

Organic pesticide-free, and other claims debunked

By ACSH Staff — May 15, 2014



Now that the claim that organic foods are more nutritious than

conventionally-produced ones is rarely espoused by responsible writers, organic producers and adherents have fallen back on the fewer pesticides claim. But is that really accurate? Blogger Steven Savage says no, not really.

In his [essay](#) [1] on why organic farming is less than optimal from an environmental point of view, Mr. Savage points out that some pesticides are indeed permitted for organic farming, albeit only those presumed to be non-synthetic. But some of these are quite toxic to many aquatic critters and are less effective meaning they must be used more often than their synthetic counterparts. In addition, because these pesticides may be less effective, some fungi may well remain on the crops, leaving them open to attack by other organisms.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom informs us, The distinction between natural and synthetic pesticides is both artificial and manipulative. As I have said dozens of times, it makes no difference where a chemical comes from only the properties of the chemical itself. Yet, the organic food industry continues to harp on this because it works.

Yet another caveat he mentions is the lower efficiency of organic farming. The decreased yield from organic agriculture in general, and the forbidding of genetically modified crops that could increase yield, combine to increase pressure to include more currently non-agricultural lands in farming. For more on current organic myths, read his [essay](#) [2].

In a similar vein, former ACSH director Dr. Henry Miller provides a scathing [critique](#) [3] of *New York Times* food writer Mark Bittman's recent [essay](#) [4] on organic foods. Dr. Miller notes that Bittman's claim that big agribusiness companies haven't been successful in moving sustainable agriculture forward is without merit. He counters that the evidence indicates that genetically engineered crops improve weed control and reduce the need for plowing. This, in turn can enable farmers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Bittman also mentions the supposedly intensive and virtually unregulated use of agricultural chemicals. Again, Dr. Miller counters that agricultural chemicals are subject to some of the most stultifying, burdensome, expansive and expensive regulation on the planet !

ACSH s Dr. Ruth Kava says We could go on, but it would be better for consumers, especially those who choose to spend their money buying only organic foods, to read both essays for themselves. She continues The organic industry and adherents have really sold a bill of goods to the American consumer and it s refreshing to see some realistic countering of their claims based on data, not beliefs or wishful thinking.

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Links

[1]

http://www.science20.com/agricultural_realism/spending_more_for_organic_does_not_buy_you_pesticidefree-136141

[2] <http://appliedmythology.blogspot.com/2013/04/six-reasons-organic-is-not-most.html>

[3] <http://www.forbes.com/sites/henrymiller/2014/05/14/a-new-york-times-food-writer-who-is-always-out-to-lunch/>

[4] [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/07/opinion/bittman-leave-organic-out-of-](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/07/opinion/bittman-leave-organic-out-of-it.html?action=click&module=Search®ion=searchResults&mabReward=relbias%3As&url=http%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2014/05/07/opinion/bittman-leave-organic-out-of-it.html)

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