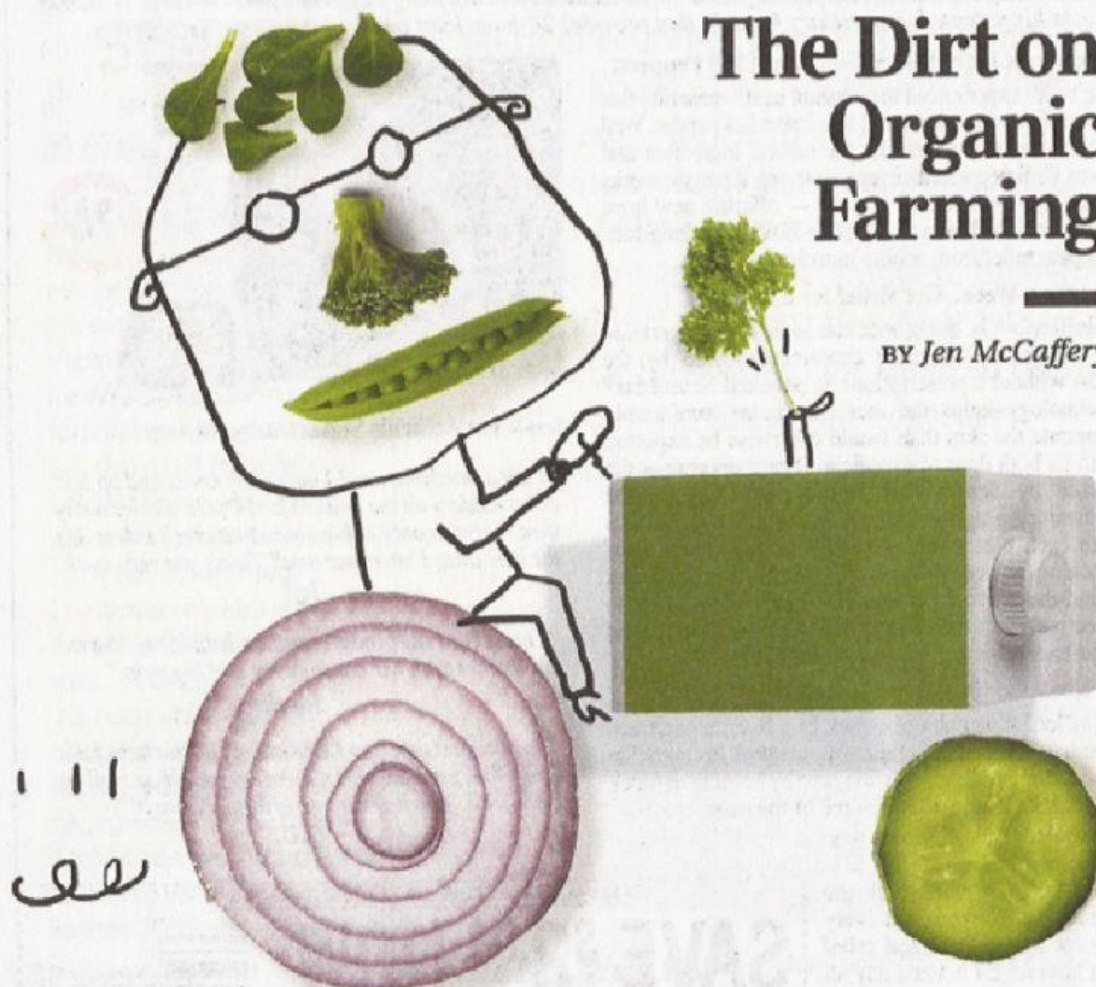


Read the text, then drag and drop the extracts taken from the text.

## 13 THINGS

# The Dirt on Organic Farming

BY Jen McCaffery



**1** PEOPLE ASSUME that organic products come from small family farms, but many of the foods labeled organic in supermarkets are actually produced by large corporations. For example, Conagra owns Alexia; a private-equity company

owns Bolthouse Farms; and organic produce grower Earthbound Farm is itself a giant, earning nearly half a billion dollars in 2018. Big or small, a farm must follow the same rules to be certified organic: fertilizing soil with natural ingredients

such as compost and manure, planting with organic seeds, rotating crops to prevent soil erosion and disease, and allowing animals to graze.

2

organic farm. "There are about 25 chemicals that have been approved for use," says Jessica Shade, PhD, director of science programs at the Organic Center in Washington, DC. "But before organic farmers can even use those 25, they have to prove that they have used every other method possible for controlling their pests and weeds."

3

but their cows do sometimes get sick. "You do have to give your cows medicine if they need it," Shade says. Also allowed: aspirin. (Cows get swollen joints too.)

4 WHILE IT may seem that there are all-natural farms everywhere these days, less than 1 percent of the 911 million acres of farmland in the United States are certified organic, according to the Pew Research Center. The most organic state: Vermont, where 11 percent of farms have the USDA designation.

5 NEARLY HALF of organic farmers are women, even though women make up only 29 percent of all American farmers, according to the USDA. Organic farmers are also younger (average age: 52) than farmers overall (58), according to *Modern Farmer*.

6 THERE WAS NO need for "certified organic" before the mid-20th century—because organic was the only way to farm. But in the 1940s, after World War II, nitrate factories that had been making bombs switched to

producing synthetic fertilizers. Ironically, the era of mass-scale chemical fertilizer and pesticide use is commonly referred to as the Green Revolution because of the dramatic increase in crop yields worldwide. For instance, the yield of rice in India increased by 164 percent from the 1950s to the 1990s.


7 WE KNOW it's good for our health, but eating organic can put a strain on the budget. According to the USDA, organic produce carries a premium of 10 to 30 percent. Fortunately, a study has shown that the risk of ingesting pesticides is relatively low with certain foods, primarily because their thicker skins or outer coverings protect us. At the top of the Environmental Working Group's "Clean 15" list: avocados and sweet corn, with less than 1 percent of the samples showing any pesticide residue.

ORGANIC FARMERS aren't supposed to use antibiotics,

USING PESTICIDES isn't completely forbidden on an



**8** THE BIGGEST organic retailer in the country isn't Whole Foods—it's Costco, which sold about \$4 billion in organic products in 2017, compared with \$3.6 billion at Whole Foods.

**9**  milk, eggs, chicken, apples, lettuce, strawberries, grapes, tomatoes, and corn, according to the Pew Research Center. (See No. 7 above for why organic corn might not be worth the cost.)

**10** DO YOU know which residents of organic farms aren't all that environmentally friendly? The cows. They burp

and fart up to twice as much methane as conventionally reared cattle. Methane is 20 times more powerful a greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub>.

**11**  organic if it isn't. The government will fine you as much as \$17,952 for each time you falsely sell or label a product as organic. The USDA has a list of people fined for "fraudulent certificates" on its website.

**12** PERHAPS THE most famous organic farmer in the United States today is Joel Salatin. He is the author of books such as *The Marvelous*

*Pigness of Pigs* and has appeared in documentaries such as *Food, Inc.* The Virginia-based Salatin also enjoys a burgeoning friendship with Prince Charles. The fellow farmer and future king has invited Salatin to his residence in Dumfries, Scotland.

**13** ORGANIC FARMING isn't just about feeding you. According to Statista, pet owners will spend \$6.8 billion on organic food for their dogs and cats this year, more than double than a decade ago. But beware, animal lovers: Foods marked "natural" do not carry the same requirement as those that are certified organic. 

THE TOP-SELLING organic products, in order: cow's

DON'T EVEN think of saying your farm is