

Choose Organic Food

Why we care

Our conventional 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. Pesticides can pose a particular risk to children because their immune systems are less able to rid their bodies of contaminants. Farm workers are also put at risk.

Alternatively, organic growers avoid synthetic chemicals, hormones, antibiotics, genetic engineering, and irradiation. To qualify as organic, crops must be produced on farms that have not used most synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer for three years before harvest. Organic growers use techniques such as crop rotation and cover crops to minimize pests, prevent erosion, and return nutrients to the soil. They often add animal and crop waste fertilizers. By choosing an organic diet, you promote a healthier environment and are exposed to fewer pesticides.

Simple, positive change

- Grow your own. With just a little space, you can plant enough to meet your household needs. Try using [edible plants in landscaping](#). Also, check out *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](#).
- Frequent natural 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 jeanne@earthleaders.org.