What You Can Say When Marketing Organic

INTRODUCTION

There is a climate emergency, we have ten years to change our behaviour to prevent catastrophic global heating. From taking fewer flights to eating less but better meat, people are increasingly making conscious decisions to reduce their impact on the planet and help build a better future.

Organic can play a leading role. As shoppers seek to be more sustainable in their daily lives, organic is increasingly becoming an easy and natural choice. However, there is more that can be done to help people understand what organic means and empower them to choose organic.

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Cutting through the noise

Confronted with a sea of labels, competing health claims, food scares and conflicting advice, people are confused. Coupled with this confusion is a growing awareness that our choices and behaviour have an impact on the wider world. This presents an opportunity for the organic industry to come together to make our voice heard and communicate the benefits of organic simply and clearly. With this in mind, we have shifted the focus of this booklet to demonstrate how organic can offer solutions in a post COVID-19 world. We have added a section to explain more about how the organic standards help achieve the outcomes that benefit our environment and how organic takes a "whole system" approach.

Organic – the natural way to be more sustainable

Organic farming is a system – governed by legal standards, and regularly and independently inspected – that produces food in ways that benefit people, animals, wildlife, society and the natural world. No other defined system of farming and food production comes close to delivering such a breadth of benefits. With attitudes shifting towards more planet-centric thinking, the time is now for the organic industry to harness this momentum and work together to promote a clear message.

What's inside

This booklet was prepared with reference to the principles of the CAP (Committee of Advertising Practice) Code. It features statements that can be used to communicate about organic in a clear and correct way. It covers the organic principles, and includes sections on sustainability, climate change, animal welfare, soil, wildlife and more. While these statements have been reviewed against the UK Advertising Standard Authority's (ASA) Code, it is important to remember that **CONTEXT IS KEY** when using particular statements, and we would **ALWAYS** advise that you submit your own advertising copy and materials to Copy Advice before using them, as much will depend on the context that a statement appears in.

We hope you find this booklet useful, and, ultimately that it helps us all to promote a strong, clear and positive message about organic.

Clare McDermott

Business Development Director
Soil Association Certification

Advertising Standards Authority & Copy Advice

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the UK's independent advertising regulator. The ASA makes sure ads across UK media stick to the advertising rules (the Advertising Codes). The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) is the sister organisation of the ASA and is responsible for writing the Advertising Codes.

The ASA investigate any complaints made about non-broadcast advertising, once it is established that it falls within the ASA's remit. They also spot-check ads across media to make sure they're sticking to the rules.

To help advertisers get their ads right, CAP provides a range of advice, guidance and training, including a free pre-publication Copy Advice service. Copy Advice are linked to, but independent of the ASA, and always take pains to stress that if they advise that a statement is acceptable, it still may be found to be unacceptable by the ASA. Nevertheless, their view carries some weight with the ASA, and certainly provides a useful guide to advertisers. Copy Advice is an essential service for advertisers, agencies, media owners and media service providers who want to check how their prospective non-broadcast ads or multi-media concepts measure up against the UK Advertising Codes.

The vast majority of advertisers, promoters and direct marketers comply with the Code. Those that do not may be subject to sanctions.

What does the ASA Non-Broadcasting code cover?

The UK Code of Non-Broadcast Advertising and Direct & Promotional Marketing (CAP Code) is the rule book for non-broadcast advertisements, sales promotions and marketing communications. Visit the ASA website (**www.asa.org.uk**) for a full breakdown of what is included in the Code.

In summary:

The Code applies to: all non-broadcast marketing communications including national and regional print and press ads; advertorials; posters; direct mail; email and text messages; online including banners, pop-ups, own websites and social media.

The code does not apply, amongst other things, to: packaging/on-pack claims; shop windows; point of sale; sponsorship; live telephone calls; fly-posting; private classified ads; statutory/public notices; press releases; political ads; online editorial.

Note: TV & Radio ads are covered by the UK Code of Broadcast Advertising (BCAP Code) and are usually pre-cleared by Clearcast (TV) or Radiocentre (radio). It is important to note that Clearcast approval DOES NOT mean it meets ASA approval.

Misleading Advertising

Is the average consumer to whom the ad is directed likely to be misled into taking a transactional decision which they would not have otherwise taken?

Adverts should not materially mislead, exaggerate the capability or performance of a product or omit material information.

Marketers must hold documentary evidence to prove objective claims (including prices). Significant limitations and qualifications must be stated and should not contradict.

What does not fall within the ASA's remit?

"Puffery"
Obvious exaggerations ("puffery") and claims unlikely to be taken literally are permitted provided they do not materially mislead.

For example:
"The most comfortable beds in the world"
"The happiest place on Earth"
"Red Bull gives you wings"
"Together we can make a world of difference"

Subjective Claims

Subjective claims are generally those which consumers will interpret as an opinion about the product and service, such as "my favourite", or those that refer to aspects of a product or service which are based on personal subjective preference, such as look, taste, or feel.

Note: Marketers should not try to present objective claims as subjective opinions or testimonials in order to make a claim without having the supporting evidence. Examples of this include putting quotation marks round an objective claim, or prefixing a claim with "users thought", or similar. Even if a claim is presented as an opinion, if it is an objective claim it must be supported by evidence which substantiates the claim.

Substantiation

Marketers must hold documentary evidence for claims that consumers are likely to regard as objective. Without adequate substantiation, claims are likely to be misleading. The level of substantiation depends on the claim – the stronger the claim, the more robust the evidence needed.

E.g. "70% of shoppers prefer the taste of organic potatoes" could be substantiated by a market study. "Organic cotton production uses 50% less water" would need robust supporting evidence.

If investigating a claim, the ASA will require the evidence to be submitted, and will call on independent experts when necessary.

YOU CAN'T SAY EVERYTHING THAT IS TRUE!

