

Geographical Eye



Organic Fortnight

The Soil Association Organic Fortnight 2007 ran from 1-16 September. During the fortnight, businesses, individuals and communities across Britain united to celebrate all things organic. Up and down the country there were organic fares, festivals and gardening events.



What is organic food?

Organic food is produced according to a set of principles and standards that address issues such as sustainability, pesticides, additives and animal welfare.

Organic produce is available in anything that is grown or farmed to be eaten or drunk, including: fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy and chocolate. Several non-food items can be labelled organic, including clothing, paper, wood and selected beauty products.

The organic market is a growing one, Globally, sales of organic food and drink increased by £2.6bn to £19.3bn last year. The organic textiles sectors has experienced particularly strong growth - with organic cotton being used by more and more brands.



There are different regulation bodies for organic produce, some stricter than others. The Soil Association organic symbol is the UK's largest and most recognisable trademark for organic produce.

The Soil Association meets the UK government minimum requirements of sustainability, environment and animal welfare, and is higher in many areas.

The Soil Association requirements apply to anything that's grown or farmed to be eaten or drunk as well as the processing of food, e.g. the milling flour to baking bread.

Keeping organic food GM free

Buying organic food is one way to avoid GM ingredients, since the use of GM ingredients is prohibited in organic food and farming.

The European Commission, supported by the UK Government, propose to relax organic standards, allow the accidental GM contamination of 0.9% of organic food. This means that almost one in a hundred mouthfuls of organically labelled food could be subject to accidental GM contamination.

European agriculture ministers assert that current regulations can make organic products too expensive for farmers to produce. Accidental or technically unavoidable, levels of GM should be tolerated so as to support the organic market.

The Soil Association, along with other environment organisations strongly oppose the proposed change in organic regulations. They argue that consumers should have the opportunity to buy genuine organic food, and a GM contamination over the limit of detection (0.1%) is unacceptable.

Environmental organisations have criticised the lax attitude of the EU, in practice, low levels of GM material could start slipping into all organic food – putting the industry at risk.

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