

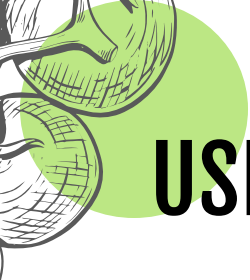
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# Organic

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What does it mean for something to be labeled as “organic”?





# USDA Regulation

## Produce:

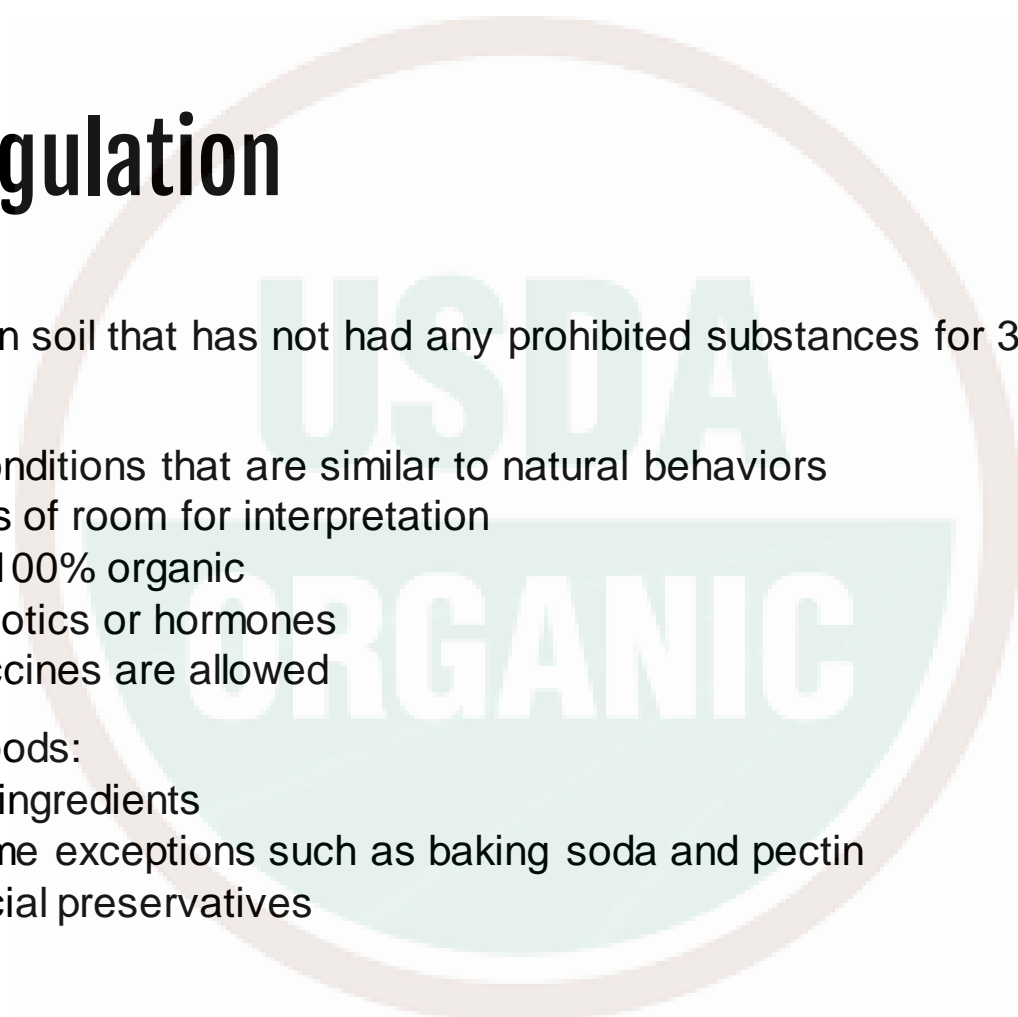
- Grown on soil that has not had any prohibited substances for 3 years prior

## Meat:

- Living conditions that are similar to natural behaviors
  - Lots of room for interpretation
- Feed is 100% organic
- No antibiotics or hormones
  - Vaccines are allowed