The rules governing what you can say to sell a product, as administered by the ASA, do not simply rely on a statement being true. For example, while you may make comparisons, you are not allowed to say something that the ASA might feel 'denigrates' other products.

FOOD & ENVIRONMENT RULES

If an ad promotes a particular food product, rather than a farming technique or philosophy, the strict food rules in Section 15 apply.

If an ad makes claims about environmental impact, the Section 11 requirements to hold strong evidence and clearly state the basis of the claims, will apply. For full details on the scope and rules of the code visit: **www.asa.org.uk/codes-and-rulings/advertising-codes/non-broadcast-code.html**

How to use the statements in this document

1. Once you have decided to use a statement, **you must still check your specific advertisement with Copy Advice**. The context in which the statement is used, and any associated imagery, can alter the meaning of the words, so give as much detail as possible to help Copy Advice make an informed response.

2. You need to hold any evidence that might be required to substantiate the statements you make, when you make them. The digital version of this document is fully referenced and can be found on our website (**www.soilassociation.org/whatyoucansay**). Many of the claims listed are based on general evidence for organic farming systems. This evidence is unlikely to be representative of a specific product so should be used in a context that does not suggest otherwise (unless additional evidence is found). See page 11 for further details.

3. In order to assist the ASA in assessing a claim, highlight the appropriate information and explain the relevance, if necessary. Given this could be buried within a detailed report, this can save the ASA advisors from having to read pages of irrelevant information in order to verify the claim. Helping them helps you!

Copy Advice can be reached via their website at **www.asa.org.uk/advice-and-resources/bespoke-copy-advice.html** and proposed statements can be submitted via the website for free advice. Copy Advice always undertake to respond within 24 hours. However, remember that Copy Advice will always qualify their opinion by stressing that it does not bind the ASA itself.

Telling the organic story

Our farming and food production systems have multiple and often 'hidden' problems that need solving. Some argue you can't fix everything all at once, but organic does a pretty good job! The true strength of organic is how it attempts to tackle these multiple problems and reduce any trade-offs – by taking a holistic "whole system" approach.

But this is a complicated concept to get across. We recommend taking a narrative or visual approach to tell this organic 'story'; the way organic standards tackle a wide range of often hidden, interrelating problems in the food system. It is about how simply looking for an organic label can make a very complicated choice, somewhat easier. The claims in this booklet are here, not so much as standalone facts, but to help you to convey this story, or at least a feel for it, using language that has been verified and can be backed up by science.

If you plot sustainability as a flower, where the degree of positive impact on different components of sustainability are shown by the size of the petal, then organic farming has been found to have a more balanced, full flower shape compared to non-organic farming.

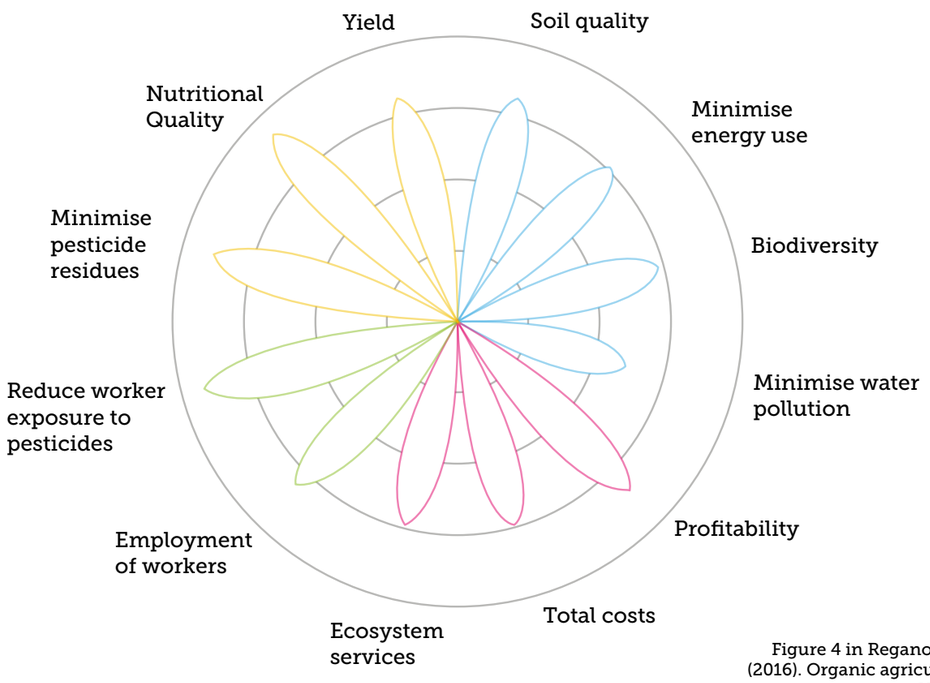


Figure 4 in Reganold, J. P., & Wachter, J. M. (2016). Organic agriculture in the twenty-first century. Nature Plants, 2(2), 15221. https://doi.org/10.1038/nplants.2015.221

What is organic?

> Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.
>
> Definition of Organic Agriculture, IFOAM – Organics International

Organic Agriculture is based on four key principles:

HEALTH

Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.

ECOLOGY

Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.

CARE

Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

FAIRNESS

Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.

Organic Standards

The Soil Association developed the world's first organic standards in the 1960s. Standards are the rules that define how an organic product must be grown, farmed or made. The principles upon which the Soil Association's organic standards are based are set out below. Organic takes a "whole system" approach to farming and food production – it recognises the close interrelationships between all parts of the production system, from the soil to the food on our fork. This comprehensive set of organic principles guides the Soil Association's work and standards.

