

The Dirty Dozen and Clean Fifteen

If you are most concerned about pesticides, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) releases each year a list of the 12 produce items most routinely contaminated with the highest quantity of pesticides based on controlled scientific study. Likewise, they publish the “Clean Fifteen,” the fifteen produce items found to have the least pesticide residue. The produce items on these lists don’t change much, though they sometimes change in order. For the most current list, visit EWG’s website.

THE DIRTY DOZEN	
1.	Apples
2.	Celery
3.	Sweet bell peppers
4.	Peaches
5.	Strawberries
6.	Nectarines (imported)
7.	Grapes
8.	Spinach
9.	Lettuce
10.	Cucumbers
11.	Blueberries (domestic)
12.	Potatoes



THE CLEAN FIFTEEN	
1.	Avocados
2.	Sweet corn
3.	Pineapple
4.	Cabbage
5.	Sweet peas (frozen)
6.	Onions
7.	Asparagus
8.	Mangoes
9.	Papaya
10.	Kiwi
11.	Eggplant
12.	Grapefruit
13.	Cantaloupe
14.	Cauliflower
15.	Sweet potatoes

Resources

Environmental Working Group
www.ewg.org

Just Label It (GMOs)
justlabelit.org

The Organic Center
organic-center.org

**United States Department of Agriculture
National Organic Program**
www.usda.gov



StrongerTogether.coop is a consumer website developed by **National Co+op Grocers (NCG)** for our “virtual chain” of over 140 retail food co-ops, operating more than 190 storefronts, nationwide.

StrongerTogether.coop is a place for people to gather on their food journeys. It’s a place to find out more about what’s in your food, where it comes from, where to find great food, how to prepare it and a whole lot more.

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ALL ABOUT

Organic Foods



Provided by your food co-op
www.strongertogether.coop

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Certified Organic.

When it comes to food labels, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Certified Organic seal is the gold standard. The label represents a sustainable, transparent and ecologically sound system of food production that not only produces abundant, nutritious, delicious food but also embodies a much broader set of positive goals for our food system, goals that protect the land and our right to know what is in our food.

When you see the USDA Certified Organic seal on food, you can be sure that its production has been rigorously reviewed by inspectors to ensure strict standards were met. Here are some of the benefits of Certified Organic food.

Organic agriculture is sustainable

Organic production uses sustainable practices that, once established, are long-term solutions to common farming issues like soil fertility and pest control. These practices include:

- **Building healthy soil, naturally.** This is done through composting, green manure cover crops, crop rotation and other time-honored methods. Organic farmers don't use synthetic fertilizers that pollute our water supply.
- **Using biological methods to control pests.** Pest management can be achieved by maintaining native plants as habitats for pollinators and beneficial predatory insects that will prey on common pests.
- **Maintaining humane conditions for livestock.** Plenty of fresh air and space to roam mean animals are healthier and farmers don't need to rely on daily doses of antibiotics to keep them well.



Organic systems are transparent

Today, most food travels many miles and changes hands multiple times before it reaches our plate, making it hard to know how it was produced. Not so for organic. Items that bear the USDA Organic seal have a fully transparent production and delivery record known as an "audit trail" that is annually documented, inspected and evaluated by third-party organic certifying agents. It's their job to ensure organic producers adhere to the organic standards developed and enforced by the U.S. National Organic Program (NOP).

What is more, many countries participate in equivalency programs that harmonize organic certification requirements internationally. This means that for something imported to the United States to be labeled as organic, it must have international documentation that its production adhered to the same standards or better than items bearing the USDA Organic seal. Organic is a global movement that is only increasing in momentum.

Organic is Non-GMO

Genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, are plants or animals created through the process of genetic engineering. GMOs are forbidden by USDA organic standards. Genetic engineering conflicts with the basic philosophy of organic farming, which takes the approach of working with natural biological systems in order to produce healthy food.

Because GMO crops are prevalent in the United States food supply (173 million U.S. acres in 2012), organic farmers must take extra steps to ensure their organic crops are not inadvertently contaminated by GMOs. These efforts are verified by their inspectors each year. Methods used include buying non-GMO seeds from reputable distributors and testing them before planting, timing their planting to prevent cross-pollination with neighboring GMO crops, preserving a "buffer zone" of uncultivated land around the perimeter of the farm and documented cleaning of farm equipment. The USDA conducts periodic residue testing to further verify organic food does not contain prohibited substances, including GMOs.

Making the switch

Organic food is sustainable, transparent to the consumer and good for the environment. Organic certification is an expense that farmers voluntarily take on in order to support their commitment to organic agriculture and consumers' right to know how their food is grown. While prices of some organic foods are higher than similar conventionally produced foods, the gap has narrowed as more and more people discover the many benefits that organic food has to offer.

