

Research suggests organic food ‘can help you lose weight ...and live longer’

Organic food research has produced conflicting outcomes. In May 2011 the University of Newcastle announced it could improve lifespan and health. In February 2011 research, again by the University of Newcastle, determined that pesticides may harm male fertility and in January 2011 the University concluded that organic milk has up to 60% more ‘healthy fats’ than conventional milk. Washington State University in September 2010 revealed that organic strawberries have ‘significantly higher levels’ of antioxidants. Going back to July 2009, data presented at the British Pharmaceutical Conference revealed that organic apples have more antioxidants than non-organic apples.

On the other side of the argument, in February 2011 Which? Magazine reported that trials on organic potatoes, broccoli and tomatoes found them to have fewer nutrients and in September 2009 the UK Food Standards Agency determined from an analysis of 55 studies that organic food is no more healthy than non-organic.

The University of Newcastle research, to be published in the journal *Critical Reviews in Plant Sciences*, challenges the opinion of the Food Standards Agency which has repeatedly dismissed claims of health benefits from organic food. The researchers suggest that a reduced use of chemicals and better animal welfare and husbandry should be taken into consideration, a view shared by the Soil Association.

The University study found that fruit and vegetables grown organically are about 6% richer in vitamin C, plus they provide various immune boosting nutrients. The researchers took these findings to estimate the life-enhancing effect of switching from eating only conventional fruits and vegetables to organic versions in the same quantities. They suggest that in all probability most people won’t live any longer but some could add months or even years to their lives. Resveratrol is one of the beneficial compounds found to be significantly higher in organic food. Because it is associated with ‘fooling the body into losing fat’ the study suggests it could result in longer lives because of a corresponding weight loss, or lack of weight gain.