



## Organic vs non-organic

The word "organic" refers to the way farmers grow and process agricultural products, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat. Organic crops must be produced without conventional pesticides, herbicides, synthetic fertilizers and are not genetically modified. Organically raised animals must be given organic feed and kept free of growth hormones and antibiotics. Organic farm animals must have access to the outdoors, including pastureland for grazing.

### USA



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established an organic certification program that requires all organic foods to meet strict government standards. These standards regulate how such foods are grown, handled and processed. If a food bears a USDA Organic label, it means it's produced and processed according to the USDA standards. The seal is voluntary, but many organic producers use it.

Products that are completely organic — such as fruits, vegetables, eggs or other single-ingredient foods — are labeled 100 percent organic and can carry the USDA seal.

Foods that have more than one ingredient, such as breakfast cereal, can use the USDA organic seal plus the following wording, depending on the number of organic ingredients:

- **100 percent organic:** Products must be made of all organic ingredients.
- **Organic:** Products must be at least 95 percent organic.

Products that contain at least 70 percent organic ingredients may say "made with organic ingredients" on the label, but may not use the seal.

Foods containing less than 70 percent organic ingredients can't use the seal or the word "organic" on their product labels. They can include the organic items in their ingredient list, however.

### Australia

In Australia there is not just one certified organic seal. Products must meet government standards but rather than carrying a government seal they will display the seal of the certifying organization.



There are seven organic certifying bodies approved by the Australian Government. They are:

- Australian Certified Organic (ACO)
- National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA)
- Aus-qual Limited
- Bio-dynamic Research Institute (Demeter)
- Organic Food Chain (OFC)
- Safe Food Production Queensland
- Tasmanian Organic-Dynamic Producers

The biggest certifying organization is Australian Certified Organic. The Australian Certified Organic seal is used for many different consumer products. It covers not only all types of food and beverages but also body care products, skin care products, makeup and textiles.

Another seal is the Organic Growers of Australia Small Producers Program (OGA). You will see this organic seal from smaller producers who sell their products primarily at local and farmers markets.

## New Zealand

In New Zealand there is no government regulation of the organic certifications, however this does not mean that there isn't any oversight. Commercial producers of organic products in New Zealand are subject to the Fair Trade Act which covers false or misleading advertising.

There are a few different organisations which oversee the organic certification processes in New Zealand.



Established in 1983, BioGro is New Zealand's largest and best-known certification body. The BioGro logo is the most recognised organic logo amongst New Zealanders. It is also renowned in wider export markets including Asian, Europe, Australian and the US.



AsureQuality Organic Standard is accredited by the world's leading organic organisation IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement) and has market access to the USA, European Union, Australia, South East Asia, the UK and Japan.



Organic Farm New Zealand targets smaller growers and those wanting to supply the domestic market only.



The Far North Organic Growers Group was established in 1989 and has been providing certification from Whangarei to Cape Reinga.

## Advantages of eating organic

- Fewer pesticides and herbicides - which can be absorbed into fruits and vegetables and leave trace elements.
- More nutrients – studies indicate that organic produce boasts up to 40 percent higher levels of some nutrients (including vitamin C, zinc and iron) than its nonorganic counterparts.
- In addition, people with allergies to foods, chemicals, or preservatives often find their symptoms lessen or go away when they eat only organic foods.

| Organic vs. Conventional Produce   |  |
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| Washing conventional produce reduces but does not eliminate pesticides. Peeling helps, but you will also lose valuable nutrients from the skin.  |  |
| <b>Organic produce:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No pesticides used</li><li>• Grown with natural fertilizers (manure and compost)</li><li>• Weeds are controlled naturally (crop rotation, hand weeding, mulching, tilling)</li><li>• Insects are controlled using natural methods (birds, good insects, traps)</li></ul> | <b>Conventional produce:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pesticides used</li><li>• Grown with synthetic or chemical fertilizers</li><li>• Weeds are controlled with chemical herbicides</li><li>• Insects are controlled with pesticides</li></ul> |

| Organic vs. Conventional Meat and Dairy  |   |
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| Regulations governing meat and dairy farming vary from country to country. The major differences include:  |   |
| <b>Organic meat and dairy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No antibiotics, hormones, or pesticides are given to animals</li><li>• Livestock are given all organic feed.</li><li>• Disease is prevented with natural methods such as clean housing, rotational grazing, and a healthy diet.</li><li>• Livestock and milking cows must graze on pasture for at least four months a year, while chickens must have freedom of movement, fresh air, direct sunlight and access to the outside.</li></ul> | <b>Conventionally raised meat and dairy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Typically given antibiotics, hormones and feed grown with pesticides</li><li>• Livestock are given growth hormones for faster growth.</li><li>• Antibiotics and medications are used to prevent livestock disease.</li><li>• Livestock may or may not have access to the outdoors.</li></ul> |

## Eating Organic On a Budget

Organic food is more expensive than conventionally grown food. But if you set some priorities, it may be possible to purchase organic food and stay within your food budget.

- Purchase the organic versions of the foods you eat the most and those that are highest in pesticides if conventionally grown.

| Fruits and vegetables where the organic label matters the most  |   |
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| According to the Environmental Working Group, a non-profit organization that analyzes the results of government pesticide testing in the U.S., the following fruits and vegetables have the highest pesticide levels on average. It is best to buy these organic: |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apples</li><li>• Sweet Bell Peppers (Capsicums)</li><li>• Cucumbers</li><li>• Celery</li><li>• Potatoes</li><li>• Grapes</li><li>• Cherry Tomatoes</li><li>• Snap Peas</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kale/Collard Greens</li><li>• Summer Squash</li><li>• Nectarines</li><li>• Peaches</li><li>• Spinach</li><li>• Strawberries</li><li>• Hot Peppers</li></ul> |

| Non-organic fruits and vegetables with low pesticide levels  |   |
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| These conventionally grown fruits and vegetables were found to have the lowest levels of pesticides. Most of these have thicker skin, which naturally protects them better from pests, and which also means their production does not require the use of as many pesticides. |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Asparagus</li><li>• Avocado</li><li>• Mushrooms</li><li>• Cabbage</li><li>• Sweet Corn</li><li>• Eggplant</li><li>• Kiwi</li><li>• Mango</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Onion</li><li>• Papaya</li><li>• Pineapple</li><li>• Sweet Peas (frozen)</li><li>• Sweet Potatoes</li><li>• Grapefruit</li><li>• Cantaloupe</li><li>• Cauliflower</li></ul> |

- Venture beyond the grocery store. Shop at farmers' markets where local farmers bring their wares to an open-air street market and sell fresh produce direct to you. Often you will find items for less than you would pay in the grocery store or supermarket.
- Buy in season – Fruits and vegetables are cheapest and freshest when they are in season. You can also find out when produce is delivered to your market. That way you know you're buying the freshest food possible.
- Shop around – Compare the price of organic items at the grocery store, the farmers' market and any other venue (even the freezer aisle).
- Tip! - Remember that organic doesn't always equal healthy – Junk food can just as easily be made using organic ingredients. Making junk food sound healthy is a common marketing ploy in the food industry but organic baked goods, desserts, and snacks are usually still very high in sugar, salt, fat, or calories. It pays to read food labels carefully.