CASE STUDY: MUSSELS—A MARKETING POTENTIAL

Figure 58: Growing ropes (five metre droppers) are attached to a longline (which sits on the surface) which is approximately 100 metres long. The longline is suspended by big black bouys

Photographs courtesy Sea Bounty Pty Ltd

Lance Wiffen and Lizzie Franklin of *Sea Bounty Pty Ltd* grow and harvest blue mussels on several leases in Port Phillip Bay in Victoria. The company employs 20 to 30 people at harvesting and 10 at quieter times. The enterprise is certified organic with NASAA and what sets this enterprise apart from others in the area is the extensive (and expensive) on-going certification and audit trail that not only involves the processes that go on out in the water but also covers packing and handling procedures back at the factory.

Lizzie says that anecdotal evidence suggests that consumer confidence is enhanced because of the organic certification and this has a very positive marketing effect, especially noticed with the success of the 1kg Retail Pack.

Figure 59: Harvesting is carried out by Sea Bounty's fleet of fishing vessels: specially designed gear is used to haul the ropes aboard

CASE STUDY: GIPPSLAND DAIRIES

At a time when many dairies are closing, Scott and Suzanne Wightman have expanded their organic dairy enterprise in Leongatha in Victoria's Gippsland. The average annual rainfall is 1016 mm. Scott explains that the basic reason for their successful production is their *focus on soil*. This doesn't mean that they focused on purchasing properties with excellent soil but rather that they set about *understanding and improving* the soil they had. Scott notes that other factors are important for successful production but these will have little effect if the soil structure and fertility is not improved and maintained. The farm has now been certified A Grade with ACO (Australian Certified Organic) for four years.

The importance of the soil. The Wightmans have their soil regularly tested by an independent soil consultant and they use additives as recommended: lime is added at one tonne per hectare and rock phosphate has been added for slow release of phosphorus, composted poultry and pig manure is bought-in, they have a mulcher (mower) which they use to mow behind the cows, mainly in spring. They also use an aerator on the pasture after the cows have grazed on it; the spike is about 15 cm deep and is used mainly to stimulate the release of nitrogen by aerobic nitrogen-fixing bacteria. Ten years ago (when they bought the farm) potassium, nitrogen and phosphorus levels were all too low, but they have now improved. The most important ingredient is adding soil biology, which is the main activator for turning soil into humus. Humus is the most important structure within the soil. It has the ability to hold water and nutrients and release it to the plants as they require it.

When the Wightmans bought the neighbouring farm they were able to improve the soil to very productive levels within three years. There was at first a stark contrast between their property and the new one: the neighbouring property had compacted soils, shallow grass roots, no earthworms and low value grasses such as bent grass. Scott observed that it took longer to rejuvenate the heavy grey soils whereas the red soils responded more quickly.