

Choose Organic Food

Why we care

Our current agricultural system, while incredibly productive, has a down side. It relies on petroleum-based fertilizers that pollute streams, results in eroded top soil, and uses harmful pesticides. A study commissioned by the Consumers' Union found that of twenty fruit and vegetable crops, 73% of USDA's conventionally grown samples had pesticide residues. These pose a particular risk to children because their immune systems are less able to rid their bodies of contaminants.

Certified organic food, on the other hand, is grown and processed without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers (or antibiotics, genetic engineering, irradiation, or sewage sludge). Organic agriculture greatly reduces toxic water pollution. Growers use crop rotation and cover crops to minimize pests, prevent erosion, and return nutrients to the soil. Healthier soil, in turn, results in fruits and vegetables with a higher concentration of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

Simple, positive change

- Grow your own. With just a little space, you can plant enough vegetables to meet your household needs. Think about using edible plants in landscaping. See *How to Grow More Vegetables* by John Jeavons.
- Buy directly from local growers at farmers' markets. Most use organic methods, even if they are not officially certified organic. Or subscribe to a CSA farm (see <http://portlandcsa.org>).
- Frequent organic food stores or the organic section of your supermarket. For a guide showing produce with the most and least pesticides, see www.foodnews.org/.
- Select local produce in season. It may be better to buy local than purchase organic food shipped long distances.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at info@earthleaders.org.