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTION

1. To produce food of high quality and in sufficient quantity by the use of processes that do not harm the environment, human health, plant health or animal health and welfare
2. To work within natural systems and cycles at all levels, from the soil to plants and animals
3. To maintain the long-term fertility and biological activity of soils
4. To treat livestock ethically, meeting their species-specific physiological and behavioural needs
5. To respect regional, environmental, climatic and geographic differences and the appropriate practices that have evolved in response to them
6. To maximise the use of renewable resources and recycling
7. To design and manage organic systems which make the best use of natural resources and ecology to prevent the need for external inputs. Where this fails or where external inputs are required, the use of external inputs is limited to organic, natural or naturally-derived substances
8. To limit the use of chemically synthesised inputs to situations where appropriate alternative management practices do not exist, or natural or organic inputs are not available, or where alternative inputs would contribute to unacceptable environmental impacts
9. To exclude the use of soluble mineral fertilisers
10. To foster biodiversity and protect sensitive habitats and landscape features
11. To minimise pollution and waste
12. To use preventative and precautionary measures and risk assessment when appropriate
13. To exclude the use of GMOs and products produced from or by GMOs, with the exception of veterinary medicinal products
14. To sustainably use products from fisheries

Why organic?

In the face of climate change, diet-related ill health and widespread decline in wildlife, the need to change our food system has never been greater. The "whole system" approach used in organic attempts to address issues in a joined-up way. Organic therefore provides solutions to many problems, offering truly sustainable food for a growing population, in a way that works with nature.

Food you can trust

The standards for organic food are laid down in law (and, in places, these are supplemented by the Soil Association's well-evidenced higher standards), so certification is required to grow, process or market organic products, plus all organic farms and companies are inspected at least once a year.

Soil Association Certification certifies over 70% of organic food in the UK and the organic label is the best way of assuring that the food you eat has been produced to a standard you can trust.

Why We Can't Always Say What We'd Like

Wondering why some claims are phrased in a certain way or not quite as strong as you might expect?

Research gaps

In order to make a substantiated claim on the benefits of a farming system, a huge number of studies from different places and for different products are needed. This is especially the case for most things that you want to put a number on, such as percentage greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Organic standards are evidence-based and regulated by law, so their rationale has had a lot of scientific scrutiny. But research gaps do remain, especially when it comes to quantifying the impacts of organic systems. Sadly, less than 1% of all annual research funding for farming goes towards looking at organic systems so the claims listed here reflect this.

Research bias

The metrics chosen by scientists also have implications for how the results are interpreted. For example, commonly used methods like Life Cycle Analyses, tend to favour intensive farming methods over organic. This is because such methods can take a narrow perspective on the function of farming systems – such as focussing on yield, without considering non-economic impacts like biodiversity. The starting point for organic is to try and avoid a narrow focus, by taking a holistic, "whole system" approach. A "whole system" approach means attempting to strike a more optimum balance between avoiding or mitigating a wide range of the common negative consequences associated with food production whilst still producing enough food. Methods that fail to account for the full range of factors that the organic approach considers, or which inconsistently model them, can misrepresent the benefits of organic and result in evidence that is not as strong as might be expected.

Ongoing disputes

An example of this is the ongoing debate about the implications of organic farming for yields, with organic farms sometimes being found to produce lower yields. Lower yields often mean that measured impacts (such as GHG emissions) come out lower per area of farmland, but higher per unit of product. Whilst some argue this counts against organic, others (including the Soil Association) argue this sets up a false dichotomy because it fails to consider the other costs that high yields come with. Not only because it ignores the potential to close the yield gap, but by focusing on a narrow set of metrics (yields and efficiency of input per unit of product) at the expense of other metrics it is short-sighted and fails to evaluate overall sustainability. This yield driven approach has directly and indirectly contributed to waste, overconsumption of unhealthy foods, and has provided economic incentives to convert natural habitat to agriculture. Nonetheless, the ASA emphasise the importance of being sensitive to ongoing scientific disputes. For this reason, when organic farming performs better only in terms of land area comparisons, the claim specifies this.

How to use claims in the context of a specific product

1. Claims based on organic standards are usually applicable to specific products

Claims listed which are based on organic standards are ***italicised and in bold and marked with our organic symbol*** Ⓞ. These should be applicable to specific products when these products meet the standards that the claim refers to. The evidence basis behind these claims is the standards themselves. It is nonetheless still the responsibility of the advertiser to check that their particular use of such claims meets ASA guidelines.

One thing to be careful of are claims based on standards which relate only to a part of a product cycle, such as on farm. The use of such claims in the context of specific products may well need further qualifying statements to make this clear.

2. General claims about organic farming may not be applicable to specific products

In this booklet a lot of the statements have been purposely worded to say "organic farming is XYZ". These claims refer to standards for organic farming or the generic impact of organic farming. The latter reflects the findings of robust reviews into the impact of organic farms, usually in comparison to non-organic farms. Where statements reference reviews, we have made every effort to ensure such claims are generic enough to stand up to scrutiny by referring to robust reviews that are as comprehensive as possible. However, review findings reflect average results, and this masks natural variation between findings for different farms and products in different places.

One example is that most research on organic agriculture happens in Europe and North America. This means the statements in this booklet are by default less applicable to crops & ingredients which originate in other continents and climatic zones – such as produce from tropical and arid environments.

With all this in mind, it is your responsibility to consider the way in which you present the information and how it might be interpreted in the context of the products it is being used to advertise.

We therefore suggest you:

- Ensure it is clear to audiences if a claim refers to organic farming systems in general, and on average. This could be through a qualifying statement that accompanies a headline claim
- Alternatively, ensure that the claim you use, and its underlying evidence, is representative of the product advertised. If it is not, more specific evidence may exist which may be more representative of your product(s), so don't be afraid to look for it.

Any claims in this booklet that are specific to organic farming do not relate to other stages in a product's life cycle (such as processing, transport, use, and disposal). If you use these claims, it is also in your interest to be careful not to imply that they relate to the whole supply chain or life cycle of your product(s) unless you hold additional evidence to support this. This is most applicable when making environmental claims, as ASA guidelines state that you must ensure you hold evidence to support any environmental claim you wish to make about the product you are advertising, taking into account its entire life cycle. See sections 11.3 and 11.4 of the code (**www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/environmental-claims-general.html**). Again, the use of qualifying claims may help in this instance.

