

Organic Myth- Busters!

Organic agriculture could never feed the world – MYTH!

This is one myth that organic producers hear quite often! In fact, Organic practices are ideally suited to subsistence agriculture as is practiced in third world countries, because these methods are sustainable. Research conducted by the United Nations Environment Program in Africa found that crop yields more than doubled when organic practices were used.

The UNEP reported that organic practices in Africa outperformed industrial, chemical-intensive conventional farming, and also provided environmental benefits such as improved soil fertility, better water retention and greater resistance to drought. The advantages for the small landholder are increased earnings and productivity and reduced dependence on external inputs. All this contributes to increased food security.

According to Mr. S. Pantichpakdi, of the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, "The way the world grows its food will have to radically change to better serve the poor and hungry if we are to cope with a growing population and climate change". Organic farming is one positive method of change!

Organic farming is not economically viable –MYTH!

The number of Organic farmers is on the increase, and one of the reasons is that it has proven to be a sustainable method suitable for the small family farm. An extensive nine-year comparison study at Iowa State University has shown the longer rotations of the organic management systems show greater yields, increased profitability, and steadily improved soil quality over conventional practices. The biggest difference was found in the ability of the organic soil to cycle nutrients more efficiently and retain water.

Research done over 12 years at Glenlea, Manitoba by Dr. Martin Entz has shown that of the four rotations studied (two conventional and two organic) the one that most consistently proved profitable was an organic one. The reason was lower input costs. The study did not include any premium for the organic grain.

Organic food is guaranteed free of pesticides –MYTH!

The key word here is "guaranteed". Certified organic products are grown and handled according to strict standards without toxic chemical inputs. However, because they are not grown in a vacuum, it is possible for crops

to be inadvertently exposed to chemicals that are prevalent in the atmosphere, rain, and groundwater. The organic producer is required to grow his crops according to accepted practices and does everything possible to protect the crop from contamination from outside sources. This process is annually inspected and certified.

Organic food is better for you – TRUE!

Organic food is not treated with toxic and persistent insecticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers.

There is substantial evidence that organic food is more nutritious too!

- Recently the E.U. Quality Low Input Food Project reported significant nutritional benefits from organic food. The four-year study indicated 40% more antioxidants in organic produce as well as higher levels of beneficial minerals.
- Research at the University of California has shown organic kiwi fruit have significantly higher levels of vitamin C.
- The British Journal of Dairy Science has published results of a three-year study that showed 68% higher levels of Omega 3 fatty acids in organic milk.

Organic agriculture is better for the environment –TRUE!

Organic farming does not use polluting chemicals, herbicides and pesticides, which can contaminate our watersheds and environment. Recent studies at the University of Ottawa showed organic farms were 29% more energy efficient than conventional farms. It has also been shown that organic farming removes more carbon from the atmosphere through enhanced soil sequestration.

A study at the University of Surrey, U.K. showed that locally grown organic produce used 90% less energy than conventional produce from a grocery store.

Organic food costs more -TRUE! (Usually)

Prices for organic food include the same factors as conventional items such as growing, harvest, storage and transportation. Organic foods must also meet very strict regulations and the process is usually much more labour intensive and on a smaller scale. Living conditions for livestock require more space per animal. There is a considerable paper trail required, as the food is traceable from the source to your fork, and the producer has the added cost of the certification process. You will probably pay more for the organic product, because it is worth more!



for more info: www.goingorganic.ca