

Field Walk...

Organic foods are poised to make bold moves into markets everywhere. This is very good news. But we should expect a backlash to grow along with it. For what it's worth, here's my two cents.

For years, organic regulations have been a blessing for both farmers and consumers as a way to distinguish two very different ways of farming. It has given non-pesticide farmers a means of communicating directly with consumers, and it has given consumers the confidence in the integrity of their food choices.

Because of this integrity, and because its techniques are sound and founded on the wisdom of the ages, organics have emerged as a legitimate sector of the food economy. We are now poised on the day when organics reach into every market. In every sense, we can expect to find legitimate organic choices every time and everywhere we shop.

But, does "organic" mean everything we think it means? Unfortunately it doesn't. "Organic" does mean that our food, soils, air, and water are protected from the deleterious effects of accumulating poisons. "Organic" means we've stopped the "war" on pests and weeds and are closer to working with nature.

However, the label still does not indicate land or community sustainability. It still doesn't tell you everything that goes into food production. It says nothing about labor practices or if the soil is treated in a non-erosive way. It says nothing about the impacts of large-scale production or mass distribution.

The recent out-break of E. coli is a case in point. Even if it didn't originate on an organic farm, it still highlights the problems inherent in large-scale production and global distribution.

I'm personally delighted that large-scale growers are embracing organic agriculture. At the same time I fear that consumers will see too much in the label, that people will make assumptions that "organic" means more than it does, that at some point, large-scale producers will ship out "organic" products that are just as uniform, tasteless, and abnormally shiny as their conventional cousins, all the while hiding the same old unjust labor practices behind their USDA-approved "organic" label.

I am in no way urging people to become overly skeptical of the organic label. When we feed our little boy, I know that "organic" protects him from harmful residues, hormones, and fumigants. I would ask for a healthy dose of skepticism, however. We should not walk into this new Wal-Mart-driven organic frontier blindly. It is time to ask hard questions before we are disappointed.

The next stage towards true sustainability is a keen distinction between organic and local. Local agriculture has positive impacts that go above and beyond organic. Local means that you know where your food comes from, that you get full, fresh flavor when the season is at its peak. It means that you are protected from contaminated California water, that you support fair wages for honest work, and that your farm worker isn't required to move south to find work during winter. And your children can go gallivanting across the fields.

We're getting there. With each season, local is becoming increasingly legitimate. You can taste the difference!

What's in Your Share

Carrots

Garlic

Fresh Onion

Potatoes (the last week for potatoes)

Cucumbers

Radishes

Salad Mix

Swiss Chard

Winter Squash

Sweet Peppers

Swiss Chard

Pick-your-own Cherry Tomatoes and
Green Beans

Volunteer Opportunities:

Next Workday is Saturday, October 7, 9 to 12... Your extra help works wonders!

We also need extra help with a few weeding "emergencies", especially in the strawberries, so if you have extra time, even a single hour goes a long way... Call the farm (467-2104) to set up a time...

Crop to Expect in Coming Weeks:

Cilantro, dill, turnips, beets, lettuce, spinach... later, expect broccoli, kale, cabbage, leeks, sweet potatoes, rutabaga, and more!
