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Believe science, not spin: Organic food still the best nutritional choice

Kutztown PA – The Rodale Institute is committed to catalyzing new research that will authoritatively establish the nutritional, health and environmental benefits of eating organic food. Recent attention given to the nutritional aspects of organic foods speaks to a high level of consumer interest in food and health.

The Institute, a pioneer in organic farming research for 60 years, welcomes the call for more research by the lead scientist of a recent study conducted by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The research review included a mix of research materials published in the 50 years up to February 2008, about a quarter of them from before 2000.

“We’re as confident as we were before the recent media furor that existing and forthcoming research will show the myriad nutritional benefits of organic foods,” said Tim LaSalle, CEO of the Institute, and a former dairy science professor at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly). “Nutrition is a primary consideration in food choice, and organic choices continue to be validated by nutrition studies from around the world.”

“Media spin has largely missed the point of this tightly focused study using existing data. It is a blip, not a cataclysm, in the ongoing effort to grasp the complexities of how organic food—from healthy soil and natural systems—differs from food grown with synthetic fertilizers and pesticides,” LaSalle explained.

The study, funded by the UK Food Standards Agency, formally acknowledges data demonstrating significant nutritional advantages for organic. It said in its analysis, however, that the evidence was insufficient, under its protocol, to proclaim organic superiority.

“We know that research from scientists in the United States, UK and the EU will improve the quality and scope of this scientific discussion, and will bolster the magnitude of the organic difference,” LaSalle explained.

The study accepted data from only 55 field trials, farm surveys and market basket surveys of the 52,471 citations it identified with relevance to comparing nutrients (and other substances) from organic and non-organic sources. Methods for rejection included

statistical methodology, unclear organic system verification and lack of specific breed/cultivar identification. Some of the studies included were conducted before the creation of current national organic standards.

Nutritional research emerging in the next year will build on current data showing organic superiority in the particular areas of antioxidant capacity (important for cancer-fighting properties) and omega-3 v. omega-6 balance in dairy products.

The Rodale Institute has been comparing organic and non-organic practices for nearly three decades, and released a report in 2008 explaining the regenerative capabilities of organic agriculture as a solution to confront global warming. Organic production methods are responsible for fewer pesticides and herbicides in soils and water, better management of land, and food with little to no risk of doing long-term damage to our planet, its people, and its biodiversity.

“There is no reason to be less confident in your organic choices, which continue to count as real votes in the marketplace for healthy people, healthy farms and healthy communities,” LaSalle stated.

ABOUT RODALE INSTITUTE

Rodale Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that creates global solutions from the ground up. Our soil scientists and a cooperating network of researchers have documented that organic farming techniques offer the best solution to global warming and famine. We were founded in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, in 1947 by organic pioneer J.I. Rodale. Our Farming Systems Trial® (the longest-running U.S. study comparing organic and conventional farming techniques) and 10-year Compost Utilization Trial document the long-term benefits of organic management with compost.

Our findings are clear: A global organic transformation will mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in our atmosphere and restore soil fertility. Our mission: We improve the health and well-being of people and the planet.

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Rodale Institute papers:

Regenerative Organic Farming: A solution to global warming

<http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/20080425/gw6>

Organic Green Revolution

By Tim LaSalle, PhD, Paul Hepperly, PhD, and Amadou Diop, PhD

<http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/20081203/fp1>