

## Why Eat Organic? By: Linda K. Schneider

Are you looking out for “Number One” these days? Is *YOUR health* a priority in your life? If your goal is to live a long and healthy life, purchasing and consuming organic foods can help you achieve it!

Organic food standards are high. They do not allow any chemical toxins or additives. Many known carcinogens, cancer-causing agents, are in our conventional foods but are not allowed in organic farming. Chemical toxins come in many forms. Pesticides, herbicides and insecticides are used by conventional farmers. Antibiotics are found in grains, added as preventative measures. Additives like coloring and flavoring are added in food processing. Organic farmers do not use any of the above.

In addition to human health, organic farmers are very concerned about *animal welfare*. Good animal care equals better end products. Free-range chickens roam the farm to eat insects, grasses and other natural foods. Their egg yolks have a brighter orange color because of this additional protein in their diet. Beef cattle graze solely on grass instead of being fed grains, because many organic farmers believe it is better for the cow and for the taste of the beef.

Organic agriculture is good for the *environment*. When farmers use organic practices they are cutting out the use of chemicals of all kinds, including herbicides, pesticides, insecticides and chemical fertilizers. These chemicals build up in the soil and water causing pollution. Organic farming lowers pollution and produces less carbon dioxide, the main global-warming gas. There are fewer dangerous wastes to dispose of; such as fertilizer containers, chemical sprays, and animal waste with antibiotics still in the manure. Genetically modified seeds are not allowed on organic farms.

*Wildlife* benefits from organic farming as well. If a songbird eats an insect that has just ingested poison from the garden, the songbird gets sick or possibly dies. The owl eats the songbird. The fisher cat eats the owl. As these chemicals build up in our soil and water, they also accumulate in the internal systems of our wildlife.

*Taste* is the best reason of all to choose organic products! Do a simple taste-test of your own. At this time of year, purchase conventional-grown and organic strawberries. I’m betting that the superb taste of the organic berries will tell the story. (Not to mention that the conventional berries contain high levels of fungicides.) Restaurants are now getting into the picture, as many award-winning chefs are choosing locally-grown, organic items to feature on their menus. Many people prefer organic foods because they say they taste better!

So, are YOU intent on living a long, healthy life? Why not let organic foods help you achieve that goal!

*Linda K. Schneider is the District Manager at Ottauquechee Natural Resources Conservation District located in White River Junction, Vermont. This District covers 18 towns in Windsor County and one in Rutland County. 802-295-7942 x11*  
[linda.schneider@vt.nacdnet.net](mailto:linda.schneider@vt.nacdnet.net)    <http://vacd.org/onrcd>