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Go Organic: An Introduction

The word *organic* refers to products that are manufactured using eco-friendly methods and materials. Organic products are natural and free from harmful pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics, and growth hormones. The reason to “go organic” comes from our knowledge that using or consuming organic products is good for our health, the health of our soil, the environment, and the planet.

Organic Agriculture

Organic agriculture promotes biological diversity and improves health quality for humans, soil, animals, and plants. It eliminates the use of artificial materials, chemicals, genetically engineered seeds, and pesticides. Organic crops grow in soil that has not been exposed to any kind of chemicals for at least three years. Organic agricultural techniques encourage the use of recyclable plant and animal waste. These wastes increase the nutrient level of soil, thereby enhancing and preserving its quality for future generations.



Organic Certification

All products sold as “organic” must be certified. Organic certification is a method of certifying food, other agricultural products, and livestock as organic. Certified organic food products must follow strict standards or guidelines at every step of production, processing, and packaging. The standards of organic certification vary in different countries. In the United States, the National Organic Program oversees the certification of all products sold as “organic.”



History of Organic Farming

Organic farming is the oldest form of farming. However, during the first half of the 20th century, conventional farming became popular. Technological developments led to an increase in the use of pesticides, hormones, and synthetic fertilizers, as these chemicals helped increase agricultural production considerably. Although conventional farming was easier and more productive, widespread use of chemicals led to serious negative effects upon human health and the environment. After World War II, organic agriculture started to take root again. Lord Northbourne, in his book *Look to the Land*, which focused on healthy and eco-friendly methods of farming, coined the term “organic farming” for the first time in 1940.



Organic Livestock

Organic livestock is raised in a natural environment for meat, dairy products, and eggs. Farmers feed the livestock with 100% organic food and expose them to sufficient air, sunlight, and pasture. The animals are not given any kind of hormones and antibiotics to promote their growth.

Organic Labels

Organic labels indicate the percentage of organic ingredients in a product. Different products may have different labels, depending on their organic ingredients. Products that are purely organic are marked “100% Organic,” while others may have different labels like “Organic,” “Made with organic ingredients,” or “Contains organic ingredients.”



Did you know?

Earth loses one inch of topsoil every 28 years due to conventional farming. It takes nearly 3,000 years to build six inches of topsoil naturally, whereas organic farming can do the same in about 50 years.

Why Go Organic: Part 1

Going the organic way has many benefits for the environment and our health. By going organic, we ensure that we eat natural and healthy food. Organically produced foods are grown in organic soil, which nourishes and enriches the quality of the earth. By going organic, we make enduring use of Earth's resources. Going organic also prevents water and air pollution.

Health Benefits

- Organic food is free from toxic ingredients like herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, about 60% of all herbicides, 90% of all fungicides, and 30% of all insecticides can cause cancer.
- Conventional farm workers are six times more vulnerable to health risks like cancer and pesticide poisoning than organic farm workers.





Did you know?

The population of farmland insect and spider species in the United Kingdom has almost halved since the 1950s.

in the United States, while the remaining 99.5% is exposed to toxic chemicals. Switching to organic practices will help reduce the use of toxic chemicals and reduce pollution.

Organic Farming Benefits Wildlife

- The organic farming season starts in spring (as opposed to the conventional farming season, which starts in autumn) and allows weeds and other plants to grow on the land, which animals can feed on in the winter season.
- Organic livestock are not treated with antibiotics and deworming medicines. This helps dung beetles to survive as they live in animal waste. Dung beetles are a good source of food for many birds and help enrich the soil.
- Organic farmers maintain hedgerows that help birds build nests. Many birds are natural predators of harmful insects found in crops.
- Organic farmers do not remove weeds. Weeds are a source of food for many animals.
- Organic farming does not use pesticides. The use of pesticides in conventional farming has reduced the population of several species of animals. For example, the number of honeybees disappearing from the United States is dramatic. Honeybees are an essential pollinating agent for crops.

Organic Farming and the Food Chain

All plants and animals in an ecosystem are dependent on each other for their food. Conventional farming uses pesticides and fertilizers that can enter the food chain and harm consumers. Conventional farming also reduces the availability of food for many species, as only one particular crop is cultivated in a region. Organic farmers practice “mixed-crop farming,” which means that different crops are cultivated in a region. Organic farming also practices crop rotation. This means that different crops are grown on the same land in successive years or seasons. Mixed-crop farming and crop rotation methods are good for the food chain and can feed diverse wildlife in a region.

Reduction of Toxicity and Pollution

Organic practices reduce the addition of toxic and poisonous substances to our environment. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), organic farming covers only 0.5% of agricultural land



Why Go Organic: Part 2



High Crop Yields

Scientists have found that organic farming practices can increase crop yields by almost 79%. For instance, organic farming increased maize yields by 20% to 250% in Brazil and by 150% in Peru. Even in drier climates and during droughts, organic farms produce higher yields than conventional farms.

Increase in Animal Reproduction

Studies show that animals reproduce better when fed with organic food. For example, chickens on an organic diet showed a 28% increase in egg production. Female rabbits produce two times more ova when fed with organic food.



Better for Future Generations

Consumption of conventional food has made our body a harmful chemical hub. By going organic, we can make our life and the life of future generations better.

Going Organic Saves Water

Groundwater is the most important source of drinking water. Groundwater in most places is contaminated with pesticides, nitrogen fertilizers, industrial chemicals, and heavy metals. Sediment runoff (animal manure and urine) from farmlands contaminates water in lakes and other water bodies. Organic farming helps reduce water pollution by avoiding pesticides and properly storing animal manure for composting.

Better for Biodiversity

- Organic farming encourages biodiversity and does not destroy natural landscapes.
- Mixed farming, an important aspect of organic farming, gives scope to raising livestock and crops together.
- Organic farming cultivates forage crops in rotation, which provides food for a wide range of animals.



- Organic soils have 1.6 times more invertebrate arthropods. This increases the availability of food for birds. Organic farms have 25% more birds than conventional farms.

Did you know?

Organic farms support twice as many butterflies as conventional farms.

Organic Farming

Organic farming is one of the fastest growing agricultural segments in the world. Most countries in the world are moving toward organically produced food to protect people's health and our planet. Although over the years conventional farming has produced food to feed the ever-increasing population of the world, it has also decreased soil fertility, converting acres of productive land into wasteland.

Organic Farming in the United States

The United States has seen tremendous growth in organic farming over the last decade. All 50 states have certified organic farms. The state of California has the maximum area of certified organic farmland. Other states with large areas of organic farmland include Alaska, Texas, and Montana.

Organic Farming in Australia

Australia has almost 29.6 million acres of organic farmland. It is one of the largest producers of organic products in the world. Australia exports almost 70% of its organic produce to Europe. Apart from organic fruits and vegetables, the Australian livestock industry is growing fast. Organic beef, sheep, and wool are in great demand.



Organic Farming in Argentina

Argentina is one of the top producers of organic products in the world. It exports about 80% of its organic produce. Argentina has about 6.9 million acres of organic farmland.

Organic Farming in China

China ranks third in organic farmland worldwide, after Australia and Argentina. It has about 5.7 million acres of organic farmland. China exports most of its organic products to nearby markets in Japan, Taiwan, and other Asian countries.

