



Chapter 17

# The Organic Decision

**S**hould you go organic? That's a very valid question in everyone's mind today. And to take a decision it is important to have all the right information available to separate fact from fiction, and find out if this dietary choice is right for you.

There is absolutely no doubt about the fact that investing in health via the food we eat is and should be non-negotiable. After all, both our life's - longevity and quality are at stake. And so, going organic makes sense. But are organic foods truly superior? A blanket statement that going completely organic is the way to go, wouldn't be the right thing to do as there are still multiple challenges. First, we still know so little about the actual difference between organic and conventional foods. Second, most of us don't know how to pick the truly organic foods. Third, the availability is always sketchy and not dependable. Fourth, the cost tends to be prohibitive in most cases.

So even though going the organic way is truly the way to go, the choice is a personal one to make. Demystifying what is organic actually can go a long way in being able to make an informed choice

## What?

Organic food is food grown ecologically, without the use of chemical fertilizers, growth regulators, pesticides, weedicides and prepared without chemicals in processing. It is the product of farming systems such as recycling of farm waste, using natural, plant or animal waste, products for soil fertility, pest control and disease, without harming natural resources. Therefore, organic foods are good for both, our health and the health of the environment.

## Why?

We need to eat organic for the simple sensible reasons. Organic is healthier for you as well as for the environment; because it has all the benefits that nature intended the crop or the fruit or the vegetable to have in terms of vitamins, minerals, fibre, antioxidants and so on. Plus, the added benefit is being free of harmful chemicals through pesticide and synthetic fertilizer residues, which tend to be destructive when unleashed in our bodies. Further, since organically grown foods are grown by rebuilding healthy soils, they have more trace elements and micronutrients, the deficiency of which leads to many health problems; e.g. iron deficiency leads to anaemia.



## The Taste Tests

Of course, there is a question of taste - organic foods definitely tastes better and fresh. Anything grown organically is better in taste, as compared to its inorganic counterpart. Experience the aroma and taste of whole wheat chapattis being made or bread or baingan bharta, chhola, rajma... or bite into raw tomatoes or an organic apple - and decide for yourself!

## Cost Factor

Money is of course a concern. Yes, generally speaking, on an average, organic food items cost about 25% to 30% more than inorganic foods. But today, most people eat out about once a week. If they were to just cut down one outing, they would be able to afford buying organic. So, it is comes down to a question of priorities, nothing else.

# The Good Work!

The organic foods market is growing at a fast pace in India with more and more people getting interested in it and more land being allocated to it. Good regulatory environment in the country will help speed up the process. Plus, it is important to make things more transparent, as only when the ambiguity is rectified, the organic food movement will gather more steam.

FSSAI has regulated that organic food needs to comply with the requirements of labelling under Food Safety and Standards Regulations (FSSR) in addition to that of National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) or Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)-India. In addition, all the organic foods need to showcase FSSAI's Organic Logo (Jaivik Bharat)

All the certified organic food operators in India are listed at the Indian Organic Integrity Database Portal developed by FSSAI. The Portal (<https://jaivikbharat.fssai.gov.in/>) serves as a good reference point and here consumers can check and access the information about certified operators.

An Expert Committee on Organic Foods has been set up to look after the issues emerging from the implementation of the regulations.



## Why Go Organic?

When you eat organic you eat natural, clean food which is nutritious and delicious. Organic milk tastes sweeter. organically grown fruit and vegetables tastes richer and fresh as are naturally ripened. Organic eggs are a result of birds that aren't continually fed antibiotics in their regular feed and are fed organic feed. According to research in-organic whole wheat is one of the most heavily pesticide foods, so is best avoided. Organic atta is usually stone-ground, has all the bran intact - therefore the family of B vitamins - and has enough roughage to keep your digestion humming along.

Organic dals are usually not polished, just milled. That is why organic moong dhuli and arhar dal are pale in colour. The fewer chemicals you put into your body the better. Plus, the taste and aroma are very different - more flavorful! Organic sugar is minus all chemicals like Sulphur free which is used as a bleaching agent in most white sugars.

Organic salts don't have any bleaching agents, and anti-caking agents. Switch to cold-pressed organic oils; there is a range available - Groundnut, Safflower/Kardi, Sunflower, Sesame, Mustard, Olive oil.

The benefit here is that the nutrients are intact as the processing method does not use a high temperature that causes nutrient loss. Also, these are high in flavour and fragrance. Spices give us micro-nutrients, and help digestion and metabolism. They are not just flavoring to food, so it is important to choose pesticide free spices. These are best consumed organic.