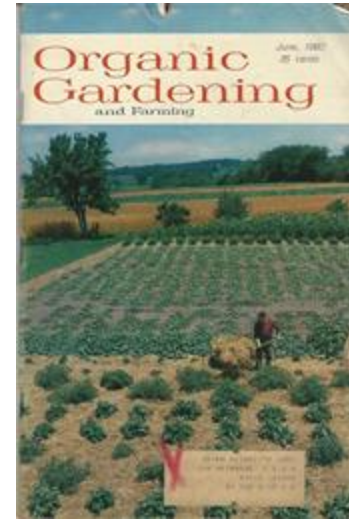
## Processed Foods:

- Organic ingredients
  - Some exceptions such as baking soda and pectin
- No artificial preservatives



# Overview: The Organic Movement

- Begun by Sir Albert Howard in 1940s
  - Crop and animal health was birthright
  - Utilizing waste materials
- Popularized in the US by Jerome I. Rodale
  - Drew ideas from Howard
- Currently regulated by USDA
  - Certain loopholes ( < \$5,000 in sales)
  - No proven benefits
  - Big vs Little Organic\*



# Timeline



## World War II

During and after World War II, the chemical technology developed during the war was used in farming, for example, the creation of artificial fertilizers.

1939-1945

Early 1940s

## Howard spreads ideas about Organic farming

Howard's central principle of organic farming was the using of waste materials to enrich the soil.

## Rodale starts the *Organic Farming and Gardening* magazine

J. I. Rodale spread the idea of organic farming in the US through his magazine which had Howard as associate editor.

1942

2002

## Rules for 'Organic' finalized

Congress passed an act in 1990 to create a regulation for what could be termed as 'Organic'. The criterion were finalized in 2002.



# Stakeholders

## Consumer

- More expensive
- Occasionally more transparent
  - Barcodes
- Exceptions to rules

## Companies

### Agricultural:

- More regulation
- Higher cost

### Stores:

- Boutique stores
  - Ex. Whole Foods

## Farmers

- Less dangers
  - Pesticides
- More careful
  - Livestock gets sick easier

## Pros

- Smaller amounts of toxic chemicals (~81% less)
  - Lower dose/less exposure for farmers and consumers
- Increase in nutrition (~12%)
- Limits antibiotics
  - Prevents from antibiotic resistant bacteria



## Cons

- Costly in land and resources
  - ~80% less productive than non-organic farms
- Stanford study claims that chemical reduction is only ~31%
- Manure contains bacteria
  - Runoff into waterways
  - Stays in soils



# Health Related Issues

- Pesticides
  - Less pesticide
  - Safer for farmers and consumers
    - Decrease in dose and exposure
- Nutritional Benefits?
  - Some studies find more nutrition
  - USDA currently says no increase in nutrition
- Natural Fertilizers/Manure
  - May contain bacteria (*E. coli*)
  - Stays in soil and transferred to crops



# Controversies

- The 2012 Stanford Study
  - Claimed no significant increase in nutrients
  - ~31% vs ~81% decrease in toxic chemicals
- Big vs Little Organic
  - Big Organic is commercialized
  - Little Organic is small farms that stick to Howard's values
- Cost
  - Extremely costly
  - Not in price range for some families





# Other Options

## Homegrown

- Gardens
- Not necessarily organic
- Control over own food
- Time and space consuming
- Hard to grow enough

Image credit: <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/27466104>

## Beyond Organic

- Not necessarily organic
- 'Grass farmers'
- Diversified 'family farms'
- Not commercialized



# Personal Opinion

Although the term 'Organic' has sometimes become synonymous with healthy and nutritious, that is not always the case. Currently, there is no significant evidence that organic foods are either of those things. At the same time, chemicals such as pesticides are inherently bad to environment health, and should be limited. Unfortunately, not all organic foods are what we imagine in that they are not the family farms that we picture, but commercialized agricultural businesses. Therefore, I think that organic overall is a good thing, but 'Little Organic' is better. By increasing demand and technology, I hope that someday, Big Organic food will become the norm like non-organic food is today, and Little Organic food will become the next Big Organic.



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