

What's The Difference? Organic Versus Non-GMO Labels

Description

We are in a golden age of healthy food availability, so why is it so hard to determine the "right" products to consume? Part of the reason is the glut of options. From low-cal and gluten-free to kosher and low-carb, the information overload in the grocery aisles can feel overwhelming.

Two of the most commonly recognized labels "organic" and "non-GMO" can confuse even the most health-conscious consumer. The two labels often get lumped together even though their meanings are quite different.

It's easy to fall into the trap of using these terms interchangeably, but that approach is inaccurate. This article will break down the two types of labels to help you understand the differences.

What Qualifies as Organic?

Experts have struggled for years to come up with a definition for this category of food. Fortunately, the USDA has since narrowed down the qualifications.

The primary distinction for organic food is how it's handled during production. For example, the raw ingredients must never come into contact with synthetic chemicals, such as certain herbicides and fertilizers. For meat products, the animals themselves must not be exposed to antibiotics or growth hormones.

Organic food must not contain any genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In other words, non-GMO is one of the criteria for organic classification, but the term itself has its own definition.

So how do you know what's organic? Look for the "USDA Organic" seal on a product to know that it's been certified.

What Is Non-GMO, and How Can You Identify It?

As noted above, non-GMO is not interchangeable with organic. While non-GMO is part of the criteria for organic classification, something that is non-GMO is not necessarily organic.

GMO generally refers to plants and animals that have been genetically modified in non-traditional ways and are not naturally occurring. While crossbreeding technically results in modifications, it doesn't fall into the GMO category. So how can you tell the difference?

The Non-GMO Project verifies qualifying food products by way of third-party inspections. Rigorous on-site review, annual audits, organic system plan reviews and residue testing help this organization say with certainty whether food is non-GMO. In fact, certification goes so far as to require that the food not even come in contact with other GMO products (animal feed, for example).

Qualifying food products can display a “Non-GMO Project Verified” label to help consumers quickly identify them.

By understanding organic and non-GMO labels, we hope this helps you make informed food decisions for your family. When you grasp the food industry’s complex language, you skip all the guesswork. While organic and non-GMO definitions are fairly straightforward, the food industry is always evolving. Refer to USDA and Non-GMO Project guidance to stay up to date, and consult the accompanying infographic for more details on the differences between the two labels.

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What's The Difference?

ORGANIC

versus

NON-GMO

USDA ORGANIC

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NON-GMO Project



CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

USDA Organic



No use of GMOs, chemical or sewer sludge fertilizers, synthetic substances or irradiation



100% of feed for livestock is organic

95-100%

95-100% of ingredients are certified as organic



No antibiotic or synthetic hormones used in raising

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<https://www.slideshare.net/PacMoore/organic-versus-nongmo-labels>

Author bio: Chris Bekermeier is Vice President of Marketing at PacMoore, a [food contract manufacturer](#) that offers food processing and packaging services. Bekermeier received his B.S. in Business Management from Eastern Illinois University and his MBA from University of Chicago.

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