3. Comparative claims need to be supported by evidence if audiences can name a competitor

If you are making a comparative statement such as 'organic XXX has more XXX' then you need to be careful about using the claim in a context which would lead your audience to interpret the statement as referring to an identifiable competitor. In this instance, ASA guidelines state that comparisons must not mislead the consumer about the product or the competing product, must be about products which meet the same need or are intended for the same purpose, and must be verifiable (see section 3.3 of the code).

STATEMENTS

PLEASE NOTE:

Claims which are based on organic standards are ***italicised and in bold and marked with our organic symbol*** ✇. These should be applicable to specific products when these products meet the standards that the claim refers to. The evidence basis behind these claims is the standards themselves.

Important:
Those standards that are the Soil Association's own higher standards clearly say so and must not be used in a context that implies they apply across all organic farming.

1 BETTER FOR THE PLANET

Organic takes a "whole system" approach to farming and food production. This means farming in a way that aims to support our whole food system, from soils and farm animals to the health of people, nature and the planet. Organic farmers are encouraged to "close the loop" on their farms, making use of what's to hand and limiting the use of imported resources. It's this respect for the natural world and ability to work with natural relationships and cycles that makes organic farming a solution that is better for the planet.

Organic farming is a holistic system that works with, rather than against, natural systems

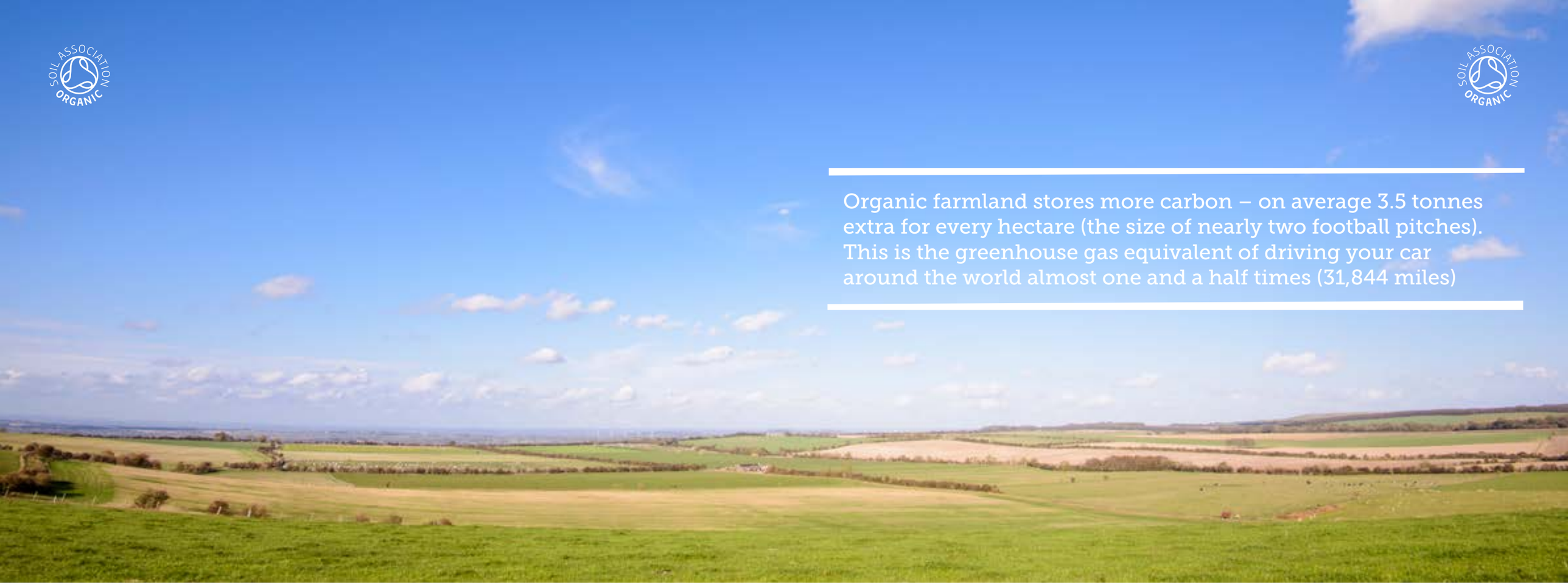
Organic as a sustainable solution

- ***Organic means working with nature, not against it***[1]
- ***Organic respects nature***[2]
- ***Organic farmers use nature-based methods***[3]
- ***Organic farmers use natural methods***[4]
- ***Organic farmers work within natural systems and cycles at all levels, from the soil to plants and animals***[5]
- ***Organic farming is a holistic system that works with, rather than against, natural systems***[6]
- ***Organic farming aims to minimise disruption to the natural environment***[7]
- ***Organic is rooted within living ecological systems***[8]
- ***Organic takes a balanced approach. It is designed to respect nature and to enhance the health of soils, water and air, of plants and animals, and the balance between***[9]
- ***Organic is a 'whole system' approach to farming and food production. It recognises the close interrelationships between all parts of the production system, from the soil, to the food on our fork***[10]
- ***Organic is a 'whole system' approach to farming and food production***[11]
- ***In organic, weeds are controlled, and pest and disease damage is reduced using techniques which are sustainable and promote environmental preservation***[12]
- ***Organic farming takes account of local and regional balances and encourages the use of on-site resources***[13]
- ***Organic production aims to maintain a healthy living soil, and positive plant and animal health***[14]
- Organic farming lowers the risk of environmental pollution and helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions by severely restricting the use of manufactured chemical fertilisers and pesticides.[15] ***Instead, organic farmers rely on developing a healthy, fertile soil and growing a mixture of crops***[16 17]
- Organic farming drives sustainability in agriculture[18 19]
- Organic farming is leading the way on sustainability[20 21]
- Organic farming takes a balanced and holistic approach to sustainability[22]
- Organic farming systems don't focus on one sustainability goal over others[23]
- Organic takes a whole system approach to sustainability[24]
- Organic food is produced with natural fertilisers,[25] usually less energy[26 27] and more care for animals[28]
- Organic farms are more ecologically diverse[29]
- Organic farms are more diverse. This helps minimise risk by reducing a farmer's economic dependence on a single crop[30 31]
- Organic farming supports smallholder families in low-income countries[32 33 34]
- Organic farming supports the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in low income countries[35 36 37]

