



UNDERSTANDING ORGANIC AND CONVENTIONAL FARMING

There are many approaches to growing crops and raising animals, and they all result in safe food.

Growing and raising food is complex. So is navigating all the choices at the grocery store. Organic, conventional or something in the middle, different farming methods can be confusing. Conventional and organic farming methods are two different ways to grow crops and raise animals that both result in safe food.

Similarities

1. **Nutrition:** Research shows that there is no significant nutritional difference between organic and conventional foods.¹
2. **Regulation:** All pesticides and fertilizers are approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
3. **Safety:** The USDA, FDA and EPA use a system of checks and balances to prevent foodborne illness outbreaks and to keep all food safe.²
4. **Animal welfare:** Both methods provide housing, food and water and medical attention when needed.



Differences

1. **Antibiotics** for illness and disease prevention are allowed in conventional farming and prohibited for organically raised animals.³
2. **Crop protection:** Both organic and conventional farming methods use pesticides. Organic only allows natural pesticides, while conventional farming allows both natural and synthetic pesticides.³
3. **Seeds:** Conventional allows traditionally and selectively bred, genetically modified and edited seeds determined safe by the USDA and FDA, while organic only allows traditionally bred seeds.³



ILLINOIS
**FARM
FAMILIES**[®]

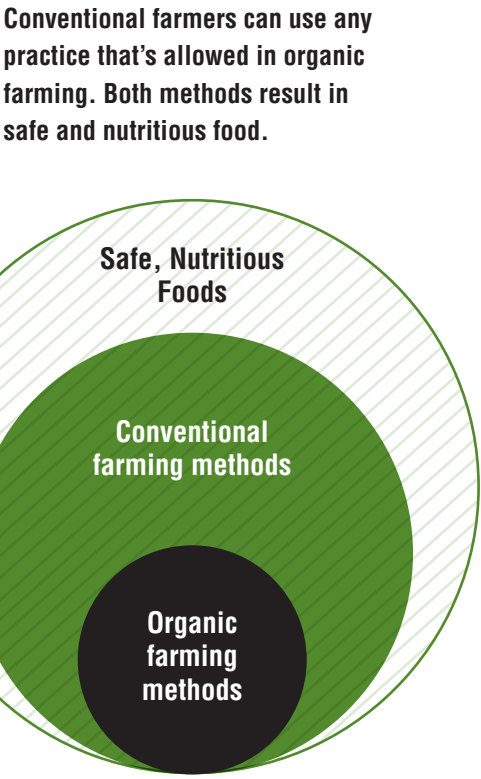
Growing your food with care.

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Organic, conventional and the environment

Illinois farmers care about their impact on the environment. Each type of agriculture works to keep your food safe and nourishes the land for future generations. People and farmers rely on each other, and we all need farmers to continue to grow and raise safe, quality food.

METHOD	CONVENTIONAL	ORGANIC
Crop rotation: Changing what is grown in fields from year to year maintains and improves soil health. For example, corn takes nitrogen out of the soil one year, and soybeans add nitrogen to the soil the next year. ⁴	✓	✓
GMO's: Conventional farmers can plant genetically modified crops that use less insecticides and grow better in adverse weather conditions. ⁵	✓	
Grazing: Farmers minimize their carbon footprint by alternating grazing areas for cattle; as cattle graze in different areas, it stimulates grass growth and helps the land flourish. ⁶	✓	✓
Fertilizer: Recycling animal waste is an earth-friendly way farmers naturally fertilize their crops, returning nutrients back to the soil. ⁷	✓	✓



Deciding on the right farming type

When it comes to deciding how to grow and raise your food, farmers have a choice.
Most farmers choose how they'll grow and raise food based on several reasons.



Bugs and plant diseases are a reality. An Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan is a combination of chemical and non-chemical methods used to reduce pests.



Water, air and soil type all play an important role in growing and raising food. The type of food a farmer grows may depend on what grows best where they live.



Organic and conventional can **both have financial benefits** to the farmer. The method each farmer chooses depends a lot on their individual situations.

References:
1. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/organic-food/art-20043880>. | 2. USDA Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-safety/markets-regulation-and-policy/>. | 3. Agricultural Marketing Service. USDA National Organic Program. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Organic%20Practices%20FactSheet.pdf>. | 4. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd1167375.pdf. | 5. GMO Answers. <https://gmoanswers.com/gmos-environment>. | 6. Journal of Animal Science. https://www.beefresearch.org/CMDocs/BeefResearch/Sustainability_Home/JAS_Beef_footprints.pdf. | 7. Cooperative Extension System. <https://articles.extension.org/pages/14879/environmental-benefits-of-manure-application>.