

What is the difference between *Organic and Conventional Farming*

Most farmers use some combination of production methods to suit their soil type, climate and type of crop grown. And every year is different depending on the weather, threats from insects, weeds and diseases.

If you buy food grown in Ontario, you can be sure that it is safe and grown in an environmentally-responsible manner – and it doesn't take a lot of fuel to get to your table. That's good for Ontario's farm families and the environment too.



What does certified organic mean?

To be labelled and marketed as certified organic, food must be produced by farmers who are certified “organic” every year. Requirements can include food that is grown without synthetic fertilizers, synthetic pesticides, genetically modified organisms, additional growth hormones, or certain medications.

Does organic food mean no pesticides are used?

No. Organic farmers are allowed to use certain chemicals to protect their crops from plant diseases and pests. The main difference is that the pesticides used by organic farmers are non-synthetic.

How big is organic?

In Ontario, less than 1% of the province's farms are certified organic. About 1.5% of farms in Canada are certified organic.

Yields tend to be lower or variable and more labour intensive when compared with conventional farming systems, therefore organic food is generally more expensive.

What is non-organic food called?

Non-organic food is also called “conventional” food. Conventional agriculture uses many of the same production practices as organic production, but conventional farmers may also choose to use modern technologies such as synthetic pesticides and biotechnology-improved seeds when needed.



Pesticide use on Ontario farms

The majority of farmers use practices such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) which includes using a variety of approaches to control pests through pest scouting and thresholds, “beneficial” insects and fungi and targeted pesticide applications where required. And, the majority of farmers complete Environmental Farm Plans to evaluate their farms and set goals for ongoing improvements.

All farmers using pesticides in Ontario are professionally trained and certified in safe pesticide use. They carefully follow label directions because they provide instructions for each product’s safe and proper use.

Is organic or conventional food safer?

All food, regardless of how it is grown, must meet the same inspection and food safety standards set by government. Organic products appeal to consumers who may have concerns about pesticides and are willing to pay more for organic food.

Is organic or conventional food more nutritious?

The Dieticians of Canada, and many scientific studies say no. Nutrients such as vitamin A, vitamin C, and iron are not higher in organic foods. There is no evidence to suggest that organic foods are any more or less nutritious than other foods. In fact, a recent review of over 55 published studies concluded that “there is no evidence of a difference in nutrient quality between organically and conventionally produced foodstuffs.”

Internet Resources:

Organic production systems standard

<http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/ongc-cgsb/programme-program/norms-standards/internet/bio-org/index-eng.html>

Organic FAQ

Organic Council of Ontario

<http://www.organiccouncil.ca/organics/faq>

Eat Right Ontario

Dieticians of Canada

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Farming-Food-production/Organic-Foods-and-Growing-Methods-FAQ>

Nutritional quality of organic foods: a systematic review: <http://www.ajcn.org/content/90/3/680.long>



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