

# Myth and Fact: Organic

## Conventional and Organic Dairy Foods are Nutritious Choices

Consumers are curious about organic foods. Are organic dairy foods more nutritious? Is organic milk safer for my family to consume? The difference between organic milk and regular milk is in the farm practices used, rather than the quality or nutritional value of the food.<sup>1</sup>

### NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Both conventional and organic milk offer a powerful package of calcium and eight other essential nutrients. When evaluating possible health claims, research does not support a health advantage of organic over conventional milk for any segment of the population.<sup>3</sup>

Many consumers assume that cows fed on pasture produce milk with a higher level of omega-3 fatty acids, but there are actually minimal differences between organic and conventionally produced dairy.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, a well-balanced diet that includes low-fat dairy can positively impact human health regardless of whether milk is produced via organic or conventional farming methods.<sup>5</sup>

### MILK SAFETY

Strict government standards, including pasteurization, ensure that milk sold at retail is pure, safe, and nutritious. Michigan's dairy farmers are dedicated to providing wholesome, high-quality milk and dairy products.



### PROCESSES

Under the standards, organic dairy farmers must demonstrate, among other things, the following processes<sup>6</sup>:



- Using organic fertilizers and pesticides on their crops.
- Providing cows access to pasture during the grazing season – at least 120 days per year. In addition to grass, dairy cows receive a supplemental organic feed so they can get enough protein. During the winter, when grass may be hard to come by, cows on organic farms eat the same type of feed as cows on conventional farms, except all the ingredients are certified organic.
- Not using antibiotics. If a cow becomes sick, an organic dairy farmer can try approved organic health treatments. If those don't work, the sick cow will then receive antibiotics and is permanently moved to a non-organic producing herd. Milk from a cow being treated with antibiotics is always separated to ensure it does not go into the milk supply.

### ANIMAL CARE

No matter if a cow lives on an organic or conventional dairy farm, dairy farmers take good care of their cows. Animal care is one of the most important aspects of dairy farmers' jobs, because good cow care leads to high-quality, wholesome milk.<sup>4</sup>

### TAKE AWAY MESSAGE

There's no conclusive evidence that organic cow's milk is healthier than conventionally produced milk. Regardless of which variety you choose, cow's milk delivers a powerhouse of essential nutrients in a delicious, affordable and readily available form.<sup>6</sup>

Learn more about the great taste and health benefits of dairy foods at [www.Drink-Milk.com](http://www.Drink-Milk.com)

### References

<sup>1</sup>USDA/AMS. National organic standards final rule. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop>. Accessed 2019 May.

<sup>3</sup>Organic vs. Conventional Milk: Some Considerations on Fat-Soluble Vitamins and Iodine Content. Pamela Manzi, Council for Agricultural Research and Agricultural Economy Analysis | CREA · Research Center for Food and Nutrition (CRA-NUT). Beverages 2017, 3(3), 39; <https://doi.org/10.3390/beverages3030039>. Accessed 2019 May.

<sup>4</sup>Lois McBean, MS, RDN. Organic milk or conventional milk: which is the healthiest? <https://www.milkmeansmore.org/organic-milk-conventional-milk-healthiest/> Sept. 1, 2016. Accessed 2019 May.

<sup>5</sup>Magkos, F, Arvaniti, F, Zampelas, A. 2003. Organic food: nutritious food or food for thought? A review of the evidence. International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition 54(5).

<sup>6</sup>Dairies: Conventional to Organic and Everything In-between. Dairy Good.org <https://dairygood.org/content/2014/conventional-to-organic-and-everything-in-between-our-nations-dairy-farms>. Accessed 2019 May.