



The Facts About Organic

Organic Farming Myths and Reality

- **Organic Methods.** Organic dairy production is a method of production that has strict guidelines that apply to all aspects of production ranging from what feed can be fed to what medicines can be used. Organic dairy production is governed by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP)
- **Approved for Use.** The NOP rulings are very comprehensive but can be reduced to saying that synthetics such as antibiotics, hormones, and pesticides are prohibited unless listed as approved. Oxytocin is an example of a hormone that is approved for use.
- **Most Dairies are Family Farms.** Just like conventional dairy farms, most organic farms are family farms and range in size from a few cows to thousands of cows.
- **Milk is No Different.** According to the National Dairy Council, there is no difference between organic and regular milk. Both contain the same unique package of nutrients that makes dairy products an important part of a healthy diet. An 8-ounce serving of organic or regular milk offers the same amount of nine essential nutrients, including calcium, vitamin D and potassium.
- **Same Milk Safety.** According to USDA and the American Dietetic Association (ADA) conventionally produced food is equally as safe as organically produced food:
www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/home_4143_ENU_HTML.htm.
- **Cost is Higher by 50%.** Organic milk and dairy products cost more than conventional dairy products due to the strict limits on what technologies can be used in their production. The limitation on technologies lowers productivity in the organic system. This lower productivity is what raises the cost of the product to consumers. According to the National Farm Bureau's *Marketbasket Survey*, organic milk by the half gallon has been running roughly 50% higher than conventional milk.
- **Label Refers to on-farm practices, not the milk.** Label statements on organic milk refer to management practices on the organic dairy, not to the milk itself. For example, organic dairy farmers do not use antibiotics to treat disease. Antibiotics will occasionally be used to treat disease on a conventional dairy. When the conventional dairy does treat a cow with antibiotics the milk from that cow is thrown away until the antibiotics have cleared her system. To be sure the milk was discarded for the appropriate length of time; all milk is tested for antibiotics at the dairy processor before it is packaged. In 2006 one load of milk tested positive for each 2500 loads that were brought in. Those loads that test positive are discarded. As you can see, the antibiotic claim refers to production practices, not the milk itself.
- **All Milk Contains Hormones.** Organic dairy producers also do not use most hormones, and that fact is often on the milk label, but all milk contains hormones and all milk has the same levels of those hormones.



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References:

- 1) USDA Organic Standards: www.ams.usda.gov/nop/Consumers/Consumerhome.html
- 2) USDA General Milk Safety Standards: www.ams.usda.gov/dairy/stand.htm
- 3) American Farm Bureau Website: <http://www.fb.org/index.php?fuseaction=newsroom.newsarchives>
- 4) American Dietetic Association on Organic Foods:
www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/home_4143_ENU_HTML.htm
- 5) Milk Residues, Maturin, NMC 47th proceedings, 2008
- 6) Management of the Organic Dairy, Fry, 2008



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