
Organic – Con

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General	2
A. Organic definition.....	2
Organic \neq Better	2
A. Organic \neq toxin free	2
B. 237 research studies: Organic \neq safer, pesticides are safe.....	2
C. 237 studies: No significant difference	3
D. Evidence shows fresh is better; no evidence for organic.....	3
E. No significant nutritional difference	4
F. Hormones in milk do not affect human health	4
G. A/T "common sense pesticides aren't safe": US guidelines ensure food safety	4
Government Corruption	5
A. Organic industry is corrupt	5
B. Lobbying money funneled through "non-profits"	5
Solvency	6
A. Organic labeling can be deceptive	6
Disadvantage: Low Income Health	6
A. Link/Impact: Pushing organic can cause less affluent families to buy less produce	6

General

A. Organic definition

Trace Amrstrong Florian (MS in food sciences) and Dr. Scottie Misner (PhD in nutrition, associate nutrition specialist in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Arizona), August 2013, University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Cooperative Extension, "Organically grown foods versus non-organically grown foods", accessed August 8, 2016, <http://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1603.pdf> (page 1)

Organic foods can include fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy foods, eggs, and to some extent, meats and poultry. Organic foods are defined as those foods that are grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, genetic engineering, pesticides, or drugs.

Organic \neq Better

A. Organic \neq toxin free

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However, organically grown foods do not necessarily mean toxin-free. Plants produce their own natural toxins and these can contaminate organic products, as well as the approved use of natural pesticides, such as sulfur, and copper, which can also be found on the organically grown foods.

B. 237 research studies: Organic \neq safer, pesticides are safe

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The short answer is: Data from research does not show that organically grown foods are safer than conventionally grown foods. An analysis of 237 research studies that looked at organically grown produce and conventionally grown produce found that there was little evidence that conventionally grown foods were a higher health risk than organically grown products. Even though researchers found that organic produce had a 30% lower risk of pesticide contamination than conventionally grown fruits and vegetables, organic foods are not necessarily 100% free of pesticides. Furthermore, the researchers stated that the pesticide levels of all foods mostly fell within the allowable safety limits that have been set by the government. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completes a risk assessment for each pesticide and determines if there is "reasonable certainty that the pesticide will not harm a person's health". If there is risk, the pesticide is not allowed to be used.

C. 237 studies: No significant difference

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A Stanford University Meta-Analysis (which is a detailed study of several related studies) found that in 237 studies comparing organically grown foods versus conventionally grown foods there were little differences between the two. For example:

-There were no consistent differences in the amount of vitamin levels of organic products, and only one nutrient, phosphorus was significantly higher in organic versus conventionally grown produce. However, very few Americans have a phosphorous deficiency, so this has little clinical significance.

-There was also no difference in protein or fat content between organic and conventional milk, though evidence from few studies suggested that organic milk may contain higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids.

-The researchers of this Meta-Analysis of 237 studies were also unable to find specific fruits and vegetables for which organic was the consistently healthier choice.

-Even though researchers found that organic produce had a 30% lower risk of pesticide contamination than conventional fruits and vegetables, organic foods are not necessarily 100% free of pesticides. Another interesting fact is that the pesticide levels in both groups generally fell within the allowable safety limits the government has set.

D. Evidence shows fresh is better; no evidence for organic

Dr. Janet Silverstein (MD, professor of endocrinology at the University of Florida), June 2013, The Wall Street Journal, "No: There is Little Evidence Organic Food is Worth the Cost", accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB100014241278873240633045785253428282504>

There is no definitive evidence that organic food is more nutritious or healthier than conventional food, but there is proof that eating more fruits and vegetables and less processed food is. Therefore, our focus as a society should be to eat as much fresh food and whole grains as possible - regardless of whether it is organically grown or not.

E. No significant nutritional difference

Dr. Janet Silverstein (MD, professor of endocrinology at the University of Florida), June 2013, The Wall Street Journal, "No: There is Little Evidence Organic Food is Worth the Cost", accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324063304578525342828282504>

It is difficult to compare the nutritional value of organic versus conventional food because the soil, climate, timing of harvest, and storage conditions all affect the composition of produce. Still, published studies have found no significant differences in nutritional quality between organic and nonorganic produce or milk.

