

Organic Foods: What You Need to Know



Organic food sales grew +8.4% in 2016, reaching \$43 billion and 5.3% of total US food sales. Organic fruits and vegetables grew at the same rate and are the number one organic food segment at \$15.6 billion, 36.3% of organic food sales, and 15% of total produce sales. These growth rates far outpace total food and produce sales. Increased household penetration and purchase frequency, as well as greater product availability are [driving growth](#). But there is still some confusion about what makes something “organic” vs. “conventional”. Here’s a quick overview that will help you be prepared to answer your shoppers’ or patrons’ questions.

What does “organic” mean?

The term “organic” refers to the way agricultural products are grown and processed. Certified organic foods are produced according to federal standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP). These regulations describe the specific standards required to use the word “organic” or the USDA organic seal. Under the federal organic standards, agricultural products labeled “100% organic,” “organic,” and “made with organic (specified ingredient(s))” must be certified by a USDA accredited certifying agent and comply with the U.S. organic laws and regulations. These standards apply to both domestic and imported foods.

Organic crops must be grown without the use of synthetic pesticides, bioengineered genes (GMOs), petroleum-based fertilizers, and sewage sludge-based fertilizers.

Organic livestock raised for meat, eggs, and dairy products must have access to the outdoors and be given organic feed. They may not be given antibiotics, growth hormones, or any animal by-products.

Standards for the processing, handling, and labeling of organic products cover all steps in the process; from receiving organic raw materials, acceptable processing aids and ingredients, appropriate packaging materials and labeling, to cleaning methods and pest management at processing facilities.

DYK?

100% ORGANIC

Products produced using exclusively organic methods, containing only organic ingredients, are allowed to carry a label declaring “100 percent organic” and may use the USDA Organic Seal.

(Use of the USDA seal is optional)

ORGANIC

Products produced using exclusively organic methods that contain at least 95% organic ingredients may use the USDA Organic Seal.

(The other 5% must be non-GMO & on the National List)

MADE WITH ORGANIC

Products with 70% to 95% organic ingredients may display “Made with organic [with up to three specified ingredients or food groups]” on the front panel. The USDA Organic Seal may not be used, however products in this category MUST be certified through the same USDA organic certification process that is required for “100% Organic” and “Organic” label.

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Why choose organic?

Over 51% of US families are [buying more organic food](#) than a year ago. Consumers cite recent studies that suggest crops grown organically have a higher concentration of nutrients, that consuming organic produce could increase anti-oxidant intake by 20-40%, and that organic milk has 62% more omega-3 fatty acids. People with allergies to foods, chemicals, or preservatives often find their symptoms lessen or go away when they eat only organic foods. Buying organic supports sustainable and healthy crop production, humane animal treatment practices, and helps mitigate climate change.

Increased consumption of fresh produce, whether it's organic or conventional, is an important part of a healthy diet. Make sure your produce department includes a comprehensive assortment of organic items to meet growing consumer demand.

Key Differences between Organic and Conventional Foods	
Organic Produce	Conventionally-grown Produce
Grown with natural fertilizers (manure, compost).	Grown with synthetic or chemical fertilizers.
Weeds are controlled naturally (crop rotation, hand weeding, mulching, and tilling).	Weeds are controlled with chemical herbicides.
Pests are controlled using natural methods (birds, insects, traps) and naturally-derived pesticides.	Pests are controlled with synthetic pesticides.
Organic Meat, Dairy, Eggs	Conventionally-raised Meat, Dairy, Eggs
Livestock are given all organic, hormone- and GMO-free feed.	Livestock are given growth hormones for faster growth, as well as non-organic, GMO feed.
Disease is prevented with natural methods such as clean housing, rotational grazing, and healthy diet.	Antibiotics and medications are used to prevent livestock disease.
Livestock must have access to the outdoors.	Livestock may or may not have access to the outdoors.

Did You Know?

Crosset Company is the largest distributor of organic produce east of the Mississippi River. With over 400 organic produce items from leading national, regional and local organic growers. Our centralized procurement team and extensive grower and customer network allow us to maintain a reliable, always-fresh inventory of regionally and seasonally best certified organic fruits and vegetables. Our volume and velocity means you can delight your shoppers with the freshest organic produce available every day. Plus, our team of talented, knowledgeable, and highly experienced merchandisers bring proven organic and conventional produce merchandising strategies and tactics to each store. Working directly with your in-store personnel, we'll help you create the produce "wow" experience in your stores.

