

Organic Certification

All products sold as “organic” must be *certified*, or checked, to make sure they really are organic. Organic certification is a method of certifying food and other products as organic. Certified organic food products must follow strict *standards* or *guidelines* at every step. The standards of organic certification are different in different countries.



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. Conventional farming is a way of growing plants and raising animals that uses technological developments, including pesticides, hormones, and *synthetic* (man-made) fertilizers. These things increase production. Conventional farming was easier than organic farming. Unfortunately, using too many chemicals harmed human health and the environment. After World War II, people started to practice organic agriculture again.

Did you know?

Earth loses 1 inch of topsoil every 28 years due to conventional farming. It takes nearly 3,000 years to build 6 inches of topsoil naturally. Organic farming can do the same thing in about 50 years.



Organic Livestock

Organic livestock is raised in a natural environment. *Livestock* are animals raised for meat, dairy products, and eggs. Organic livestock eat 100% organic food. Farmers raise them in the fresh air with lots of sunlight and room to graze. The animals are not given any kind of hormones or antibiotics to make them grow bigger or faster.



Organic Labels

Organic labels show how much of the ingredients in a product are organic. Different products may have different labels. Products that are purely organic are marked “100% Organic.” Others may have different labels like “Organic,” “Made with organic ingredients,” or “Contains organic ingredients.”

Why Go Organic: Part 1

Going organic has many benefits for the environment and our health. It provides natural and healthy food. Organically produced foods are grown in organic soil. This increases the quality of the soil. Going organic also prevents water and air pollution.

Health Benefits

- Organic food is free from *toxic*, or poisonous, ingredients. Some of these are *herbicides*, *fungicides*, and *insecticides*. Each of these three poisons is designed to attack a specific organism. Herbicides kill unwanted plants. Fungicides kill unwanted fungi. Insecticides kill insects. Many of these chemicals can cause cancer.
- Conventional farm workers suffer from more health problems, like cancer and pesticide poisoning, than organic farm workers.



Organic Farming and the Food Chain

Conventional farming uses pesticides and fertilizers. These toxins can enter the *food chain* and harm living things. Conventional farming also decreases the kinds of food available. This is because only one particular crop is *cultivated*, or grown, in an area. Organic farmers practice *mixed-crop farming*. Different crops are grown together. Organic farming also practices *crop rotation*. This means that different crops are grown on the same land from one year or season to the next. For example, this year beans may be planted in the field, but next year the farmer might plant corn in that field. Mixed-crop farming and crop rotation methods are good for wildlife and the food chain.



Dung beetle

Did you know?

The population of farmland insect and spider species in the United Kingdom is only about half of what it was in the 1950s.

Reducing Toxicity and Pollution

Organic practices reduce the amount of *toxic* (harmful) and poisonous substances added to our environment. About 99.5% of farmland is used for conventional farming. 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. The conventional farming season starts in fall. Organic farmers allow weeds and other plants to grow on the land. Animals can eat these in the winter.
- Organic livestock are not given antibiotics and deworming medicines. This helps dung beetles live in animal waste. Dung beetles are a good source of food for many birds. They are good for the soil.
- Organic farming does not use pesticides. Pesticides used in conventional farming have killed animals and helpful insects. For example, a lot of honeybees are disappearing from the United States. Honeybees help fertilize crops.

Better for Future Generations

Eating conventional food has put a lot of harmful chemicals into our bodies. By going organic, we can make our lives and the lives of future generations better.

Going Organic Saves Water

Groundwater is the most important source of drinking water. Groundwater in most places is *contaminated*, or dirty. It contains pesticides, nitrogen fertilizers, chemicals, and heavy metals. When it rains, materials like soil and animal manure wash downhill into lakes and rivers. This is called *runoff*. Runoff from farmlands contaminates water. Organic farming helps reduce water pollution. It does not use pesticides. Animal manure is used as fertilizer.

Better for Biodiversity

- Organic farming helps biodiversity. It does not destroy natural landscapes.
- Mixed farming, an important part of organic farming, raises livestock and crops together.
- Crop rotation provides food for many animals.



Did you know?

More butterflies live on organic farms than on conventional farms.

Organic Farming

Organic farming is increasing around the world. Most countries are moving toward organically produced food. It protects people's health and our planet. Conventional farming has produced food, but it has also lowered soil fertility. Conventional farming has turned acres of productive land into wasteland.

Organic Farming in the United States

The United States has seen a lot of growth in organic farming over the last 10 years. All 50 states have certified organic farms. The state of California has the most certified organic farmland. Other states with large areas of organic farmland include Alaska, Texas, and Montana.

Organic Farming in Australia

Australia is one of the largest producers of organic products in the world. Australia *exports*, or sends out, almost 70% of its organic produce to Europe. Organic beef, sheep, and wool are also raised in Australia.



Organic Farming in Argentina

Argentina is another one of the largest producers of organic products in the world. It exports about 80% of its organic produce.

Organic Farming in China

China ranks third in organic farmland worldwide, after Australia and Argentina. China exports most of its organic products to other Asian countries.



Organic Farming in Switzerland

The Farmers' Movement started by Hans and Maria Müller in the 1940s began the organic-farming movement in Switzerland. Hans Müller was the first in the world to use the term "organic-biological farming."

Organic Farming in the United Kingdom

Organic farming started in the United Kingdom in the 1930s. Lady Eve Balfour was one of the early pioneers of organic farming in the United Kingdom.

