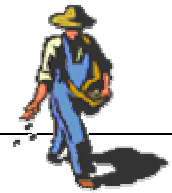


Pros & Cons of Going Organic



Organic food production is based on a system of farming that maintains and replenishes soil fertility without the use of toxic and persistent pesticides and fertilizers. Organic foods are minimally processed without artificial ingredients, preservatives, or irradiation to maintain the integrity of the food.

Pros

- Organic farming is friendlier to the environment; therefore on organic farms you are likely to find a greater diversity of plants (not including the organic food itself) and animals.
- Organic processed food contains no hydrogenated fat, whereas non-organic processed food does. Hydrogenated fat has been linked to heart disease – so choosing organic options can help to protect your heart.
- If you are concerned about how animals are treated, then choosing organic food is a good idea. Organic farming ensures that animals are fed a natural diet and kept in free-range conditions.
- Genetically modified (GM) crops are not allowed under organic standards.
- There are lower levels of pesticide residues in organic food, as only a small number of chemicals are allowed in organic food production. However, it should be noted here that it is possible to produce conventionally grown fruit and vegetables with minimal residues. Indeed, residues are usually not detected in about 70% of produce sampled by the Pesticides Residue Committee (and they tend to focus on problem crops).

Cons

- Organic food may go ‘off’ more quickly than non-organic produce. This is because organic fruit and vegetables do not contain artificial preservatives and are not irradiated.
- Organic food is more expensive to buy than non-organic food.
- Many people believe that organic food does not allow the use of any chemicals. Contrary to popular opinion, organic food production does allow a limited number of chemicals to be used.
- According to the UK Food Standards Agency, the French Food Safety Agency and the Swedish National Food Administration, some scientific research has found that organic food is no safer or more nutritious than food produced by conventional means.
- Eating organic food is often thought to be healthier than eating the equivalent non-organic produce. However, the Consumers’ Association (UK) has concluded that there is ‘no consensus’ on reports linking organic foods to health benefits.

It is likely that sales of organic food will continue to rise for the foreseeable future. Whether or not you decide to ‘go organic’, what’s important to remember is that balance is the key when it comes to the overall content of your diet. A totally organic diet may not necessarily provide you with the optimal balance of nutrients. It is the choice of different foods from the five different food groups that constitutes a healthy diet, whether the foods you choose are organic or not.