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# 'Organic has no health benefits'

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/health/8174482.stm>

Adapted from BBC News 29.07.2009 © BBC MMIX

**Organic food is no healthier than ordinary food, a large independent review has concluded.**

There is little difference in nutritional value and no *evidence* of any extra health benefits from eating organic produce, UK researchers found.

The Food Standards Agency who commissioned the report said the findings would help people make an "**informed choice**".



But the Soil Association criticised the study and called for better research.

Researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine looked at all the evidence on nutrition and health benefits from the past 50 years.

Among the 55 of 162 studies that were included in the final analysis, there were a small *number* of differences in nutrition between organic and **conventionally produced** food but not large enough to be of any public health relevance, said study leader Dr Alan Dangour.

Overall the report, which is published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, found no differences in most nutrients in organically or conventionally grown crops, including in vitamin C, calcium, and iron. The same was true for studies looking at meat, dairy and eggs.

Differences that were *detected*, for example in levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, were most likely to be due to differences in fertilizer use and ripeness at harvest and are unlikely to provide any health benefit, the report concluded.

## Choice

Gill Fine, FSA director of consumer choice and **dietary health**, said: "Ensuring people have accurate information is absolutely *essential* in allowing us all to make informed choices about the food we eat."

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"This study does not mean that people should not eat organic food. What it shows is that there is little, if any, nutritional difference between organic and conventionally produced food and that there is no evidence of additional health benefits from eating **organic food.**"

She added that the FSA was neither **pro nor anti** organic food and *recognised* there were many reasons why people choose to eat organic, including animal welfare or environmental concerns.

Dr Dangour, said: "Our review indicates that there is currently **no evidence to support** the selection of organically over conventionally produced foods on the basis of nutritional superiority."

He added that better quality studies were *needed*.

Peter Melchett, policy director at the Soil Association said they were disappointed with the *conclusions*. "The review rejected almost all of the existing studies of comparisons between organic and non-organic nutritional differences. Although the researchers say that the differences between organic and non-organic food are not 'important', due to the relatively few studies, they report in their *analysis* that there are higher levels of beneficial nutrients in organic compared to non-organic foods. Without **large-scale, longitudinal research** it is difficult to come to *far-reaching clear* conclusions on this, which was acknowledged by the authors of the FSA review."

"Also, there is not **sufficient research** on the long-term effects of pesticides on human health," he added.

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## A. Read the text and then answer the questions.

1. What differences were found between conventionally produced and organic food?
2. Why according to Gill Fine is accurate information essential?
3. What was the reaction from The Soil Association to these findings?
4. What does The Soil Association feel could perhaps shed more light on this claim?
5. According to Dr Dangour why should organic food not be chosen over conventionally produced food?

## B. There are ten words highlighted in *bold italics*

*evidence*      *recognised*      *analysis*      *clear*      *needed*  
*detected*      *far-reaching*      *number*      *essential*      *conclusions*

Which of the following words could be used in place of these words in the text? You can only use ten of the twenty words below.

test	cleaning	sweeping	accepted	realised
breakdown	results	study	completed	amount
questions	free	identified	vital	planned
important	few	required	unambiguous	proof

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C. There are eight phrases highlighted in **bold**. What do you understand by these phrases in the text?

1. **conventionally produced**
2. **dietary health**
3. **organic food**
4. **pro nor anti**
5. **no evidence to support**
6. **large-scale, longitudinal research**
7. **sufficient research**
8. **informed choice**

D. What are your views? Do you think this is true? Do you think there are benefits from organic food? For years we have been led to believe that organic is better. Was it a way to get us to pay more for food? Use the space below to explain your views.

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## Answers

A.

1. Levels of phosphorous and nitrogen
2. Allows people to make choices
3. They were disappointed
4. Large scale, longitudinal research
5. There is no nutritional superiority

B.

<i>evidence</i>	<b>proof</b>
<i>recognised</i>	<b>accepted</b>
<i>analysis</i>	<b>study</b>
<i>clear</i>	<b>unambiguous</b>
<i>needed</i>	<b>required</b>
<i>detected</i>	<b>identified</b>
<i>far-reaching</i>	<b>sweeping</b>
<i>number</i>	<b>mount</b>
<i>essential</i>	<b>vital</b>
<i>conclusions</i>	<b>results</b>

C.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1. conventionally produced</b>            | grown using normal long established methods                 |
| <b>2. dietary health,</b>                    | food that effects fitness and well being                    |
| <b>3. organic food."</b>                     | food grown without use of chemicals and pesticides          |
| <b>4. pro nor anti</b>                       | neither for nor against                                     |
| <b>5. no evidence to support</b>             | no information to prove the point                           |
| <b>6. large-scale, longitudinal research</b> | wide-ranging, long-lasting investigations                   |
| <b>7. sufficient research</b>                | an adequate amount of information                           |
| <b>8. informed choice</b>                    | a choice made with all the information being made available |