Benefits of Organic Farming

- Organic farming does not cause harmful chemicals to enter the food chain.
- Organic farming preserves natural areas, like wetlands.
- In conventional farming, the soil gradually loses its fertility. It grows less food. Organic farming methods enrich the soil. Soil in organic farms is less acidic.



Organic Farming in Spain

Organic farming in Spain began in the 1970s. Spain has almost 3.5% of its farmland managed organically.

Organic Farming in Denmark

Denmark has one of the highest numbers of organic farms in the European Union. Organic farming has helped Denmark to decrease the amount of carbon dioxide it releases into the air.

Did you know?

Conventional farming uses about 350 different pesticides.

Organic Skincare Products

The skin plays an important role in keeping us healthy. Every day we use skincare products that are full of chemicals. They can cause skin diseases and allergies. Organic skincare products do not hurt our skin. Organic skincare products are prepared using herbs and medicinal plants.

Organic Medicine

Organic medicines are prepared from organic plants. Most organic medicines have few or no side effects. Herbal or traditional medicines are not always organic. They may use plants that have been grown conventionally.



Organic Food



Organic food is grown in naturally enriched soil. Farmers must not have used any chemical on that soil for at least three years. Organic livestock is raised naturally. The animals are not forced to live in small pens. They are allowed to roam around in large, open pastures.

The Organic Food Industry

The organic food industry has been growing quickly. Organic food is grown in about 120 countries around the world. The European Union, Japan, and the United States buy the most organic food.



Organic Fish

Organic fish farms have enough space for fish to swim. The fish are fed on high-quality recycled fish and shellfish waste. They are not given any kind of chemicals. They are bred naturally without using hormones and antibiotics.



Organic Meat

Organic meat is a good source of important fatty acids and vitamin E. It is free of pesticides and is safer than nonorganic meat.

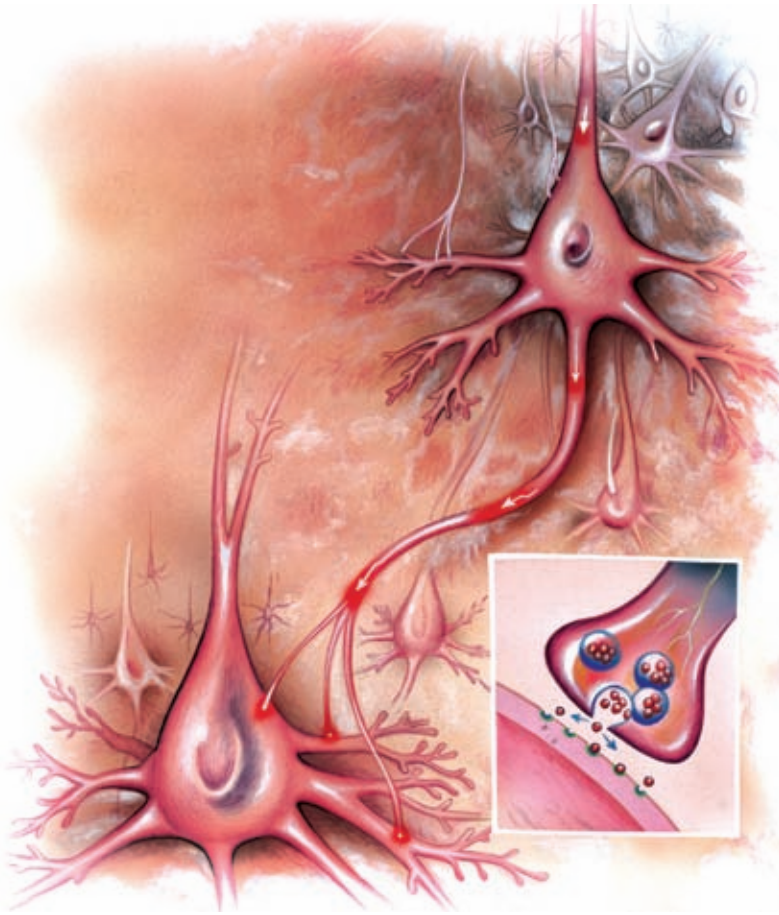
Organic Milk Is Healthier

Organic milk is healthier than conventional milk because it contains 68% more omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are good for your health. Organic milk is free from harmful antibiotics and growth hormones. It is also an important source of calcium for growing children.



Did you know?

The global organic food industry is growing at the rate of 20% to 35% per year.



Did you know?

By 2020, about 70% of heart disease, strokes, and diabetes will be caused by our diet.

Hyperactivity

Many artificial colors and preservatives are used in conventionally processed food and drink. *Preservatives* are used to make food last longer. Many of these substances can cause *hyperactivity* in children. Hyperactivity is a problem with focus, paying attention, and sitting still.



Developmental Problems

Many harmful chemicals present in non-organic food items have been found to cause *birth defects*. Birth defects are damage to a baby before it is born. This can be caused by harmful chemicals in food that the mother eats.

Nervous System Disorders

Many chemicals in non-organic fruits and vegetables harm the brain, spinal cord, and other parts of the *nervous system*. The nervous system is the way the body sends messages.

Reproductive System Disorders

Conventionally grown and packaged foods often contain chemicals that can damage the reproductive system in humans. The *reproductive system* contains the parts of the human body that produce children.