

## HOW CAN I BUY ORGANIC FOOD LOCALLY?

- Find family farms and farmers' markets in your area.  
[www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)
- Look for local producers of sustainably-raised meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs.  
[www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org)
- Join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program at a local farm. As a CSA member, you'll purchase seasonal foods and support your local economy.  
[www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/csastate.htm](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/csastate.htm)

## WHAT CAN I DO?




- Become an educated food consumer. Learn about the fruits and vegetables that have the most pesticide contamination and choose wisely when shopping.  
[www.foodnews.org/reportcard.php](http://www.foodnews.org/reportcard.php)
- Eat locally and seasonally. The typical dinner now travels at least 1,500 miles from farm to table. Choose foods that are grown close to home and in season, thereby minimizing or eliminating the need for food processing, refrigeration, and transportation.  
[www.sustainabletable.org/shop/eatseasonal/](http://www.sustainabletable.org/shop/eatseasonal/)
- Plant a food garden. Start a food garden in your backyard, on your balcony, in your neighborhood, or at a local school. Learn about sustainable gardening practices and relish in the fruits of your labor.  
[www.journeytoforever.org/garden\\_sqft.html](http://www.journeytoforever.org/garden_sqft.html)

Teleosis would like to thank the Organic Trade Association ([www.ota.com](http://www.ota.com)), California Certified Organic Farmers ([www.ccof.org](http://www.ccof.org)), and Sustainable Table ([www.sustainabletable.org](http://www.sustainabletable.org)) for much of this information, and for promoting organic and sustainable food systems.



## ABOUT THE TELEOSIS INSTITUTE

The Teleosis Institute is devoted to effective, sustainable health care provided by professionals who serve as environmental stewards. The Institute has three major goals:

-  To educate health professionals about the principles and practices of Ecologically Sustainable Medicine
-  To build a community-based network for professionals providing Green Health Care
-  To provide access to high-quality, cost-effective, sustainable medical services benefiting underserved populations and the environment in which we live

*A not-for-profit organization, the Teleosis Institute was founded by Dr. Joel Kreisberg, DC, CCH, a health care practitioner and environmental educator. The Institute is based in Berkeley, California.*



TELEOSIS

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# ORGANIC FOOD AND GLOBAL HEALTH

*When you buy and eat organic, you improve your health and help create a safe, healthy, and sustainable food system.*



TELEOSIS



## WHAT IS ORGANIC FOOD?

By its simplest definition, organic food is food that is farmed without synthetic chemicals. Organic food in the United States is grown and certified according to specific USDA standards. These standards require that organic food be produced without the use of: most conventional pesticides, synthetic or sewage based fertilizers, bioengineering (genetically modified organisms), or ionizing radiation. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones and that eat 100% organic feed.

## WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE?

The term “sustainable,” while related to the term “organic,” refers to a broader philosophy or approach rather than a strict set of standards. Sustainable agriculture is healthy for consumers, workers, animals, and the environment, often provides a fair wage to farmers, and supports local economies.

## WHY EAT ORGANIC?

Organic food is related to the environment, health, and social justice. When you buy and eat organic, you improve your health and help create a safe, healthy, just, and sustainable food system.

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH CHEMICAL FERTILIZERS?

- Many chemical fertilizers contain toxic metals that are harmful to humans and animals.
- As a result of commercial agricultural practices, U.S. coastal ecosystems receive 100% to 400% more nitrogen than they would naturally experience otherwise. Water that is high in nitrate, a naturally occurring form of nitrogen, can be threatening to human health.
- Large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus from synthetic chemical fertilizers leach into streams, rivers, and lakes. This stimulates excessive growth of algae and plants, which robs water of dissolved oxygen and kills off other aquatic animals.

By eliminating synthetic chemical fertilizers, organic farming helps reduce ground and surface water contamination and helps to safeguard drinking water supplies.

## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF ANTIBIOTIC USE IN AGRICULTURE?

- Public health authorities now link antibiotic use in conventionally-raised livestock to increasing numbers of people with infections that are resistant to antibiotic treatment.
- Farm animals in the U.S. receive 24.6 million pounds of antibiotics a year, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists.
- Water samples from the Ohio River and two of its tributaries contained trace amounts of commonly prescribed antibiotics: penicillin, tetracycline, and vancomycin. These were also present in area tap water.

The widespread use of antibiotics has led to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which pose a serious threat to the treatment of disease in humans. The use of antibiotics, hormones, and other drugs are eliminated in organically-raised animal products.

## WHY IS FOOD A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE?

The conventional system of food production relies heavily on synthetic chemicals and contributes to numerous health problems, including cancer, asthma, antibiotic resistance, and nutrition-related chronic disease. The wide range of social justice issues implicated in our current food system include farm workers’ rights, animal rights, health equity, environmental justice, and food security.

## WHY DOES ORGANIC FOOD SOMETIMES COST MORE?

Organic farms tend to be on a smaller scale than conventional farms and often rely more on labor-intensive practices than chemically-intensive ones. Organic foods must also meet much stricter regulations governing all stages of production, which is more management-intensive.

There is mounting evidence that if all the indirect costs of non-organic food production—e.g. clean-up of polluted water, rebuilding of eroded topsoil, and cost of health care for farm workers—were factored into the price of food, organic food would likely cost the same or less than non-organic food.

