Top twelve Reasons to go Organic

1. **Organic Is the Only Alternative Delivering Meaningful Health Results.**
   It is hard to miss the problems arising in the wake of the conventional food system—toxic exposures, birth defects, learning disabilities, obesity, water pollution, unacceptable suffering by farm animals, to name a few. While dozens of labels promise undefined and unverified benefits, the certified organic label stands apart in delivering what people need—nutritious food, grown using methods that minimize the use of toxins while building soil quality and protecting water quality. A growing, dynamic organic food sector will stimulate valuable changes benefiting all of agriculture, as well as everyone dependent on the American farmer for three square meals a day.

2. **Reduce Your Exposure to Harmful Synthetic Pesticides.**
   On average, conventional farmers apply 2-12+ synthetic pesticides to their crops. The average serving of conventionally grown leafy greens, peppers, tree fruits, berries, and grapes contains three to four pesticide residues. Residues of some widely used pesticides may trigger subtle changes in a child’s development, and have been linked to a wide range of health problems including ADHD, autism, obesity, and certain forms of cancer.

3. **Boost the Nutritional Quality of Your Food.**
   Organic crops are grown in healthy, biologically active soils. While crops on organic farms tend to yield somewhat less per acre and often take longer to grow than crops on conventional farms, plants nurtured by soil on organic farms produce crops that often contain higher levels of important antioxidants, minerals, and vitamins.

4. **Steer Clear of Unknown Genetically Engineered Food Risks.**
   Most of today’s genetically engineered (GE) foods were approved over 15 years ago during a period when the government was aggressively promoting biotechnology. The prevailing “wisdom” was that GE foods were “substantially equivalent” to conventional foods. We have since learned that even small differences in the genetic makeup of food can lead to unexpected human health risks. Because organic farmers are not allowed to plant GE seeds, nor use GE crop inputs, choosing organic is the only sure way to avoid GE food risks.

5. **Decrease your Intake of Unnecessary Hormones and Antibiotics.**
   Most conventional livestock farmers use a combination of growth hormones, drugs, feed supplements, and high-grain diets to push their animals to grow faster, get bigger, and produce more milk and eggs per day. In fact, animals on conventional farms are often pushed so hard that they experience serious reproductive and/or other health problems leading to heavy antibiotic use. The National Organic Program (NOP) rule prohibits the use of virtually all synthetic animal drugs. At the end of the day, healthy animals produce healthier meat, milk and dairy products, and eggs.

6. **Give Farm Animals a Healthy Measure of Respect.**
   A significant share of the livestock raised on conventional farms live in crowded, stressful conditions that erode animal health, increase drug dependency, and take away any chance of carrying out natural behaviors. However, the National Organic Program (NOP) rule, states that organically raised animals must have access to the outdoors, including pasture, and ample space to behave naturally.
WHAT IS ORGANIC?

Organic food production methods promote biodiversity, the biological cycling of nutrients, and plant and animal health. Certified organic farmers may not use toxic synthetic pesticides, artificial fertilizers, and unnecessary hormones or antibiotics. Instead, they use practices that restore, maintain, and enhance soil and ecosystem health. GMOs, artificial ingredients, or trans fats may not be used.

Today 50% of all food eaten worldwide comes from four plant species and three animal species. A handful of multi-national corporations own and control over 50% of the world’s seed market. Small organic farms often preserve heirloom and rare seed varieties for future generations to enjoy. There are more than 10,900 certified organic farms and ranches in the U.S. and more than 4 million organic acres.’

Rainfall landing on a field of crops will carry a certain amount of soil, nutrients, and chemicals downstream or into underground aquifers. The more chemicals applied per acre, the greater the challenge in preserving water quality. The Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico is the most graphic example of the enormous harm caused when farm chemicals flowing off of millions of acres congregate in the mighty Mississippi.

9. Promote Biodiversity and Beauty in Rural Landscapes.
Organic farmers not only encourage biodiversity, they depend on it – both above and below the ground. Experienced organic farmers have learned over many decades that combining multiple crops with livestock and other animals is the best way to promote soil health and fully utilize the rainfall and sunlight that falls on an acre in any given year.

10. Maintain Healthy Soil.
Healthy soil is the bedrock of all successful organic farms. Hundreds of studies conducted over the last 50 years have compared soil quality on organic versus nearby conventional farms and virtually everyone has concluded that organic management practices, including crop rotation, substantially enhance soil quality, restore nitrogen and organic components, and sequester carbon to help fight global warming.

Studies suggest that organic fruits and vegetables more often than not have higher levels of flavor-enhancing nutrients, coupled with lower concentrations of water and sugars. The end result—typically more intense and complex flavors. Plus, no artificial food colors or preservatives are added to any organic foods.

Farming is second only to mining on the list of the most hazardous occupations. Unless great care is exercised, exposures to toxic pesticides, caustic fertilizers, and other chemicals will pose risks for many people working on or living near farms. Organic farmers simply do not use high-risk chemical materials and so workers, and rural neighbors, have one less health risk to worry about.

For more information and sources visit www.GenerationsofOrganic.org and www.ota.com/industrysurvey.html

* 2010 Organic Industry Survey