

Consumers Preference Towards the Purchase of Organic farm Products



Management

KEYWORDS :

Mrs.J.Dhivya

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies with Computer Application, Sri Krishna College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore

Dr. Saravanan Ranganwamy

Director, Holy Grace Academy of Management Studies, Kuruvilassery P.O., Mala, Thrissur Dist. Kerala

ABSTRACT

Making a commitment to healthy eating is a great start towards a healthier life. Beyond eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and good fats, however, there is the question of food safety, nutrition, and sustainability. How foods are grown or raised can impact both your health and the environment. Consumers also associate organic food with natural process, care for the environment and animal welfare and the non-use of pesticides and fertilizers. Premium price continues to suppress organic food consumption. Understanding the grounds of increasing level of organic food consumption such as motivation are most critical in understanding the potential of the organic food to become a genuinely mainstream market. Food safety, human health and environmental concern along with sensory attributes such as nutritive value, taste, freshness and appearance influence organic food consumer preferences.

Organic food can simply be classified as food products that have been produced without using any pesticides. But a complex explanation would be those products that have been produced using naturally available materials in its entire life cycle.

Organic food does not limit to vegetarian food only but also to non-vegetarian food such as egg, chicken, etc. Organic food is the current hot topic among consumers at supermarkets these days as the awareness about organic products has increased many fold and consumers are moving towards healthier life-style.

Introduction

Organic farming is a method of crop and livestock production that involves much more than choosing not to use pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics and growth hormones.

Organic production is a holistic system designed to optimize the productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the agro-ecosystem, including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people. The principal goal of organic production is to develop enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment.

The general principles of organic production, from the Canadian Organic Standards (2006), include the following:

- protect the environment, minimize soil degradation and erosion, decrease pollution, optimize biological productivity and promote a sound state of health
- maintain long-term soil fertility by optimizing conditions for biological activity within the soil
- maintain biological diversity within the system
- recycle materials and resources to the greatest extent possible within the enterprise
- provide attentive care that promotes the health and meets the behavioral needs of livestock
- prepare organic products, emphasizing careful processing, and handling methods in order to maintain the organic integrity and vital qualities of the products at all stages of production
- rely on renewable resources in locally organized agricultural systems

The organic standards generally prohibit products of genetic engineering and animal cloning, synthetic pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, synthetic drugs, synthetic food processing aids and ingredients, and ionizing radiation. Prohibited products and practices must not be used on certified organic farms for at least three years prior to harvest of the certified organic products. Livestock must be raised organically and fed 100 per cent organic feed ingredients.

Organic farming presents many challenges. Some crops are more challenging than others to grow organically; however, nearly every commodity can be produced organically.

Reasons for Farm Organically:

The main reasons farmers state for wanting to farm organically are their concerns for the environment and about working with agricultural chemicals in conventional farming systems. There is also an issue with the amount of energy used in agriculture, since many farm chemicals require energy intensive manufacturing processes that rely heavily on fossil fuels. Organic farmers find their method of farming to be profitable and personally rewarding.

Reasons for Buying Organic Farm Products:

Consumers purchase organic foods for many different reasons. Many want to buy food products that are free of chemical pesticides or grown without conventional fertilizers. Some simply like to try new and different products. Product taste, concerns for the environment and the desire to avoid foods from genetically engineered organisms are among the many other reasons some consumers prefer to buy organic food products. In 2007 it was estimated that over 60 per cent of consumers bought some organic products. Approximately five per cent of consumers are considered to be core organic consumers who buy up to 50 per cent of all organic food.

"Certified Organic":

"Certified organic" is a term given to products produced according to organic standards as certified by one of the certifying bodies. There are several certification bodies operating in Ontario. A grower wishing to be certified organic must apply to a certification body requesting an independent inspection of their farm to verify that the farm meets the organic standards. Farmers, processors and traders are each required to maintain the organic integrity of the product and to maintain a document trail for audit purposes. Products from certified organic farms are labelled and promoted as "certified organic."

