

Live an organic life

Another way to love yourself and the environment.

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Edited by Melissa Ko

Nowadays, ~~more people take care of their health not only at eating, but also products used in daily lives.~~ people has paid more attention not only to their diets but also the daily care products; therefore they tend to use more organic products to reduce the chemical ingested. But there are a wide range of organic products available in the local market, how can consumers know what they pay for and which one is effective?

Chen Sau-wan, the shop owner of Natural Infinity which sells various types of organic products such as body care and household products, has been selling them for seven years.

Chen remembered at first that she bought organic products for her daughter to provide better care.

She firstly sold baby care and skincare products, but herself kept using non-organic skincare products, however later the skin allergy broke out.

“At that time, I have tried different products from famous brands, however the outcomes were the same – my skin was searing and started to peel off, organic skincare eventually effected a radical care on me that the situation is much better than before. This made me trust organic products so much,” said Chen.

Also, Chen saw the impact of organic products on her customers, which ~~make~~ boosts her ~~have more~~ confidence in those goods. Since then, she kept doing research and analysed different kinds of organic products, which ~~lead her to have her own shop~~ evoked her idea of opening an organic store.

Chen thinks that people ~~nowadays have more health problems, so they~~ commonly tend to use organic products which are less irritating than medicine if they get sick. Chen herself has several rules in choosing appropriate organic products since Hong Kong does not have such regulation specifically regulating organic ~~products~~ labels or standards.

Chen would scrutinize the ingredients when she purchases products according to her own Chemistry knowledge learnt from secondary school. Also she would choose products with foreign official labels, such as products with the 'organic' label from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

According to USDA, “organic” can be used to label product that contains a minimum of 95% organic ingredients, while the others may be non-organic agricultural products or

non-agricultural products that are on the National List.1, the list that identifies the artificial substances that may be used and the natural substances that may not be used for organic products production.

Chen also provide another scheme from The Environmental Working Group(EWG), which is an authoritative organization in the USA have tested over 60,000 products' ingredients on their potential hazards and health concerns.

Its website analyse products by rating their ingredient hazard score from one to 10, products rated seven to 10 is categorize are categorized as high hazardous.

"Products rated as one to two is are less hazardous and products with USDA label are mostly in this category," added by Chen.

When it comes to "natural" and "organic", people easily get confused about these two terms. Chen has also explained the differences between natural and organic, natural products emphasize the products originating from the natural environment, but whereas organic products also concern on emphasize the former and the producing process, such as smaller amount of chemical fertilizers.

According to Chen, the nutrition value or effects of organic products is can be similar with the non-organic products, but the non-organic one later may also contains excessive chemicals like hormone or accelerator that are harmful to our body bodies.

However, Chen agrees that organic products are more expensive compared with those non-organics, saying explaining that the growing process of ingredients need extra care in order to replace the use of chemicals and manufacturers also need to pay for the organic labels, so the cost will be higher and then transferred to the price.

With the help of the Internet, Chen thinks more people want to buy organic products because they can search for information in more ways to pick the suitable product they want. Her shop also provides purchasing agent service to help consumer buying overseas, "they find me to buy different kinds of organic products from their own research," said Chen.

~~[19] Chen also thinks that people nowadays have more health problems, so they tend to use organic products which are less irritating than medicine.~~

William Sze, a 33-year-old father who buys organic milk powder for his baby for around six months said he chose the organic one purely because of others' opinion recommendations.

"I can't make comparison between the effects of organic and non-organic milk powder on babies, but the organic one really contain less sugar," he added.

~~[22] Chen also explained that the effects of organic products may might not be immediately, "like when we are getting older, we tend to blame our hair loss to age, but it may be caused by chemical is shampoo."~~

On the other hand, people have different thoughts on organic products.

Emily Yeung, a 34-year-old customer of Chen who ~~is also saved by organic skincare products too~~ has been using organic skincare products for around two years, now rarely has serious skin trouble said, "medicine can provide instant effects but steroid made my skin thinner, organic products can really calm my skin down and solve the problem." Now she has even spread the word and referred organic products to friends.

~~[25] She has been using organic skincare products for around two years, now rarely has serious skin trouble and has introduced friends to try organic products too.~~

Yiu Ka-lam, a 19-years-old university student, said the price is not the reason to affect her in buying organic products if she knows they can really help her. She is currently using organic shampoo which makes her hair stronger and healthier than before.

Insufficient promotion and education are main reasons that organic products cannot be commonly used in the society, said Yiu. She continued, most products in supermarkets and chain stores are not organic, people would not be aware of their purchase of chemical products so not many of them would think of buying organic products for their daily lives. And "it seems like everyone is using non-organic products, thus the harm of chemicals to both our body and environment is underestimated."

"We are always told to be environmental friendly by using less or recycling, but seldom talks about the products we use can also make great changes to the environment, for example, chemical shampoo which actually contains microplastics can harm the ocean," explained by Yiu.

She suggested that more exhibitions about organic non-food products for public can help to make them become determined to live organically.

On the other hand, Tsang Ling Yan, who is also a 19-year-old university student, doubted the ~~effects~~ effectiveness of organic products. "I have tried handmade organic insect repellent and organic shampoo purchased by my mother, but I don't find they are so effective and worth paying," said Tsang.

Chen ~~also~~ explained that the effects of organic products ~~may~~ might not be immediately, "like when we are getting older, we tend to blame our hair loss to age, but it may be caused by chemical is shampoo."

“The happiest thing is to see my customers ~~are~~ who benefited from the products I chose for them, they can really get out from their hardship and then share to more people,” said Chen, ~~who believes in organic products.~~

Comment from Melissa:

I appreciate your efforts and your hard work, especially when you searched for potential interviewees. Being rejected is normal when we’re still student journalists; but keep in mind that no interviewees will come to you actively if you want to do a good story.

The story topic of organic products is commonly discussed among the public and some news reports also covered that before, but about farming mainly.

The story can be more in-depth I believe, for example, if you focus on the organic daily care products, you can try to find some sources about skin test, the case of “before and after” using organic products (any big difference to show the value of organic products if it is said that organic products are generally good).

As I suggested you before, you could try to make a small comparison with the big companies such as Melvita which not only sells organic skin beauty products but also shampoo something. What are the difference between those “big or well-known” stores and Chen’s stores? They both sell organic products (they claimed). You could also interview the customers of those big companies and see the effectiveness of organic products.