



# ORGANIC

## All about organic food

*Organic food has become very popular nowadays and everyone wants to know the benefits. This brochure will explain what organic food is, how it is beneficial, what the standards are and who certifies these*

### **What does “organic” mean?**

Organic symbolises working with nature, not against it. It means higher levels of animal welfare, lower levels of pesticides, no manufactured herbicides or artificial fertilisers and more environmentally sustainable management of the land and the natural environment.

### **What is the organic farming practice?**

Organic farmers grow and process foods by following guidelines established by the Department of Agriculture of the respective countries to ensure sustainable practices and animal welfare.

### **How is organic farming different from conventional farming?**

Organic farmers use biological methods and management practices such as

diversified crop rotations that improve soil quality while conventional farmers use synthetic chemicals. It uses minimal crop rotations growing the same single crop year after year on the same land.

### **Is organic produce better than that from non-organic farms?**

The organic methods take care of the environment, animals and the end product to another level. It gave consumers the choice to eat food produced in this sustainable way that they can be sure are non-GM.

### **Are there any standards?**

All organic produce that has been grown and processed should adhere to standards. Organic standards also differ in details from country to country. National organic



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programmes of different countries develop rules and regulations for the production, handling, labelling and enforcement for all organic products.

### **How can be sure that farmers and food processors are sticking to organic standards?**

Organic producers are inspected by an accredited certifying agency regularly. They are subject to spot inspections to ensure they are complying fully. They have continuing dialogue between them, through a variety of forums, to ensure the integrity of the system.

### **Who provides organic certification/seal in India?**

It is carried out by agencies accredited of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), GOI. National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) provides the certificate of accreditation.

### **Does Government support/promote organic farming?**

The Government is promoting the production of organic crops, fruits and vegetables, etc through various schemes/programmes under the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), National Mission on Oilseeds & Oil Palm (NMOOP) and Network Project on Organic Farming of Indian Council of Agriculture Research.

The government also promotes National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States (HMNEH), National Project on



Management of Soil Health and Fertility (NPMSHF), National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF), and various schemes of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). The government is giving incentives to cultivators of organic food products under the NHM.

In addition to these, the Government is implementing a Cluster based programme to encourage the farmer for promoting organic farming called Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).

### **Where to buy organic food?**

You can order online and get them delivered at your doorstep. If you want to check out the organic food yourself, go to supermarkets or farmers market.

### **What should the consumer check before buying organic foods?**

Check the certification or label provided by certifying agencies. Many producers also use the certification from different countries because they export and need to be compliant to that country's law.



### **Does organic food cost more?**

It costs more to produce because it is more labour intensive and produced in relatively small quantities. These are less protected from diseases and insect predators. It results in more substantial losses during the course of a growing season. But organic farming does not have costly environmental impacts.

### **Can organic farmers use pesticides and other chemicals?**

Where there are no natural or system-based alternatives, and then as a last resort, only a limited list of carefully selected pesticides is approved for use in organic farming. Organic farmers do not use herbicides; instead, they rely on crop rotation, well-timed cultivation, hand or mechanical weeding and carefully selecting crop varieties.

### **Can organic food contain genetically modified (GM) elements?**

Genetic modification of plants and animals goes against the principles of organic food and farming. No GM inputs are allowed in the organic food. Certifiers withdraw organic certification of that product if the trace of GM is found.

### **Do organic farmers use antibiotics on their animals?**

Most synthetic veterinary drugs - including antibiotics and growth hormones - are prohibited under organic regulations. Producers of organic meat and dairy products should feed animals with organic feed, and must prevent contamination of organic feed with antibiotics and hormones. Animals are given on the advice of a vet if they are sick to prevent or



reduce an animal's suffering or to restore health. This withdrawal period for organic products is twice as long as that for non-organic ones.

### **Why is organic farming better for animals?**

Animal welfare is a top priority for organic farmers. They have to raise animals without the use of antibiotics or synthetic growth hormones. Organic farmers should provide animals with organic feed and safe, clean, cage-free living conditions.

### **Do organic production benefit farmers?**

Yes – in many ways. It protects crops from pests and weeds in a non-toxic manner. Farmers face fewer risks from exposure to chemicals. It preserves the ecological balance, promotes biodiversity and protects the environment. It opens up a new market for farmers.

### **Does organic food actually taste better?**

Many studies that have compared the taste and organoleptic quality of organic and conventional foods report no consistent or significant differences between organic and conventional fruits and vegetables. You have to decide for yourself.

### **Is organic food really healthier?**

There is a lack of strong evidence that organic foods are significantly more

nutritious than conventional foods. Consumption of organic foods may reduce exposure to pesticide residues and antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

### **Are natural and organic foods the same?**

There is no rules or regulations for products labelled “natural.” Organic is regulated food system. Foods labelled “organic” are certified under the national organic programme.

*Consumers who choose to buy organic food can be sure they are paying towards a method that generates an environmental benefit.*

## **Amazing Benefits of Organic Food**

**Reduced Pesticide Use:** It may have both health and environmental benefits. It reduces the risk of human and animal exposure to toxic chemicals; reduced runoff and leaching potential, so less ground and surface water contamination.

**Protection of Environment:** Harmful chemicals are not used in organic farming. So there is minimal soil, air and water pollution. It ensures a safe and healthy environment for future generations to live in.

**Saves Energy:** Organic farming is based on labour intensive practices like manual weeding, using green manures and crop covers rather than synthetic fertilisers to build up soil.

**GMO-free food:** The organic system does not permit the use of GMOs during any stage of food production, processing or handling.

**Promotes Biodiversity:** Organic farming encourages healthy biodiversity. The maintenance of natural areas within and around organic fields and absence of



chemical inputs to create (suitable) habitats for wildlife.

**Global Warming:** Most organically produced food is distributed locally. As a result, less energy is used for transportation. It automatically reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which are believed to be the main reason for global warming.

**Supports Animal Health and Welfare:** Animals live on organic farms are exposed to clean, chemical free grazing that helps keep them naturally healthy and resistant to illness.

**Supports the Local Economy:** Purchasing organic food from the farmer's market supports local community's economy, creating jobs and keeping farmers thriving.

## **CERC-ENVIS Centre**

Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, GOI has recognized Consumer Education and Research Centre as ENVIS (Environment Information System) Centre in 2005 with the theme “Environment Literacy-Ecolabelling and Eco-friendly Products.” The focus is to provide environmental information to decision makers, policy planners, scientists and engineers, research workers, etc. across the country.