

FROM FARM TO TABLE

Farm Stories



A Taste of Paradise

Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your organic farm?

My name is Tim Francis and my farm runs a little differently to a traditional one. It is more of an outdoor classroom for young people between the ages of 12 to 20 who come to learn about growing organic food. The students are able to learn everything they need to know about organic farming and about making nutritional choices. The farm project is located in a beautiful secluded valley near Berry, on the south-east coast of Australia, approximately one hour's drive south of Wollongong.



What do you do?

The farm itself produces five different types of bamboo and certified organic eggs. We also have a registered charity that works alongside the farm. We are about inspiring and creating opportunities for young people. We introduce them to growing food without chemicals, and show them how to grow food healthy food cheaply so that they can eat well.

Many of these kids have had a difficult upbringing so the farm experience really helps give them confidence. They are taken through a lot of rural training so that the students can graduate and move on to further study or get work.

Tell us a bit about the processes you use to farm organically.

Our free range eggs were the first part of the farming production to be certified, and we are planning to certify the rest of the farm with a veggie garden planned for the next project. It is all about providing opportunities and supporting young people who are in our program.

There are 80 chickens for students to work with, and feeding all the farm animals takes about to 2 ½ – 3 hours per day. After that, it is often straight to maintenance work on machinery or fencing. We also do some formal rural training at the farm's activity centre. We then move out into the paddock to apply what we learnt to things like building projects.



Describe a problem that you have had to face or tackle.

We are located south of Wollongong and cannot grow the tropical bamboo so we grow the colder varieties, but bamboo grows from colms rather easily if you have good soil and water supply.

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Do you have an interesting fact or story to share?

We grow five varieties of organic bamboo. Some of it is quite established and some we are still working on. Bamboo can be used to build things like railings in buildings as well as musical instruments such as flutes and panpipes.

What is the best part about your job?

I am hugely privileged to be a significant part of these young people's lives.

