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**Organic foods: Worth the Cost?**

Have you ever stopped to think what is in your food? There are many things, like chemicals and unnatural ingredients that are hiding in conventional foods that you may not be aware of.  It is important for consumers to be informed of the options there are for buying produce. Organic foods have become more available in stores recently, because people have been noticing that some things that conventional foods contain are not good for the body. Organic produce are foods that are grown without pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or ionizing radiation, animals that produce meat, poultry, eggs and dairy are not fed antibiotics or growth hormones (“Organic FAQ”). The USDA, United States Department of Agriculture, has a National Organic Program that labels organic foods. Before a product can be labeled “organic” a Government approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules that are necessary to meet the USDA organic standards. One disadvantage of organic produce is that it costs more than conventional produce. People should be aware that organic produce is better for them and pay the extra price. Organic foods are worth the extra money.

Before any consumer chooses to buy organic or not they should first be informed on how they are different from conventional produce. The two types of farming apply different techniques to grow their crops. Organic farmers use natural fertilizers to feed their soil and plants, like compost or manure; whereas conventional farmers apply chemical fertilizers to promote plant growth (Mayo Clinic). Conventional farms use synthetic insecticides to reduce pests and disease; on the contrary, organic farms spray natural-source pesticides that use beneficial insects or birds mating disruption or traps to prevent unhealthiness (Mayo Clinic). On managing weeds, the different types of farming differ too. Organic farmers use environmentally-formulated plant-killing compounds, rotate crops, hand weed or mulch to remove weeds. On the opposite side, Conventional farmers use synthetic herbicides. For animal growth and development Conventional animals are given antibiotics, growth-hormones and medications to prevent disease and make growth faster (Mayo Clinic); which can leave residues on the food you consume. Organic animals are fed organic foods and live in the outdoors, to help minimize disease, farmers keeps them in a clean environment and they keep a balanced diet. Organic foods are worth the additional price because of the extra health benefits that they have. Would you compromise your health just because you need to pay a few pennies more? People should try to pay a little bit more because conventional foods are affecting their health.

Organic foods retail at a higher price than conventional foods, there are many reasons for why this happens and it is important for consumers to be aware of these. Some of the reasons why organics cost more are that organic farmers do not receive federal subsidies like conventional farmers do; therefore, organic farming reflects the true cost of growing. Also, conventional foods do not pay the cost of environmental cleanups that organics pay for through their tax dollars this reflects on the cost of the food as well. Organic farmers, since they don’t use growth-hormones or synthetic weed killers, their practices require more labor and management because they have to take out the weeds manually and their animals take more time to grow which ultimately means less production. Organic farms are also a lot smaller than conventional food farms so they don’t benefit from the economies of scale that larger growers get (Zelman). Consumers should also be aware that as the demand for organic produce grows, the cost will continue to decrease. So it is important to be informed of what conventional produce contains that is affecting their health and make the choice of going Organic.

It is reasonable that some people may not be able to buy organic foods because of economic reasons. Experts say that there are some conventional foods that don’t contain as much pesticides and chemical residues as other do. Consequently, some foods are worth more the extra money. Some of the foods experts say are “worth the extra buck” are: Peaches, apples, celery, strawberries, cherries, pears, imported grapes, spinach, lettuce, potatoes. Because said foods in conventional form, are foods that contain more chemical residues and are rigorous to your health. Foods that are not so crucial to be organic, because they don’t contain as much pesticide residue are: papayas, broccoli, cabbage, bananas, kiwifruit, frozen sweet peas, asparagus, mangoes, pineapple, frozen sweet corn, avocadoes and onions (Zelman). “These are mostly ‘not worth it’ because they have peels and leaves that you can easily remove” (Zelman); but still, they can contain growth hormones or can be genetically modified. Also, when not buying organic, it is recommended that you buy locally-grown foods from your farmers market because they don’t contain the chemicals that transported foods do to remain fresh. To prevent from ingesting chemicals and residues when not buying organic, it is suggested that you first wash and scrub the vegetables to remove dirt that may have residues. Also, remove the peel in fruits and vegetables or the first leaves of leafy vegetables because those parts are the most common to contain pesticides and herbicides residues. Additionally, when eating meats and poultry remove the fat part because pesticides residues tend to collect in fat (Zelman). Even if you are not buying organic foods it is important to take these precautionary steps in order to have a clean and healthy meal.

The main reasons why people change to organic are important to know, so others can be influenced and choose organic too. The first and most important ones are pesticides. Conventional foods carry many pesticides residues and people buy organic because organic contains noticeably less residue. Another good reason are additives or processing aids that are banned completely from organic foods. These additives could be fortifying agents like preservatives, colorings, artificial sweeteners or flavorings and monosodium glutamate. They can even have nutritious advantages, Matt Bean the senior editor of Health Magazine says: “Studies show that organic foods may have increased levels of nutrients like antioxidants than conventionally grown foods” (CBS News). Another can be environmental; many practices that conventional farmers do are harmful to the environment and not healthy for the soil or water. Organic farming benefits the environment because it reduces pollution and it conserves water and soil quality (Mayo Clinic).

Consumers shouldn’t compromise their health because unhealthy food is just cheaper. On an article featured on CBS News they said, “Making organics a part of your diet can have a big impact on your health and that of your family” (CBS News). Many people consume large amounts of pesticides and chemical residues every single day and this is something that could be stopped by purchasing organic produce instead of conventional. Buying organic produce means stopping the ingesting of pesticides, growth hormones, food additives and any other chemical residue that’s affecting your health.

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