The following need a qualifying statement or context that makes it clear that these refer to organic in comparison with other farming or production methods:

- ***Organic is designed to benefit nature***[38]
- ***Organic is designed to benefit insects, wildlife, and soils***[39]

Organic is a "whole system" approach to farming and food production. It recognises the close interrelationships between all parts of the production system, from the soil, to the food on our fork



Organic farmland stores more carbon – on average 3.5 tonnes extra for every hectare (the size of nearly two football pitches). This is the greenhouse gas equivalent of driving your car around the world almost one and a half times (31,844 miles)

Organic farms help combat climate change

LOWER EMISSIONS

- ***Organic farmers don't use synthetic fertilisers which come from burning fossil fuels***[41]
- ***Soil Association organic standards severely restrict the use of peat - an important carbon sink***[42]
- On average, organic farms use less energy[43]
- Organic farming tends to reduce energy use[44] due to the avoidance of synthetic fertilisers[45]
- On average, organic vegetable farms, dairy farms, and mixed farming systems use less energy than their non-organic counterparts[46]
- Soil Association organic standards support the protection of peatlands, which are vital in our fight against climate change[47]

The following statements need to be used along with one of the listed additional qualifying statements:

- Organic farming can help to mitigate climate change[48 49]
- Organic farming can help to slow down climate change[50]
- Organic farms tend to have lower emissions[51]
- Organic fields tend to have lower emissions[52]

QUALIFYING STATEMENTS:

- If Europe's farmland all followed organic principles, agricultural emissions could drop by 40-50% by 2050, with plenty to feed the growing population healthy diets[53 54]
- Adopting nature-friendly farming, such as organic, could feed the growing population of Europe healthy diets, maintain key exports, and drop agricultural emissions by 40-50% by 2050[55 56]
- Adopting nature-friendly farming along with other key changes to our food system could help keep global warming below 2°C[57]

Organic farms sequester more carbon

(see also section 2, Better for Soil)

- Organic farmland stores more carbon – on average 3.5 tonnes extra for every hectare (the size of nearly two football pitches).[58] This is the greenhouse gas equivalent of driving your car around the world almost one and a half times (31,844 miles)[59]
- Organic farming stores more carbon, on average nearly 2 tonnes more carbon per football pitch area[60]
- Organic soils are around 25% more effective at storing carbon in the long-term[61]
- Soil carbon increases on average by 2.2% per year after converting to organic[62]

Organic farms are more resilient to the effects of climate change

- Organic farms are more resilient to climate change[63]
- Organic crops perform better during climate extremes[64]
- Organic farms are more resilient to the effects of climate change[65]
- Organic soils store up to twice as much water - this makes them more resilient in a changing climate[66]
- Farming organically can protect against flooding because organic soils store twice as much water[67]
- Organic soils store twice as much water[68]
- Organic soils help protect against flooding[69]
- Organic soils perform better during drought[70]
- Organic soils perform better under extreme weather events[71 72]

2 BETTER FOR SOIL

Keeping soils fertile and preventing soil erosion is a challenge for all farmers. Instead of using artificial fertilisers, organic farmers look after their soils using manure, compost, 'cover crops' and crop rotations.[73] Around the world, we are losing soil much faster than it's formed, alarmingly between 10 and 40 times faster.[74] One UN official stated that we may have fewer than 60 harvests left.[75] 95% of our food production relies on soil,[76] so it has never been more crucial to farm in a way that protects and preserves the soil.

Organic farming is based on nourishing the soil

Why soil matters

- Around 95% of food production relies on soil[77]
- Healthy topsoil is vital to our existence[78]
- Soils are home to a quarter of the Earth's species[79]
- One gram (a quarter of a teaspoon) of soil may harbour up to 10 billion micro-organisms (most of which are still unexplored)[80 81]
- Healthy soils absorb and store water - with the help of soil organisms, organic matter and good soil management[82 83]
- Soils store more carbon than the atmosphere, and all of the world's plants and forests combined, which means that soil is one of our most important weapons in the fight against climate change[84]
- A single hectare of soil has the potential to store and filter enough water for 1000 people for 1 year[85]
- UK soils store around 130 trillion litres of water - more than contained in all UK lakes and rivers combined[86]
- 10 billion tonnes of carbon is stored in UK soils[87]
- Soils store 65% of the world's fresh water[88]
- Food security relies on sustainable soils[89]

Soil degradation

- Half of the topsoil on the planet has been lost in the last 150 years[90]
- Globally we lose around 30 football pitches of fertile soil a minute[153]
- One UN official stated that we may have fewer than 60 harvests left[91]
- The world loses 24 billion tonnes of soil every year[92]
- Over the last 40 years, almost a third of the world's arable soils have been lost to erosion or pollution[93]
- European farmland is being lost at an unsustainable rate[94]
- Every year an area of fertile soil three times the size of Switzerland (12 million hectares) is lost globally[95]
- The UK has lost 84% of its fertile topsoil since 1850, with erosion continuing at 1cm to 3cm a year[96]
- British soils are in crisis[97]
- Soil degradation in England and Wales costs £1.2 billion every year[98]
- It takes 100 years for just 1-2cm of topsoil to form, and soil that is lost to pollution or erosion will need hundreds or even thousands of years to recover on its own[99]
- One inch of soil takes over 500 years to form[100]
- We are losing soil 10-40 times faster than it's formed[101]

