

ORGANIC FOODS – An Investment in Health and Sustainability

What is Organic Food?

Organic food refers to the output from *Organic Agriculture*: a holistic production method that contributes to enhancement of biodiversity, good soil health and ecological balance. Organic agriculture prohibits the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), irradiation, growth hormones, artificial flavours, colours and preservatives and is based on these seven guiding principles, as stated in the **Canadian Organic Standards**:

1. Protect the environment, minimize soil degradation and erosion, decrease pollution, optimize biological productivity and promote a sound state of health
2. Maintain long-term soil fertility by optimizing conditions for biological activity within the soil
3. Maintain biological diversity within the system
4. Recycle materials and resources to the greatest extent possible within the enterprise
5. Provide attentive care that promotes the health and meets the behavioural needs of livestock
6. Prepare organic products, emphasizing careful processing and handling methods in order to maintain organic integrity and vital qualities of the products at all stages of production.
7. Rely on renewable resources in locally organized agricultural systems.

Organic Food in Canada

Organic food in Canada must meet all food regulations as well as additional organic standards and inspections. Canadian law requires all organic foods that cross interprovincial or international borders to be regulated under both the *Food and Drug Regulations* and the *Organic Product Regulations*, and are subject to the enforcement by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Similarly, organic foods that are made and sold only within their province of origin are subject to federal truthful-labelling laws and may be subject to provincial organic regulations.

Having these rules in place to govern organic foods makes “Organic” a trustworthy brand and allows consumers to shop with confidence.

The Benefits of Buying Organic Foods

When buying organic foods, you are not only investing in your health, but you are also supporting sustainable environmentally friendly practices and animal welfare. There are a number of benefits to choosing organic:

- Know that your products have been grown and handled according to strict procedures and without persistent toxic chemical inputs
- Choose foods that are made without the use or inclusion of GMOs, and that many find taste better

- Protect and improve the environment and animal health
- Help maintain a clean water supply, soil health and fertility
- Reduce the carbon footprint and fight climate change (organic farming can use 30-50% less energy)

What to Look For?

Organic foods can be found at health food stores, local farmers markets and grocery stores. There are a few key identifying factors that can help guide your purchasing decisions and ensure the foods you are buying truly are organic.



The **Canada Organic logo** - Foods with an organic content of **95% or more** are allowed to carry the logo however, use of the logo is *voluntary*. Furthermore, products carrying the logo must be certified through a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) approved third party certification body and their name must appear on the product label.

As it is not always possible to source 100% organic ingredients for organic food production, CFIA also permits the following claims on organic multi-ingredient products.

Multi-ingredient products with an organic content of 70-95% may carry the statement “**contains x% organic ingredients,**” however these products cannot make an “Organic” claim or carry the organic logo. Therefore, a product with 80% organic content may make the claim “contains 80% organic ingredients.” When using such claims, the products are required to be certified by a CFIA approved third-party certification body and their name must appear on the product label.



Multi-ingredient products with less than 70% “organic” content may also contain organic claims in the product’s ingredient list, but they cannot use the organic logo. Although these products are not required to be certified, the organic ingredients within these products must be certified.



As Canada is a global organic trading partner with the United States and Europe, the USDA and European organic logos may also appear on organic foods sold within Canada.

Products bearing these logos adhere to equivalent standards as Canadian organic products.



Looking for more information?

Get the latest updates on organic foods, associated regulations and new developments through the following resources:

- Canadian organic consumer info site – www.OrganicBiologique.ca
- Canadian Health Food Association – www.chfa.ca
- Canadian Organic Growers – www.cog.ca
- Canada Organic Trade Association – www.ota-canada.ca

- Canada Organic Office, The Canadian Food Inspection Agency – <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioe.shtml>
- Canada Organic Product Regulations – <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2009-176>
- Canada Organic Standards – <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/ongc-cgsb/programme-program/normes-standards/comm/32-20-agriculture-eng.html>