F. Hormones in milk do not affect human health

Dr. Janet Silverstein (MD, professor of endocrinology at the University of Florida), June 2013, The Wall Street Journal, "No: There is Little Evidence Organic Food is Worth the Cost", accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324063304578525342828282504>

Similarly, there is no evidence that giving bovine growth hormone (BGH) to cows changes the composition of milk or affects human health. BGH is inactive in humans and degrades in the acidic environment of the stomach.

G. A/T "common sense pesticides aren't safe": US guidelines ensure food safety

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As for pesticide, exposure, the U.S. in 1996 established maximum permissible levels for pesticide residues in food to ensure food safety. Many studies have shown that pesticides levels in conventional produce fall well below those guidelines. While it's true that organic fruits and vegetables in general contain fewer traces of these chemicals, we can't draw conclusions about what that means for health as there haven't been any long-term studies comparing the relationship between exposure to pesticides from organic versus nonorganic foods and adverse health outcomes. It may seem like "common sense" to reduce exposure to these chemicals, but there are currently no good evidence-based studies to answer the question.

Government Corruption

A. Organic industry is corrupt

Dr. Henry Miller (MD, fellow in scientific philosophy and public policy at Stanford University), September 23, 2015, Forbes, "Government Favors and Subsidies to Organic Agriculture: Follow the Money", accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/henrymiller/2015/09/23/why-does-government-give-favors-and-subsidies-to-organic-agriculture-follow-the-money/3/#69a3812d62ed>

The reality is that the organic industry is doing plenty of "lobbying." Scores of millions of dollars is spent each year by organic interests to influence legislators and government agencies, pass state and federal anti-genetic engineering labeling initiatives and fund the political campaigns of sympathetic candidates and lawmakers. Although the organic footprint is only about 4% of the marketplace by dollar amount, the industry is spending liberally to promote organic eating and in particular to vilify genetically engineered (also called "genetically modified" or GM) crops, a strategy intended to boost its bottom line by bamboozling the public, policymakers, and the media.

B. Lobbying money funneled through "non-profits"

Dr. Henry Miller (MD, fellow in scientific philosophy and public policy at Stanford University), September 23, 2015, Forbes, "Government Favors and Subsidies to Organic Agriculture: Follow the Money", accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/henrymiller/2015/09/23/why-does-government-give-favors-and-subsidies-to-organic-agriculture-follow-the-money/3/#69a3812d62ed>

Much of the funding for the lobbying is laundered through "non-profits" that claim to be motivated solely by the common good, such as issues of environmental and public health. Two of the organic industry's biggest - and most pernicious - activist groups, the Environmental Working Group and the Center for Food Safety, are based in Washington DC; and according to financial statements filed with the IRS, they raised more than \$42 million from undisclosed donors between 2009 and 2013 (the latest year for which reports are available). Although they like to portray themselves as public interest groups, they are undeniably lobbying organizations, and they are lobbying for special interests: EWG and CFS work to sway consumer opinion and advance public policies favorable to a pro-organic, anti-conventional-farming agenda.

Solvency

A. Organic labeling can be deceptive

Dr. Janet Silverstein (MD, professor of endocrinology at the University of Florida), June 2013, The Wall Street Journal, "No: There is Little Evidence Organic Food is Worth the Cost", accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324063304578525342828282504>

We would like to think that organic food is grown locally, put in a wheelbarrow and brought directly to our homes. However, much of it comes from countries where regulations might not be as tightly enforced as in the U.S., and labeling of the foods might be misleading. And just because food is labeled organic doesn't mean it is completely free of pesticides. Contamination can occur from soil and ground water containing previously used chemicals, or during transport, processing and storage. Organochlorine insecticides were recently found in organically grown root crops and tomatoes even though these pesticides haven't been used for 20 years. A recent epidemic of salmonella deaths from both organic and nonorganic peanuts, meanwhile, suggests that organic meat and produce are just as susceptible to infection by bacteria and fungi as other foods.

Disadvantage: Low Income Health

A. Link/Impact: Pushing organic can cause less affluent families to buy less produce

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Organic food is more expensive than conventional offerings - up to 40% more, according to some estimates - which could make it cost-prohibitive for families on limited food budgets. Given the lack of data showing that organic food leads to better health, it would be counterproductive to encourage people to adopt an organic diet if they end up buying less produce as a result.