Organic is better for soil

- ***Organic farming is based on nourishing the soil***[102]
- ***Organic farming is based on nourishing the plants by building healthy soils***[103]
- ***Organic farming creates a healthy, living soil***[104 105]
- ***Organic farming builds soil fertility naturally***[106] ***using compost and clover***
- ***Natural, sustainable soil fertility is encouraged through composting and crop rotation***[107] with legumes to provide nitrogen, rather than energy-hungry synthetic fertilisers[108]
- Healthy soils protect underground water supplies by neutralising or filtering out potential pollutants. Increasing soil organic matter levels (through methods used by organic farmers)[109] can improve this function[110]

The following statements need to be used along with one or more of the listed additional qualifying statements:

- Organic farming is better for the long-term health of the soil[111]
- Organic farms have healthier soils[112]

QUALIFYING STATEMENTS:

- Organic farms have a more diverse range of microbes living in the soil - this helps the crops to grow without artificial fertilisers[113 114]
- Organic farmers use around 65% more manure and compost – this nourishes the soil and keeps it alive[115]
- Soil organic matter – the 'living' part of the soil – is higher on organic farms[116]
- Organic soils have more earthworms[117]

3 BETTER FOR WILDLIFE

The importance of pollinators

- 76% of globally important commercial crops depend on insect pollination[118]
- Three quarters of food crops depend on pollinators[119]
- 1 in 3 mouthfuls of food depends on pollinators[120]
- Without pollinators we wouldn't have potatoes, strawberries, tomatoes, coffee, chocolate or cotton[121]
- We get 90% of our Vitamin C, the majority of Vitamin A, folic acid, and lots of important antioxidants from plants that rely on animal pollination[122]
- The decline of pollinators is a threat to human nutrition[123]
- Bees are important pollinators but so are flies, beetles, moths, butterflies, wasps, ants, birds, and bats[124]

WHAT DO POLLINATORS DO?

Bees and other insects drink the sweet nectar of flowers. As they move between flowers, they transfer pollen which fertilises the plant, enabling it to produce fruit and seeds.

Wildlife declines

- Over 40% of insect species are declining and a third are endangered[125]
- We are losing insects eight times faster than mammals, birds and reptiles[126]
- The world's insects are being lost at 2.5% a year[127]
- A major global report states that insects could vanish within a century[128]
- Intensive farming is the main cause of insect decline - particularly the heavy use of pesticides[129]
- 41% of Britain's wildlife species have declined since 1970 and more than one in ten are currently facing extinction. Intensive farming practices have been identified as the primary drivers of these declines[130]

Organic is better for wildlife

- Organic farms are havens for wildlife and provide homes for bees, birds and butterflies. On average, plant, insect and bird life is 50% more abundant on organic farms[131]
- Organic farms are home to 30% more species of wildlife on average[132]
- Organic farming is better for bees[133 134]
- More bees on organic farms[135 136]
- There are up to 7 times more bees in organic grain fields[137]
- For every 10% increase in bee friendly habitats – like that found on organic farms – bee numbers and diversity increases by over a third[138]
- A small increase in bee-friendly organic habitat would boost bee numbers by a third[139]
- There are more wild bees on organic farms[140]
- There are around 75% more wild bees on organic farms[141]
- Organic farming can improve the numbers of bees found in habitats surrounding the farm[142]
- If pesticides were substituted for more sustainable farming practices (like organic), this could slow or reverse the decline in insects[143]

Organic farms are home to 30% more species of wildlife on average

- Organic farms have around 50% more bees, butterflies and other pollinators[144]
- Organic farming is better for pollinating insects[145]
- Studies have found more wildflowers on organic farms[146 147]
- Studies have found that organic farming improves pollination of flowers surrounding the farm[148 149]

Ecological diversity

- Organic farms are more ecologically diverse[150 151]
- Organic farms have a more diverse range of microbes living in the soil - this helps the crops to grow without artificial fertilisers[152 153]

Life below water

- Organic supports cleaner water for wildlife[154 155 156 157 158]
- Organic farming lowers the risk of pollution in rivers and waterways[159 160 161 162 163]
- Fertilisers used in farming can create 'ocean dead zones' which deprive life below water of vital oxygen[164]
- The main cause of 'ocean dead zones' is nitrogen fertilisers[165]

- ***Organic standards ban the use of manufactured nitrogen fertilisers[166]***
- ***Manufactured nitrogen fertilisers are banned in organic farming[167]***

4 BETTER FOR ANIMALS

Animal welfare is one of the most important aspects of organic farming. Organic standards insist that animals are given plenty of space and fresh air,[168] and that they are raised in conditions that suit their natural behaviour.[169] Smaller flocks and herds, and more access to the outdoors means organic animals don't have to be routinely treated with antibiotics and wormers.[170] Mutilations like beak-trimming to prevent the aggressive side effects of stress are also not needed or allowed.[171]

Organic standards mean that farm animals:

- ***Must have access to pasture (when weather and ground conditions permit) and are truly free-range***[172]
- ***Must have plenty of space (indoors and outdoors)***[173] ***– which helps to reduce stress and disease***[174]
- ***Are fed a diet that is as natural as possible***
- ***Graze and forage naturally on organic pasture (grasses and other crops) where only natural fertilisers are used and pesticides are severely restricted***
- ***Must not routinely be given antibiotics.***[175] In 2017 farm animals accounted for around 30% of all antibiotics used in the UK.[176]

  Note: at the time of writing in June 2020, these are the most up to date figures, but please check for updated figures if using this stat in the years to come.

