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Organic food more nutritious say EU researchers


Early results of a £12 million, 4-year European Union study on the benefits of organic food suggest that some of them, such as fruit, vegetables and milk, are more nutritious than non-organically produced food and may contain higher concentrations of cancer-fighting and heart-beneficial antioxidants.

The results, released to the press, will be published in full within the next 12 months. The findings were announced by Professor Carlo Leifert of the Tesco Centre for Organic Agriculture based at Newcastle University, UK. Leifert and his team are working on an EU-funded project in the Quality Low Input Food (QLIF) program, the biggest ever to research the pros and cons of organic farming and food.

Prof Leifert told the press that the research results suggested that eating organic food was equivalent to eating an extra portion of fruit and vegetables a day.

The early results of the study show that organic fruit and vegetables have up to 40% more antioxidants than non-organically grown produce. Even greater contrasts were found for milk, with organic milk containing up to 60% more antioxidants and healthy fatty acids, said Leifert.

The Newcastle University researchers raise cattle and grow fruit and vegetables on 725 acres of organic and non-organic farms situated next to each other at the university's agriculture centre in Stocksfield, Northumberland. Similar set ups exist at other research centres across Europe.

Leifert's findings contradict advice by the UK government's Food Standards Agency which states that organic produce is no healthier than non-organically produced food. Leifert said he and his team now want to explore the underlying mechanisms by which organic as opposed to non-organic farming methods lead to such higher concentrations of healthy nutrients. 

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