Advantages of Organic Farm Products:

There are many advantages of consuming organic prod-

ucts, a few of which are mentioned below:

- Organic food is very tasty and stays fresh longer without any refrigeration.
- Organic food grows in harmony with the nature, the way vegetation is intended to grow. This makes it more pure and safe to consume. Researches and studies have revealed that organic food has medicinal properties attached to it, when consumed on a daily basis. Thus, nature takes care of you, reducing your frequent visits to the doctor.
- The food products grow with the natural vitamins and minerals intact in it. This way, cooking needs less of salt, thus eliminating chances of aggravating Hypertension (High Blood Pressure).
- Some fruits and vegetables grown the organic way do not look attractive but they are definitely rich in nutrients. For example, apples are sold after coating them with wax, which is synthetic. This makes it look very attractive and gives them sheen, but it is poisonous to consume these apples. This is definitely not the case with organically grown food.
- Any grain or a pulse that is purchased from our shop would definitely sprout.

Common Myth - Organic Farm Products are not affordable:

This is a common myth among the public regarding Organic Products. If the nutritive value of the Organic Products is taken into consideration, then the prices marked are definitely worth paying. Comparing Organic Products to Chemically grown farm products, the Organic Products are healthier and more nutritive. Several diabetic, Hypertension (high BP), cardiac, skin, cancer and gastric patients are our clients who have shown good improvement in health by consuming Organic food. We believe that "Prevention is better than cure".

Organic Vs Non-Organic Produce

Organic Produce	Non-Organic Produce
<p>Organic produce: No Pesticides in production Grown with natural fertilizers (manure, compost). Weeds are controlled naturally (crop rotation, hand weeding, mulching, and tilling). Insects are controlled using natural methods (birds, good insects, traps).</p>	<p>Conventionally grown produce: Pesticides used Grown with synthetic or chemical fertilizers. Weeds are controlled with chemical herbicides. Insecticides are used to manage pests and disease.</p>

Local Foods:

Generally local food means food that was grown close to home. This could be in your own garden, your local community, your state, your region, or your country. During large portions of the year it is usually possible to find food grown very close to home at places such as a farmer's market.

Why people buy locally grown food:

Financial benefits: Money stays within the community and strengthens the local economy. More money goes directly to the farmer, instead of to things like marketing and distribution.

Transportation issues: This uses a lot of fossil fuels and emits carbon dioxide into the air. In addition, produce must be picked while still unripe and then gassed to "ripen" it after transport. Or the food is highly processed in

factories using preservatives, irradiation, and other means to keep it stable for transport and sale.

Fresh produce: Local food is the freshest food you can purchase. Fruits and vegetables are harvested when they are ripe and thus full of flavor

Small local farmers often use organic methods but sometimes cannot afford to become certified organic.

Why is organic Farm Food more expensive than Conventional Food?

Certified organic food: Certified organic products are generally more expensive than their conventional counterparts (for which prices have been declining) for a number of reasons:

Organic food supply is limited as compared to demand: Production costs for organic foods are typically higher because of greater labor inputs per unit of output and because greater diversity of enterprises means economies of scale cannot be achieved;

Post-harvest handling of relatively small quantities of organic foods results in higher costs because of the mandatory segregation of organic and conventional produce, especially for processing and transportation;

Marketing and the distribution chain for organic products is relatively inefficient and costs are higher because of relatively small volumes.

Organic Food Buying Tips:

Buy in season – Fruits and vegetables are cheapest and freshest when they are in season. You can also find out when produce is delivered to your market. That way you know you're buying the freshest food possible.

Shop around – Compare the price of organic items at the grocery store, the farmers' market and any other venue (even the freezer aisle).

Remember that organic doesn't always equal healthy – Junk food can just as easily be made using organic ingredients. Making junk food sound healthy is a common marketing ploy in the food industry but organic baked goods, desserts, and snacks are usually still very high in sugar, salt, fat, or calories. It pays to read food labels carefully.

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