

# The Organic Myth

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I was watching a TV commercial the other night and it showed the supply chain and ended with a restaurant owner making his restaurant more organic. It seems that the word Organic has been built up as some kind of miracle food to make the world better and people healthier. Organic

farming in reality is more like subsistence farming practiced by our grandparents or great grandparent 100 years ago. It is farming without scientific advances such as commercial fertilizer, pesticides or chemicals. It is farming without these great scientific and agronomic advances that have made the US farmer capable of feeding the world.

The latest information I have seen is that the American farmer currently grows enough food to feed 155 people in the US and the World. I am not sure how much food production would drop with organic production, but I know that before these advances 60 to 70 percent of the people had to live on a farm to raise their food and make subsistence living. At most, only a small fraction of the current world population could be fed using organic production methods, what happens to the rest? Many countries across the world practice forms of organic production, because they do not have enough money for more modern practices. Most of their population are hungry, poor and live in conditions that most Americans could not survive.

We do not want our local fire department to put out your burning house with a horse drawn pumper or bucket brigade. We do not want our doctor to diagnose a serious problem with just a stethoscope and no MRI or Cat scan, but that seems to be what a portion of American citizens want farmers to go back to.

The myth with organic production is that the food is healthier and it is better for the environment. Scientific studies show the food is not healthier. I can say that the food supply in this country is extremely safe. It is a rare occurrence

and makes the national headlines when a problem is found with the food supply. Life expectancy is increasing every year as supported by a report last week that a child born today in certain countries could expect to live to 100. None of those countries focus on organic food production because that child would probably die much sooner due to hunger and malnutrition.

The argument that organic production is better for the environment is simply not true. Just from weed control alone, organic production would lead to much higher rates of soil erosion and fuel consumption from the use of cultivation as the main form of weed control. At a vegetable field day a few weeks ago, the presenter was bragging on the fact that no chemicals were used for weed control. He said that already the field had 5 cultivations. I then asked him what would happen on 90 percent of the farmland in KY that is rolling hillsides, if they had 5 cultivations for weed control. He admitted that most of the top soil would wash down the creek. We tried that years ago and were left with ditches and gullies and no topsoil in many fields that have taken the last 30 years of no-till farming and good soil erosion control practices to build back up.

The American farmer takes good care of his land. He lives on the land, he makes his living from the land and he does everything in his power to protect it so it will remain productive for his future and his children's future. We can go back to farming the way we did 100 years ago, but you are not going to be able to live in the city or the suburbs. You would have to move back to the country on a few acres and spend all your time trying to grow enough food to survive. Gone will be vacations and all the other luxuries we now enjoy. Most of our time and money would be spent on raising food to feed our family. Isn't it amazing, how an abundant, cheap food supply has let the American standard of living change over the last 100 years? Do we really want to go back? That is what the word organic really means when we talk about food production. Δ

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