Sources: [Organic Trade Association](#), [Helpguide.org](#)

Organic Produce

BEETS: Beets still remain a challenge due to curly top virus that impacts the plant leaves and bulb. Supplies will be limited for a few more weeks until growers move to lower elevation new fields that should be clean.

BROCCOLI: Due to weather issues (heat) in growing regions in the west, we are seeing suppliers limit available supply driving market cost up. There will be discoloration to the tops as heat will cause a darker head on the broccoli.

BUNCH CARROTS: Supply has rebounded quite well and we are seeing much better quality.

CABBAGE: Regional supply has really come on from the Southeast. Supply will be great for the first part of the year!

CAULIFLOWER: Supplies are starting to improve and the quality is good. Pricing has been seen to be firmer due to loading issues.

CELERY: Supply is getting better as we have moved up in to California regions. Pricing has started to tick up over the past couple weeks.

CUCUMBERS: Supply is starting to slow down as cooler temps in Mexico has affected growing areas. We will remain in-stock, but pricing will increase.

GREEN PEPPERS: Steady supplies available as the Nogales season is starting up. Supply will become more promotable at the first part of the year.

KALES: Great supplies of kale currently, plenty of regional product from all over the Midwest available. We are sourcing from Georgia, Florida and other regions. Product is in great supply and pricing is very promotable.

LETTUCES: Inbound quality on leafs from the west have rebounded in quality and we are seeing much better supply. Lady Moon has had great supply in Florida with great quality!

RADISHES: Supplies are improving with better quality tops. Very little damage now to the tops and they look much cleaner than they have been.

YELLOW SQUASH & ZUCCHINI: Like cucumbers, temps have really affected supply in the Nogales growing region. We will see very limited supply on organic yellow squash.

Western Vegetables

ARTICHOKES: The artichoke market has increased in volume with great quality.

AVOCADOS: Supplies and price are still steady even with the fires in California affecting supply. As Mexico regions transition, we could see an uptick in price and a possible lapse in supply in the coming weeks.

BROCCOLI: The broccoli market remains to have a wide range throughout the industry. There are multiple regions that are harvesting which in return are creating a wide range of pricing and quality. Numbers are scheduled to hit a gap over the next couple weeks.

CAULIFLOWER: We are enduring heavy prorates. As the weather cooled off and Salinas finished, we have saw a swift decrease in volume. Weather will play a significant factor in volume going forward. As cooler weather is hitting the Yuma region, we are starting to see a gap in product as we approach January.

CELERY: The market has continued to stay steady after the New Year's pull.

ICEBERG LETTUCE: The lettuce market is starting to tighten up due to cooler temperatures hitting the Yuma region. We are expected to increase in volume over the next couple weeks.

ROMAINE/ROMAINE HEARTS/MIXED LEAF: All lettuces have tightened up with small amounts of quality issues. Volumes are expected to increase over the next couple weeks.

Value-Added

Cooler temperatures in the southwest U.S. growing areas and Mexico is affecting raw product supply for most conventional and organic items.

Southern Vegetables

BEANS: Will come down a little bit.

CABBAGE: Cold weather out of the south as affected cabbage.

CORN: Market is still fairly high.

CUCUMBERS: Market stable.

GREENS: All greens are up at least a \$1.00, some \$2.00 due to freight.

HARD SQUASH: Plenty coming out of Mexico.

ONIONS: No changes in the western onion markets. Supplies continue to be good.

PEPPERS & YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH: Coming from Mexico.

POTATOES: Markets will hold firm to higher through the first of the year. Supplies and quality are good.

Asparagus

Market is on the rise and will continue over the coming weeks; looks like no deals on asparagus.

Fruits

APPLES & PEARS: All varieties of organic and conventional apples and pears are in ample supplies. We will be introducing several varieties of bagged pears in the coming week. Red Bartlett pears, Anjou pears and Bosc pears will be available in a twelve count three pound bag.

BLACKBERRIES: Very reasonable particularly on organic blackberries; there are a lot of deals and pricing to take advantage of in the coming weeks.

BLUEBERRIES: Supplies are a little tight; freight is affecting the commodity keeping some prices up but we'll see opportunities as we get further into January and February to promote.

