

# **GLOBAL TO LOCAL:** **BRIEF ORGANIC FOOD HISTORY FACT SHEET**

## **Certified Organic Products:**

The item has been grown according to strict uniform standards that are verified by independent state and private organizations. Certification includes inspections of farm fields and processing facilities, detailed record keeping and periodic testing of soil and water to ensure that growers and handlers are meeting the standards which have been set.

Organic farmers maintain and replenish soil fertility without 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.

Prevention is the primary strategy for disease, weed and insect control. When pest populations get out of balance, growers try options including insect predators, mating disruption, traps and barriers.

If these fail, permission may be granted by the certifier to apply botanical or other nonpersistent pest controls under restricted conditions.

Botanicals are derived from plants and are broken down quickly by oxygen and sunlight.

## **Nutritional Considerations:**

In a review of 41 published studies comparing the nutritional value of organically and conventionally grown fruits, vegetables, and grains, certified nutrition specialist Virginia Worthington has concluded there are significantly more nutrients in organic crops:

- Nutrients include: 27% more vitamin C, 21.1% more iron, 29.3% more magnesium and 13.6% more phosphorus.
- Organic products have 15.1% less nitrates than their conventional counterparts
- In more than 300 comparisons, organic crops had a higher nutrient content about 40% of the time and conventional crops had a higher nutrient content only about 15% of the time
- Overall, organic crops had an equal or higher nutrient content about 85% of the time. Results suggest that organic crops have a higher nutrient content

—MORE—

## **Global To Local: Brief Organic Food History Fact Sheet**

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#### **Global:**

- Farmers in 130 countries now produce organically grown food with consumers now spending \$22 billion a year worldwide on organic products. (Organic Trade Association Business Facts)

#### **National:**

- According to the Organic Trade Association (Greenfield, Mass.), there are 8,000 certified organic farmers nationwide
- In 2001, farmers in 48 states dedicated 2.3 million acres of cropland and pasture to organic production systems
  - Over 1.3 million acres were used for growing crops
  - California, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Montana and Colorado had the most organic cropland
  - Idaho, California and North Dakota account for 35% of organic cropland
- In a study by The Hartman Group, it was found that almost one-third of the U.S. population currently buys organically grown food products
- According to USDA estimates, retail sales of organic foods in the U.S. grew from \$1 billion in 1990 to \$7.76 billion in 2000.
- Organic products are now available in nearly 20,000 natural foods stores and are sold in 73% of all conventional grocery stores. (USDA)
- USDA data/studies accumulated in 1994-99 found that 73 percent of conventionally grown foods had at least one pesticide residue, while only 23 percent of organically grown samples of the same crops had any residues.
- Most residues in organic foods (and some in conventional foods) can readily be explained as unavoidable results of environmental contamination by past pesticide use or by "drift" (sprays blown in from adjacent non-organic farms).

#### **California:**

- California has more than 2,500 registered organic farms and food processors

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