

Reading Exercise: Organic Foods

Organic food is very popular these days. It can also be very expensive. Some organic food costs twice as much as non-organic food. Parents of young children, and even some pet owners, will pay high prices for organic food if they think it's healthier. But many others think organic food is just a waste of money.

There is one main difference between organic and non-organic food. Organic farms do not use agricultural chemicals such as pesticides that stop insects from damaging crops. In many countries foods that claim to be organic must have special labels that guarantee they're grown organically.

Some people think organic also means "locally grown", and originally this was true. But over time organic farming has become big business, with many organic foods now being grown by large agricultural companies that sell their products far from where they're grown. Processed food made with organic ingredients has also become more popular. At first, only small companies produced these products. But as demand overtook supply, big food companies that had been selling non-organic products for many years also began selling organic products. Small organic food companies found it difficult to compete with these big companies, and many didn't stay in business much longer.

Is organic food safer and more nutritious? This is an important part of the debate. Many farmers and consumers believe it is. They think agricultural chemicals can cause serious illnesses like cancer, but there isn't much evidence proving this is true. However recent studies have shown that eating organically-grown produce reduces your chances of developing heart disease. Many doctors think it's more important to stop dangerous bacteria from contaminating foods. These bacteria can contaminate both organic and non-organic fruit and vegetables, and doctors recommend washing produce carefully before eating it. Meat, fish and chicken can also become contaminated, so washing your hands before handling these foods is also very important. Many doctors also believe we should reduce the amount of sugar in our diets, and there is a lot of evidence to support this idea. They recommend carefully checking the list of ingredients on processed food and drinks for all the words that really mean sugar, like glucose, sucrose and fructose. And they remind us that the aim of most big food companies is to make lots of money, even if they damage our health while doing so. This means processed foods that are called "organic" can also be very unhealthy if they contain lots of sugar.

Most people agree that naturally grown food tastes better. Is tastier food worth the extra money? That's a matter of opinion. Whether organic food is healthier or not is still not clear, so more research is needed. However, consumers of organic food often say "better safe than sorry" when it comes to what we eat.

1. What is the main difference between organic and non-organic food?

use of pesticides

size of the company

location of the farm

2. Which is usually more expensive?

pet food

organic food

non-organic food

3. Many small organic food companies found it difficult to _____ .

waste money

stay in business

find cheap pesticides

4. Recent studies show that eating organic produce can _____ your chances of having heart disease.

develop

increase

reduce

5. Dangerous bacteria can contaminate

organic food only

non-organic food only

organic and non-organic food

6. All processed foods should have a label listing the product's
ingredients
pesticides
organics

7. Many doctors now believe eating too much _____ food is bad for our health.
fresh
sweet
organic

8. Processed organic foods can also be unhealthy if they contain lots of
nutritious ingredients
organic produce
glucose

9. The aim of most big food companies is to make the healthiest _____ they can.
profits
products
customers

10. Most people agree that naturally grown food tastes
safer
better
worse