

# Organic Agriculture & Human Health

*Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.*

**Good nutrition is vital for maintaining health and preventing disease. Because organic foods are high in nutritional quality and quantity, and have no or low residues, they can play an important role in promoting human health.**



Organically-grown fruits and vegetables obtain nutrients from healthy soils and farmers manage pests through ecological means.

Compared to their conventionally-grown counterparts, organic products are:

- lower in water content, reserving higher nutrient density
- richer in iron, magnesium, vitamin C, and antioxidants
- more balanced with essential amino acids



Organic livestock operations aim to optimize the health and welfare of the animals by ensuring a high quality, balanced diet and an environment that meets their behavioral and physiological needs.

Organically-raised animals have:

- better overall health
- reduced risk of contracting or carrying diseases, such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)
- lower ratio of saturated to unsaturated fat

In organic food processing, chemical aids, irradiation, harmful additives, flavorings and enhancers are prohibited, while the application of heat and pressure is minimized.

Organic produce has consistently been rated to have better flavor and texture than non-organic produce. Moreover, organic foods have enhanced nutritional quality; for example, increased amounts of vitamin C in organic foods increase the effect of vitamin E, folic acid, and iron in our bodies.

## Conventional methods of food production compromise the nutritional quality and safety of food

Even after washing, over half of the conventional produce contain pesticide residues which:

- negatively affect the endocrine and immune system
- are known animal and suspected human carcinogens
- can result in higher rates of miscarriages and reduced fertility in agricultural workers exposed to them

There are more than 500 additives permitted in conventional food processing, some of which have negative human health effects.

Conventional livestock is regularly provided antibiotics to prevent disease and promote rapid growth. This can cause resistance to antibiotics in humans due to indirect consumption.

The use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in conventional agriculture compromises food safety because:

- negative health effects have been observed in animals
- there is insufficient evidence that the consumption of GMOs is safe for humans

## Supporting Organic Agriculture means supporting human health

Consumers who wish to increase their intake of minerals, vitamins, and secondary plant nutrients, while reducing their exposure to harmful pesticides, drug residues, GMOs and additives, should support the organic movement and chose organic food.

Farmers who wish to protect their own and their workers' health, and improve the quality of their produce, should grow organic.

Governments who wish to improve the health of their population and reduce health care costs should encourage Organic Agriculture and engage in procurement of organic products.

Researchers should continue to explore the role of organic foods in promoting human health and safety, and make use of new holistic research methods.



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