- ***Organic farming has high standards of animal welfare***[177]
- ***Organic animals are fed a natural, organic and completely GM-free diet***[178]
- ***Organic farmers always provide enough light, space and comfort to allow farm animals freedom to move and express their natural behaviours***[179]
- ***Organic animals enjoy plenty of fresh air and have space to graze and roam, satisfying their natural instincts***[180]
- ***Organic animals are able to satisfy their natural behaviours such as grazing, rooting, dust-bathing and perching. This means there is no need for painful mutilations such as tail-docking or beak trimming***[181]
- ***Organic systems provide the environments animals need, which means they don't need to undergo painful mutilations***[182]
- ***Organic farmers reduce stress and disease in animals by giving them plenty of space and allowing them to behave naturally in a suitable environment, meaning there is no need for preventative antibiotics. An animal is only treated with medicine if it is sick***[183]
- ***Soil Association standards restrict the use of antibiotics (such as Colistin) that are critically important for human health***[184]
- ***Organic farming standards ban the use of antibiotics and wormers***[185] ***which helps minimise antimicrobial resistance and protects the effectiveness of these treatments***
- ***Organic standards ban the use of cloning and embryo transfer***[186]
- The Soil Association has the highest standards for animal welfare in the UK[187]
- Ensuring all animals reared for meat and animal products have a good life is at the heart of Soil Association standards[188]

ANTIBIOTICS IN FARMING

The overuse of antibiotics in human and animal medicine is undermining their ability to cure life-threatening infections. The more sparingly we use our antibiotics, the more effective they will remain. Farm animals account for around 30% of all antibiotics used in the UK.[189] In intensive farming systems, to compensate for animals being housed in more crowded conditions where infections spread fast, antibiotics can be used as a preventative measure - before animals show signs of illness - or for group treatments after a disease outbreak which could have been avoided had the animals been kept in better conditions in the first place. Thanks to higher animal welfare standards which reduce the risk of disease, the preventative use of antibiotics is banned in organic farming.

Free-range

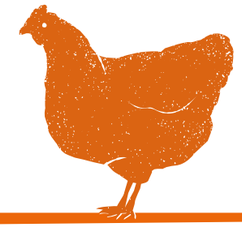
- *Always free-range*[190]
- *Organic animals have a truly free-range life*[191]
- *Organic animals must have permanent access to pasture whenever conditions allow*[192]
- *Animals reared organically are encouraged to forage and graze*[193]
- *Organic standards insist that animals are given plenty of space and fresh air to thrive and grow – guaranteeing a truly free-range life*[194]

Pigs

- *Pigs raised to organic standards do not have their tails docked (cut short), teeth cut or have painful nose rings fitted. Organic farmers reduce stress by giving pigs plenty of space and the opportunity to express their natural behaviours*[195]
- *Pigs reared in organic systems are weaned much later than standard ones, at 40 days rather than as early as 21 days.*[196] *The Soil Association advises its farmers not to wean pigs until they are eight weeks old. This allows the piglets to develop at a natural pace, reducing stress and disease and notably, antibiotic use*[197]

Cows

- ***Organic cows spend as much time outdoors as possible***[198]
- ***Cows are fed a grass-rich, GM free diet (minimum 60% grass-based)***[199]
- ***'Zero-grazing', where cows are kept indoors and cut grass or other feed, such as cereals and soya is taken to them, is banned by organic standards***[200]
- ***Calves must be fed natural, organic milk, preferably maternal milk, for a minimum period of 12 weeks***[201]
- ***Soil Association standards state that farmers must have a plan in place for unwanted male dairy calves***[202]
- Organic cows eat mainly grass (the organic standard requires 60% forage in the diet), while non-organic cows are generally given more concentrated feed (on average a third more) in order to increase milk production. This means organic dairy has lower (on average 20% lower) but more sustainable, milk yield, which helps to protect the animals' health and welfare[203]



The Soil Association have the highest standards for animal welfare in the UK

Chickens & Eggs

- ***Organic chickens are much more than free-range. They live in smaller flocks, have better access to fresh air and the outdoors and more space*** in their houses than non-organic chickens[204]
- ***Organic chickens are never caged***[205]
- ***Organic chickens have a third more space indoors*** than free-range birds[206]
- ***Organic poultry must have continuous and easy, daytime access to a diverse outdoor range. Organic farms certified by the Soil Association also have to provide more pop holes (exits from the hen house)*** than free-range farms do[207], to encourage and promote ranging[208]
- ***Organic chickens are not allowed to be fed on GM feed*** (which is common in free-range and non-organic hens)[209]
- ***Organic farming encourages poultry/chicken breeds that are slower growing, and more robust.***[210] ***Organic meat chickens live twice as long as most intensively farmed chickens***[211]
- ***Organic laying hens are kept in smaller flocks with more space (max 3,000*** vs 16,000 in free-range systems)[212]
- ***Soil Association certified poultry raised for meat are kept in smaller flocks (max 1,000 birds) and have more space than free-range birds***[213]
- ***Poultry must be given access to an outdoor range as early as possible***[214]
- ***Chickens must not have their beaks trimmed*** to try and prevent feather pecking[215] and are given plenty of opportunities to express their natural behaviours such as foraging, bathing in the dust outside and pecking at insects and worms on diverse ranges[216]
- ***Organic chicken flocks are eight times smaller than free-range flocks.***[217] This is important as the health of individual birds is much more easily managed within a smaller flock

5 KNOWING WHAT'S IN YOUR FOOD

Soil Association Certification certify over 70% of organic food in the UK

Food you can trust

For a food product to be labelled as organic, every organisation working up and down its supply chain – from farmers and packers to food processors and organic retailers – have to meet organic standards and prove it to an organic certification body. Those who certify with the Soil Association must also meet our additional higher standards – as shown by the Soil Association organic symbol. The Soil Association Certification certify over 70% of organic food in the UK, meaning when you see the organic symbol you can be sure what you eat has been produced to a standard you can trust.

