

# Definition of Organics in the U.S.

Effective 21 October 2002, all agricultural farms and products claiming to be organic must be guaranteed by a USDA-approved independent agency to be meeting the following guidelines:

- Abstain from the application of prohibited materials (including synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and sewage sludge) for 3 years prior to certification and then continually throughout their organic license.
- Prohibit the use of genetically modified organisms and irradiation.
- Employ positive soil building, conservation, manure management and crop rotation practices.
- Provide outdoor access and pasture for livestock.
- Refrain from antibiotic and hormone use in animals.
- Sustain animals on 100% organic feed.
- Avoid contamination during the processing of organic products.
- Keep records of all operations.

Organic products grown in healthier soil contain higher levels of nutrients, and many taste better than their conventional counterparts. Organic fruits and vegetables test at minimal or zero pesticide residue levels and, with the passage of the USDA organic standards, consumers can now be assured producers follow earth-friendly cultivation and grazing practices. Millions of people choose organic foods as a way of showing their support for responsible business, strong communities, and local farmers.

## Definition of Sustainable Agriculture:

In addition to the nearly 7,000 certified organic farms in the United States, a growing number of the country's nearly 2.2 million farms are abandoning conventional, volume-driven techniques in favor of economical, ecological, and social balance. Sustainable agriculture describes the practices of a group of producers that may not meet the strict legal standards for organic agriculture but that seek many of the same goals and outcomes. Specifically, sustainable farmer's goals include:

- More profitable farm income
- Environmental stewardship, including:
  - o Guarding and improving soil quality
  - o Minimizing dependence on non-renewable fuels, pesticides, and fertilizers
- Promotion of stable, prosperous farm families and communities

Sustainable farmers employ a variety of location-specific and creative practices to accomplish these goals. Excellent profiles of farmers using sustainable practices can be found at