



Why Organic?

By: Daron 'Farmer D' Joffe

Organic food is quickly becoming more and more popular to the extent that even the major brands like Jif Peanut Butter and Smucker's Jellies have begun offering organic options. Shoppers looking for affordable and quality organic products no longer have to seek out the local farmers market or food coop now that big grocers like Kroger and Publix have a wide variety of organic products, including their own private label organic product lines.

Organic farmers do some things differently from conventional farmers. For example:

- They do not use toxic pesticides or synthetic fertilizers protecting ground and surface waters from contaminants.
- They feed the soil using cover crops and green manures, compost and animal manure to stabilize nutrients and make them available to the plants.
- They do not use any genetically modified/engineered crops.

What does Organic really mean and how do you know that what you are buying is truly organic?

As of October 2002, the USDA finalized the National Organic Program (NOP), which was the result of a 10-year National Organic Standards Board study. The USDA label is granted to products that go through the rigorous organic certification program and provides consumers with a valid third-party certificate of quality. The certification is based on growers and processors following the NOP guidelines for organic production and the NOP's definition of organic as, "A production system that is managed to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices, that foster cycling of

resources, promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity."

Is organic food really better for you?

The University of Washington found that "consuming food grown using organic production methods can virtually eliminate exposure to a dangerous class of insecticides known to disrupt neurological effects in infants and children." For more information, see the Pesticide Action Network website at <http://www.panna.org>.

Substantial health benefits have been found by eating organic foods. USDA scientists found that organic brands of ketchup contained 57% higher levels of the health-promoting antioxidant lycopene, than the major conventional brands of ketchup.



Another study done by Newcastle University found that organic fruits and veggies have up to 40% more antioxidants and organic milk has 80% higher antioxidants than their conventional counterparts.

Are animals on organic farms treated differently?

Animals raised on organic farms must have access to the outdoors, be fed organic feed and cannot be treated with hormones or antibiotics.

Cloned and transgenic animals, and their products, are not allowed in organic farming.

Are organically raised animals healthier for the consumer?

On conventional farms with caged hens, 23.4% of the farms tested positive for Salmonella, compared to just 4.8% in free-range organic flocks and 6.4% in conventional, free-range birds.

Is organic farming really better for the environment?

The U.S. geological Survey has shown that rainwater in 8 Midwestern states consistently contains more

than 100% of the EPA Safe Drinking Limit for Atrazine and Alachlor, both toxic chemicals used to grow conventional corn, soybeans and other crops.

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On the contrary, the organic farming system works by making healthy soil, healthy plants, healthy animals, healthy people and thus a healthy planet. Organic farming increases biodiversity by using more than one crop to keep the soil rich in natural minerals and nutrients. This is the conclusion of the largest

review ever done of studies from around the world looking at this area.

How can you get involved in this movement? Check out Georgia Organics and seek out local, organic farms in your community.

Check out these websites to learn more and to find a farm or market near you. www.localharvest.org, www.georgiaorganics.org ■

Daron Farmer D’Joffe, President of Farmer D Organics - Creators of farms and products for the earth and its people at www.farmerd.com. Special thanks to Jim Riddle of University of Minnesota and Organic Independents for many of the facts and statistics. Learn more at eorganic.info

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