

## Dr. Mercola's Comments on Organic Foods

The fact that people, in ever increasing numbers, are addressing their dietary choices and choosing to adopt a greener, healthier lifestyle is a great thing. On the downside, if we're not careful and vigilant, [the terms "organic" and "natural" will completely disintegrate and become nothing more than marketing clichés – the beginnings of which are apparent already.](#)

It's unfortunate, but numerous companies are tacking misleading or downright fraudulent labels and claims to their wares, and are charging a premium for the *idea* of healthy food.

Greenwashing, the practice of branding a conventionally grown or processed food as natural or organic, is becoming a pervasive problem. Companies have realized that a simple label change can be sufficient to nab a share of the growing all-natural movement. And it's a big market.

In addition to organic sales, which accounts for 4 percent of total U.S. retail sales, products labeled as "natural" or "sustainable" account for another \$50 billion annually, or 8 percent of total retail grocery sales. The annual growth rate of this "natural" or "sustainable" market is about 10-15 percent. It's only normal for companies to want to cash in. But it's extremely unfortunate that they don't give you what you pay for in all cases.

### **Learning How to Read Labels All Over Again**

I've already warned readers about the substandard and distorted image of organic foods promoted by companies such as [Wal-Mart](#), who were found guilty of deceptive organic labeling on several products in 2007.

Other major corporations like [Dean Foods](#), General Mills, Unilever, Mars, Kraft and Kellogg have also jumped in to reap some of the fat margins that are present in organic foods, further distorting the real meaning of organic, and all-natural.

The question you need to ask yourself is: Does the label really make sense?

Is it possible for Cheetos to be processed and still be considered a natural health food? What ingredients can be included and still be all-natural and healthy? As an example, how many "natural" products have you purchased lately that contain high fructose corn syrup (HFCS)?

The fact is, no matter how natural corn may be, [corn syrup is neither natural nor healthy](#), and if you're striving for a natural diet, HFCS does not belong.

### **The Increasing Hazard of Genetically Altered Foods**

Part of the problem also includes checking your foods for GMOs. I've often said it's better to buy conventionally-grown fruits and veggies if they're fresher than the organic varieties, but I would pause before buying GM varieties for any reason.

In my mind, the infiltration of GM foods into your everyday fare is a serious mistake that will most likely bring catastrophic problems, both in terms of human health and environmental hazards. In fact, I go so far as to say that [GMOs pose a major threat to the fertility and the very existence of all life on earth.](#)

A recent [study](#) conducted by eight international researchers indicate that the dangers of GMOs are being significantly downplayed or overlooked by the very agencies charged with protecting your health.

The results of their study calls into question the reliability of the tests used by the European Food Safety (EFSA) and the U.S. FDA to assess the health risks of GMOs and pesticides.

Some go even further than that. In this [previously published lecture](#), [Jeffrey Smith](#), author of *Seeds of Deception*, discusses how corruption within the U.S. government, the FDA, and the GMO industry has allowed and perpetuated a cover-up of GMOs real dangers.

He also explains how genetically modified foods cause health problems, and the mechanism by which they can create a vast array of completely unforeseen and surprising illnesses.

As for tracking down GM foods in your local food store, reading labels is oftentimes not enough, although you can [check the PLU code on fresh produce to see if it's a GM variety](#).

Processed foods, however, do not advertise which, if any, ingredients have been genetically modified, so you'll have to do your research. [The True Food Network](#) offers a great [guide to GM-Free foods](#).

### **The Hidden Costs of Cheap Food**

One of the most important aspects to consider when comparing prices is understanding how you can save in the long run by eating well now.

What most people are doing is exchanging convenience and taste for their health. While it seems like a great bargain initially, down the road the hidden costs of health problems, impairment, disability and premature death come into play.

Processed foods containing cheap, chemical-laden ingredients will eventually take their toll on your body, and you'll pay for your dietary choices with both your quality of life and your pocketbook when you get ill.

Just look at what obesity is doing to healthcare costs. ABC News recently [reported](#) that healthcare spending on obese patients has risen by more than 80 percent over the course of five years and account for the largest increase in healthcare spending.

Between 2001 and 2006, healthcare costs for the obese rose from just below \$167 billion to more than \$303 billion – an 82 percent increase.

In comparison, total expenditures for the slightly overweight rose 36 percent, and normal-weight patients' costs rose by 25 percent.

This is not insignificant as health care costs are the leading cause of bankruptcy, especially in these troubled economic times. All it takes is one serious illness that can EASILY generate six-figure unexpected and frequently uninsured expenses, and that pushes many families into bankruptcy.

Even if you don't go bankrupt there are other costs. There's no doubt that [obesity is dangerous to your health](#) and significantly increases your risk of diseases such as:

- Hypertension
- High total cholesterol and triglycerides
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast and colon)

So, what's causing this obesity epidemic? The answer is quite simple: An abundance of unhealthy, processed foods that is frequently based on [the corn economy](#) and provide little or no real nutrition. As I'm fond of reminding you, 90 percent of the money Americans spend on food is spent on processed foods.

I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say, every time you buy processed foods, the money you saved that day you'll spend, and more, for medical bills down the road.

### **Other Deceptive Tactics to Look Out For**

Greenwashing is not the only deceptive tactic employed these days to get you to part with your money. Now we're also seeing more and more examples of "localwashing" – corporations launching campaigns appealing to the market's increasing attention to "food miles" and taste for local foods.

A recent [article](#) in *The Best of New Orleans* highlights this growing trend with a story about how one of the biggest banks

on the planet, HSBC, has taken to calling itself "the world's local bank," and Winn-Dixie, a 500-outlet supermarket chain, recently launched a new ad campaign under the tagline, "Local flavor since 1956."

Talk about watering down the underlying message and *meaning* of the word.

Locally grown food has soared in popularity, giving rise to self-proclaimed "locavores." The U.S. now has nearly 4,700 farmers markets – and corporate executives and the consumer research firms that advise them are taking notice, tracking this localizing trend to see how they might benefit.

Misleading corporate strategies now include redefining the term "local" to mean not locally owned, grown or produced, but just something "close by," or worse yet, local through association with something else.

### **If You Can't Trust Them, Avoid Them**

Eating plenty of organic foods and maintaining an active, healthy lifestyle are key if you want to prevent chronic disease and reduce your healthcare costs. It's also the only answer to the healthcare crisis in the U.S. as a whole.

How healthy can you really be if you're routinely ingesting pesticides, antibiotics, hormone disrupting chemicals, genetically modified organisms, chemical additives, colors and preservatives, and an untold amount of other chemically-derived byproducts and toxins?

The health statistics speak for themselves. Cancers, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and allergies of all kinds are modern plagues, spreading and increasing in occurrence and severity with each passing year.

We've tried trusting Big Pharma and Big Food Inc. and this is the result. It's time for a radical change.

The trend of organic fraud may linger for years, but you don't have to fall prey to their tactics.

Seek out REAL local suppliers of REAL healthy food. Get to know the people who grow them. A good start is to check out some of the suppliers I mentioned in my previous article, [How to Get Inexpensive, Organic, Locally-Grown Vegetables](#).

Always remember, just because someone slaps an "organic" or "natural" label on a food product, that label does not somehow magically transform [a junk food](#) into a health food. "Organic" sugar and "all-natural" processed foods are just as detrimental to your health as conventional sugar and [processed foods](#).