

# All About Organic

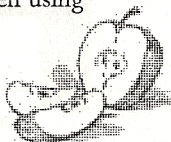


Organic refers to methods of growing and processing foods that rely on the earth's natural resources. Pests and weeds are managed using earth-friendly methods such as beneficial insects and mechanical controls. Organic farmers work to build natural nutrients in soil, which help fertilize plants without the need for synthetic fertilizers. Organic processors and handlers package food that is natural from beginning to end.

## What is Certified Organic?

Products labeled "certified organic" have been grown and processed according to strict standards governed by a third-party certifier like California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF). CCOF annually inspects all farms and facilities to ensure that no harmful chemicals have been used for at least three years, that foods are processed using ecologically-friendly methods, and that growers and processors keep detailed records of their practices. All certifiers must enforce the standards set by the California Food Act of 1990, which was modeled after CCOF's high standards. Products must include the name of the certifier when using "certified organic" labeling.

CALIFORNIA CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARMERS  
<http://www.ccof.org>



## Organic vs. Certified Organic.

Until recently, organic farmers and producers were required only to register with the state. They were not necessarily certified by a third party, and may never even have been inspected. However, the new Federal Standards released in December 2000 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture require that all foods labeled "organic" must be certified by a third party certifier such as CCOF.



## "No Spray", "Pesticide Free", and "Residue Free."

These labels do not ensure that your food is organic. Claims like "pesticide free" usually mean the edible parts of a crop have not been sprayed with harmful chemicals. However, synthetic fertilizers, insecticides and fungicides may have been used to grow the food.

PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK  
<http://www.panna.org>

## Does Organic Food Cost More?

We need to understand that healthy, high quality organic foods have a certain value and price. Organic farmers often pay higher costs for environmentally-friendly farming practices which are both labor intensive and expensive. The price of conventional foods in comparison to organic does not include the hidden costs of conventional farming, the impact of toxic chemicals to human health, nor serious environmental impacts. When you buy organic foods, you are investing in your health and future of this planet.



## Are there (Inter)National Organic Standards?

The Federal Standards for organic food were recently released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These standards became effective on October 21, 2002. Now, all products labeled "organic" must comply to the Federal Standards. For more information or to view the Standards in their entirety, visit the National Organic Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture at:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>

An organization called the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) publishes the *IFOAM Basic Standards of Organic Agriculture and Food Processing*, an effort to streamline International organic standards. CCOF is accredited by IFOAM.



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

<http://www.ifoam.org>

## Do Organic Standards Allow Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) ?

The USDA Organic Rule prohibits the use of GMOs at any stage of organic production. Since GMO labeling is not in place, choosing organic is the only way for consumers to ensure that their food is GMO-free. For more information on GMOs, the new nationwide organic regulations, CCOF's Supporting Membership program, or organic food and agriculture, please visit the CCOF website at:

[www.ccof.org](http://www.ccof.org)

You can also contact Brian Sharpe, Office Coordinator, at 831.423.2263, ext. 10, or email [bsharpe@ccof.org](mailto:bsharpe@ccof.org).

Thank you for supporting organic agriculture and food!

California Certified Organic Farmers • 1115 Mission Street • Santa Cruz • California • 95060

Phone: 831.423.2263 Fax: 831.423.4528 Email: [ccof@ccof.org](mailto:ccof@ccof.org)

<http://www.ccof.org>