CANTALOUPE & HONEYDEW: Into all offshore product; there's nothing left domestically. Maybe some honeydews coming out of Mexico. DelMonte Mag melons which have outstanding quality, will be available in the next week or so.

CHERRIES: Market is pretty stable; there's a mix bag on quality. Strictly loading air fruit which is higher priced; it's a better quality advantage than using the boat fruit that's been picked for three weeks.

CITRUS: Navel supplies remain good. Fruit quality is very good and markets continue to be firm.

CLEMENTINES: Pretty stable markets. The best values are the Spanish or Moroccan fruit coming in.

GRAPES: The grape market is fully transitioned into Peru; quality looks very good particularly on the white seedless. Black seedless are starting to come back on and will be added back on order guides but will be extremely high priced.

PINEAPPLES: Steady volume and pricing. Seeing promotable pricing in the market.

RASPBERRIES: Supply has been affected by delayed inbounds on the east coast leaving us to move out west on orders. Supply should bounce back to loading in the east.

STRAWBERRIES: The strawberry market has been affected significantly by the cooler temperatures we have seen throughout the US. Florida berries will be virtually non-existent as frost has set in pushing back any crop. Mexican fruit has also been slowed down by the dip in temperatures and supply is limited.

Chilean Stone Fruit

Starting to see better prices, better quality and sizing.

Tropical Fruit

BABY FRENCH BEANS: Tight item for Christmas week business.

KIWI: Pricing steady with good volume.

LIMES: Prices has firmed up and increased on some sizes, with better demand this week. Size 200 and large remained limited. Overall quality is very nice.

MANGOES: Both conventional and organic markets are in good supply. Great time to promote!

MARIDOL PAPAYAS/ GOLD PAPAYAS: Stable market; excellent quality on Caribbean Red Maridol papayas and Brazil Gold.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS/SNO PEAS: Cost down as volume picking up.

Merchandising Tips

Well let's just get right to the point of the New Year, and that is all your customers' New Year's Resolutions. People will say they need to loss that 20 pounds that they put on over the holidays, when in actuality it was only around 5 pounds. Here are a few ideas for you to help out the customers with that problem. First of all, start up front with a nice citrus display featuring grapefruit. You can tie in some navel oranges and box clementine's for some color to the display. Apples will also add some nice color to the display with some nice signage. Here is a fun fact for you to add to the signage about apples, "Eating your favorite apple 30 minutes before your meal will help you curb your appetite."

Salads will also be a hot item for your customers that want to lose the extra pounds that they gained. Make sure your dressings set is close by in the case, and a nice display of grape tomatoes that will help to drive some extra sales. A couple of other items to consider would be fresh mandarin oranges, dried cranberries, and walnut pieces. Let's not forget about the value-added section of your department. Fresh cut fruit and vegetables will also be on your customer's minds as they aim to eat healthier in the coming weeks. If you need a little help to keep up the value-added item's, then talk to your Crosset customer service representative about getting items from CC's Kitchens. Remember that you need an extra day's lead time when ordering. Using some nice signage will help to gain extra sales for your department. You could say something like "Made Fresh Daily," or "Produce Mangers Pick of the Day." I am sure that you will have great success at whatever you try to do. Now, Go Out and Make It A Great Day!

CROSSET NEW ITEM & DELETION SHEET

W/B: 1/14/18

ITEM #	NEW ITEMS	SIZE
41591	Citrus Sumo 18ct	18#
38818	Minneola Tangelos	12/3#
38860	Minneola Tangelos	56ct
69020	Black Seedless Grapes	18#
74680	Tomato Lady Moon OG	20#
75545	Tomato Cherry OG	12ct
75625	Tomato Rainbow Mix OG	12ct
41590	Sumo Citrus	18#
	DELETIONS	
40405	Navel Orange	113ct
88015	White Potato	10/5#
30080	Sweet Tango Apple	38#
78038	Florida Strawberries	8/1#
205	Cantaloupes	6ct
97305	Black-eyed Peas	12/10oz
69419	CV Red Seedless Grapes	19#
69211	CV White Seedless Grapes	19#
97425	Pomegranates	22ct
55040	Halo Clementine's 4/5#	4/5#
55042	OG Clementine's	12/2#
69445	CV Jbo Red Seedless Grapes	19#
69215	CV Jbo White Seedless Grapes	19#
74605	Tomatoes Red OG	15#