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Is Organic Food Really Superior to Conventional Food


Is organic food really superior to conventional food—what do you mean it is not?
by *Art Drysdale*


by **Art Drysdale**

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Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has renovated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over two radio stations: Easy 101 FM out of Tillsonburg at 2 PM weekdays and CD98.9 FM out of Norfolk County at 11:40 AM weekdays.

Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>








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September 25, 2011

Organic food vs. undesignated food (basically non-organic) is this week's topic. It is something that has been on my personal radar for decades.

Now, I have nothing against choosing organic food, but personally, I never purchase anything organic if it is more expensive than the alternative.

In the 1980s I had considerable experience over a period of many years dealing with organic farmers not just of vegetables and fruits but also cattlemen who specialized in growing non-chemical-treated beef. The latter is quite a commitment for farmers who must make significant changes to their operations, over a period of years before being able to offer "organic beef." This involvement became a major part of the CFRB Art Drysdale Farm Programme and not only did I interview farmers themselves, as well as academics at various universities, I also made visits to a number of farms and institutions where research was being carried out on different forms of organic food products.

At that time, one of the big negatives to organic foods was the almost total lack of verification that a product labelled "organic" was in fact all-organic. Some people now will tell you that has all changed and that the pro-programmes in place to verify "organic statements" are all proven officially. Others, including me, still question some of the organic statements. I have personally seen pesticides being applied to a field that the next year bore crops labelled as "organic." And, I believe that still goes on!

And so I was not surprised to learn of an item in the Daily Gleaner out of Fredericton, New Brunswick, ostensibly written by K. Jean Cottam (who many say is a real person, but that there are many ghost writers authoring under that name). I have long stopped answering her many e-mails which are nothing more than harangues by a non-

Lacking photos of organic food (!), I decided to include a few shots from our garden currently: Above, two views of our Cardinal Climber (Ipomoea sloteri) and below, two of our relatively newly acquired Hibiscus rosasinensis which has huge blooms as you can see from the silver pen in the second picture; and finally, also a new acquisition, Hydrangea paniculata Pinky Winky. Author photos



expert anti-pesticide activist.

Some long time ago anti-pesticide activists, like K. Jean Cottam, concocted the theory that eventually it should be possible to prohibit the use of pest control products in the agriculture industry.

These non-expert activists have also alleged that organic pesticide-free food was somehow a safer alternative to conventional food.

On July 29th, 2009, a review from U.K.-based Food Standards Agency confirmed that this allegation about or-ganic food is bogus. The focus of the review was the nutritional content of food-stuffs.

This review was peer-reviewed and published by the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. The review con-firmed that there were no important differences in the nutrition content, or any additional health benefits, of or-ganic food when compared with conventionally-produced food.

The review, which took the form of a "systematic review of literature", was carried out by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and was commissioned by the Food Standards Agency.

LSHTM's team of researchers, led by Dr. Alan Dangour, reviewed all papers published over the past fifty years that related to the nutrient content and health differences between organic and conventional food. This system-atic review was the most comprehensive study in this area that has been carried out to date.

The Food Standards Agency commissioned this research as part of its commitment to giving consumers accurate information about their food, based on the most up-to-date science. The research was split into two separate parts, one of which looked at differences in nutrient levels and their significance, while the other looked at the health benefits of eating organic food.

According to Dr. Dangour, "a small number of differences in nutrient content were found to exist between or-ganically and conventionally produced crops and livestock, but these are unlikely to be of any public health relevance.

"Our review indicates that there is currently no evidence to support the selection of organically over conven-tionally produced foods on the basis of nutritional superiority."

According to Gill Fine, director of consumer choice and dietary health at the Food Standards Agency "ensuring people have accurate information is absolutely essential in allowing us all to make informed choices about the food we eat.

"This study does not mean that people should not eat organic food. What it shows is that there is little, if any, nutritional difference between organic and conventionally produced food, and that there is no evidence of addi-tional health benefits from eating organic food.

"The agency supports consumer choice and is neither pro nor anti organic food.

"We recognise that there are many reasons why people choose to eat organic, such as animal welfare or envi-ronmental concerns. The agency will continue to give consumers accurate information about their food based on the best available scientific evidence."

Allegations by anti-pesticide activists that organic food will someday replace conventional food are ludicrous.

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Even more ludicrous is the expectation that pest control products will someday and somehow no longer be necessary for agriculture.

Unfortunately, once anti-pesticide activists have completed their destruction of the professional lawn care industry, they will terrorize and destroy the agriculture industry next!

The destruction of these industries is, or will be, the result of the carnage caused by the prohibition of conventional pest control products.

Any prohibition of pest control products is not justified because strict regulations based on scientific research already protect our health and our environment.

Incredibly, some jurisdictions arbitrarily prohibit pest control products that are, in fact, ...

- Health Canada-approved,
- Federally-legal,
- Scientifically-safe, and
- Practically-non-toxic.

Scientifically safe according to leading authorities: there are leading authorities that support or validate the concept that pest control products are scientifically-safe.

These authorities are educational, regulatory, research, scientific, and trade agencies that are considered as many or all of the following ...

- Experts
- Highly-rated
- Independent
- Leaders
- Non-profit
- Respected and
- World-renowned.

They have publicly stated that, or have validated the concept that, in one form or another, pest control products are scientifically-safe. These agencies are not unduly influenced by any stakeholder in those industries manufacturing and using pest control products.

The following educational, regulatory, research, scientific, and trade agencies have supported or validated the concept that pest control products are scientifically-safe:

American Chemical Society, American Council for Science and Health, American Cancer Society, CropLife Canada, Health Canada, International Agency for Research on Cancer, The Fraser Institute, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the World Health Organization.

Again, it is your choice, but do keep these facts in mind when doing your grocery shopping, and if the price is higher for "organic-produced", definitely consider conventionally produced foodstuffs.

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