



# Organic food diet and why it is important

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Seasonal foods available in the off-season are the manipulation of nature's pattern.

In the recent past, the idea of organic farming is booming, and also the market for the same. It's considered a solution for maintaining sustainable agriculture due to its being less dependent on external factors.

## What are organic foods

Organic foods are products of holistic agricultural practices focusing on bio-diversity, soil health, chemical free inputs etc. with an environmentally and socially responsible approach that have been produced in accordance with organic production standards.

## Interesting facts about organic agriculture in India

- Sikkim has been declared as the India's first fully organic state
- Total area under Organic certification is 5.71 million hectares
- India ranks first in terms of number of Organic producers
- India ranks 9th in area under Organic agriculture
- India exports around 1.35 million MTs of certified organic foods

## Benefits of organic foods

Conventional farming involves GMOs and synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. But, foods labeled organic are grown without the use of most synthetic pesticides or artificial fertilizers. Although such chemicals have been deemed safe, in the quantities used for conventional farming, and pesticides are present in food only at minimal trace levels, their negative impact on health is well documented. Pesticides are chemicals used to kill pests, now imagine them acting on the human body.

Having said that, the common assumption of the term organic is that it's pesticide-free. It's true in some cases but not in all. Organic foods don't involve GMOs. This makes the plants/foods less

resistant to pests and hence requires more pesticides, organic pesticides but pesticides. Organic pesticides are from a natural source and are not processed, but it was found that it also contains some of the same chemical found in non-organic pesticides.

The majority of the consumer's choices towards organic food are made thinking that it doesn't involve any pesticides, but it does! So the choice of organic should be made with complete and correct knowledge. The key to avoiding possible pesticides in organic food is to go local.

Another reason to go organic is Organic meat. Organic meat means no antibiotics or synthetic hormones. Whereas, Conventional livestock can be fed antibiotics to protect against animal illness, making it easier for farmers to raise animals in crowded or unsanitary conditions.

Conventionally raised animals can also be injected with synthetic growth /sex hormones, so they'll gain weight faster, or the product is more (E.g.: Milk). These hormones are thermo-stable, and it's identified that traces of these substances can make their way to consumers. These drug residues are believed to contribute to widespread antibiotic resistance, on-set of early puberty, growth of tumors, heightened cancer risk, risk of autoimmune conditions, and genetic problems. Organic foods (esp. meat), which are produced without antibiotics, are intrinsically safer in this respect.

Though it's comparatively a better choice than conventional foods, false claims have misguided consumers on its nutritional nature. Over the years, research has not found a major difference in the nutritional quality of organic food vs conventional food. However, in some studies, it is also identified that organic foods have higher antioxidants, high levels of vitamins, minerals, and lower saturated fat [(milk) compared to their conventional counterparts.

Choosing organic helps preserve our ecosystems, as its farming in harmony with nature the preservation of soil crops and rotations are extremely important, and chemical abstinence helps to preserve the ecosystem. It helps with wildlife; insects, birds, and soil organisms, which cannot function with conventional farming practices. Increasing organic farming reduces soil and water pollution and its contamination.

## Standards for Organic Foods in India

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has the mandate to regulate manufacture, distribute, sell or import "organic foods" as per the provisions laid under Section 22 of the Food Safety Standards Act, 2006. Organic foods are regulated by [Food Safety and Standards \(Organic Foods\) Regulations, 2017](#) .

The Regulations aim to benefit farmers by way of increasing their income. These Regulations recognizes two systems of certification i.e. Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) implemented by [Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare](#) and National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) implemented by [Ministry of Commerce and Industry](#). These regulations ensure integrity of the Organic Food products, and help in controlling unscrupulous practices in the market.

These regulations came into force from the date of their publication in Gazette, however the enforcement against these standards started from 01.07.2018.

The Offences and Penalties for the Food Business Operators who are not complying with the FSS

Act, Rules and Regulations are liable for offences and penalties provided under Section 48 and 49 of the FSS Act.

### What is behind an organic label?

An organic label indicates that a product has been certified against specific organic standards. The label carries the name of the certification body and the standards with which it complies. In India, the FSSAI's Organic branding is 'Jaivik Bharat'.

To the informed consumer, this label can function as a guide. Certification bodies evaluate operations according to different organic standards and can be formally recognized by more than one authoritative body. The label of a given certification body, therefore, informs the consumer on the type of standards complied with during production and processing as well as on the type of recognition granted to the certification body. Many certification bodies operate worldwide, most of which are private and originate in developed countries.

### Conclusion

As the market is full of options between organic and conventional foods, it's possible for consumers to get confused often. If buying and eating healthy, sustainable food is a primary concern; local organic foods are the solution; this allows a sustainable future for many generations to come. While health is the primary concern, the budget comes in the way, choosing local organic staples helps to reduce the chemical load on your daily plate.

Apart from avoiding a cocktail of chemicals and its other known benefits, going organically local is a healthier lifestyle, and it supports local farmers.

### Related resources

1. [Maximum Residual Limits \(MRLs\) of Insecticides in Organic Foods](#) 

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