- Food as it should be
- Food you can trust[218]
- Organic: a symbol of trust[219]
- All organic products come from trusted sources[220]
- Organic food must be certified by law, so you can be assured that the product and ingredients come from verified sources[221]
- ***Organic products certified and sold in the UK must legally comply with the EU Organic Regulation.***[222] This means certification is required to grow, process and market organic products. All organic farms and food companies are inspected at least once a year[223]
- Soil Association Certification certifies over 70% of organic food in the UK, and all organic farmers and processors are inspected at least once a year. The organic logo can only be used on products that have been certified as organic by an authorised certification body. This ensures that the product fulfils strict conditions on how it was produced, processed and handled at every stage. This means the organic label is the best way of assuring that the food you eat has been produced to a standard you can trust[224]
- Wherever you see the organic symbol, you can be sure that the food has been produced to the highest standards
- Organic certification and labelling is agreed nationally and across Europe, and is a guarantee of food quality, independently inspected and certified all over the world
- Choosing organic means that you are supporting farming practices with a more traceable production process and you'll always know what's in your food
- It means higher levels of animal welfare,[225] lower levels of pesticides,[226] no manufactured herbicides or artificial fertilisers,[227] and more environmentally sustainable management of farmland and the natural environment – this means more wildlife![228]

Pesticides

- ***Organic farmers manage pests using natural methods[229]***
- ***Organic farmers aim to control pests naturally[230]***
- ***No herbicides (weedkillers) such as Glyphosate are allowed in organic farming[231]***
- ***Weedkillers can be detected in food including bread.[232] Their use is banned in organic farming[233]***
- ***Choosing organic is an easy way to limit your exposure to pesticides, herbicides (weedkillers)[234] and many additives and preservatives[235]***
- ***Organic farmers aim to create a natural balance between plants and animals to prevents pests, so that they don't need to rely on pesticides[236]***
- ***Organic farmers aim to use natural enemies of pests to control their numbers, so they don't need to rely on pesticides[237]***

- Around 400 pesticides are used in farming in the UK[238] and pesticides are often present in non-organic food[239]
- Many pesticides remain in some of the food we eat, despite washing and cooking[240]
- In both 2017 and 2018, roughly a quarter of all food items tested by the government contained residues of more than one pesticide. In 2017, this included more than half of rice, a quarter of bread and 40% of fruit and vegetables[241]
- A study of soil in 11 European countries found UK sites had the second highest diversity of pesticide residues[242]
- A long-term UK study over two years revealed that 66% of samples taken from seven river catchments contained over ten pesticides[243]
- Between 1990 and 2016, the area of UK land treated with pesticides (treated area multiplied by number of applications) increased by almost two-thirds (63%)[244]
- One way to reduce your exposure to pesticides is to eat more organic food[245]
- The best way to reduce your exposure to pesticides in food is to buy organic; certified organic food, including fruit and vegetables, processed food and dairy and meat products have overall been found to contain less pesticides[246]

WHAT ARE PESTICIDES?

'Pesticides' are chemicals designed to kill insects and other pests e.g. insecticides, fungal diseases (fungicides) and weeds (herbicides). The vast majority are used in farming to grow our food, but they are also used in our parks, schools and even our own gardens. On farms they are being used on a wide scale. Farmers have become reliant on them and they've found their way into our food, our soils, our rivers and our wildlife. Recent studies on global insect declines and the biodiversity crisis name direct and indirect impacts of pesticides as key drivers.

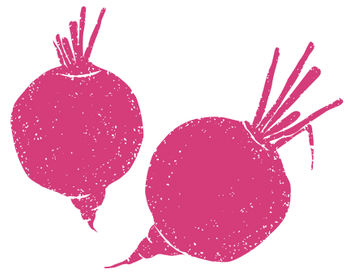
- In the 26 years between 1990 and 2016, the use of Glyphosate on British cereals has increased by well over ten times[247]

The following statement needs to be used along with one or more of the listed additional qualifying statements:

- ***Organic farming uses virtually no pesticides[248]***

QUALIFYING STATEMENTS:

- ***In organic farming, all weed killers are banned - a very limited number of naturally occurring fungicides and insecticides are permitted and their use is severely restricted[249]***
- ***Soil Association organic farmers are able to use a very limited number of naturally-derived pesticides like citronella and clove oil as a last resort, under very restricted circumstances[250]***



Additives

The use of additives and processing aids is heavily restricted in organic products,[251] organic products are made with care.[252] Only a heavily restricted list of essential additives and processing aids can be used in organic products,[253] and organic processed products are made using processing methods that guarantee the organic integrity and vital qualities of the product are maintained through all stages of manufacturing.[254]

- ***Organic standards prohibit the use of toxic substances[255]***
- ***Organic standards prohibit the use of toxic ingredients[256]***
- ***Organic standards prohibit GM crops and ingredients, hydrogenated fats, and controversial artificial food colours and preservatives[257]***
- ***Organic food can only be produced using natural products and substances[258]***
- ***GM ingredients, hydrogenated fats and controversial artificial food colours, and preservatives including sodium benzoate, aspartame and food colouring tartrazine are banned under organic standards[259]***
- ***Soil Association standards prohibit the use of nanoparticles[260]***
- ***Organic food must not be irradiated[261]***
- ***Organic fruit and vegetables cannot be washed in chlorine[262]***
- ***Only organic wax coatings can be used on organic fruit and vegetables[263]***
- ***Amongst the additives banned by Soil Association standards are hydrogenated fat, aspartame (artificial sweetener) and monosodium glutamate[264]***
- ***Any natural flavourings used in Soil Association certified organic food can't be extracted using ingredients from fossil fuels like hexane and acetone[265]***
- ***Organic wines are produced in ways that reduce the potential for allergic reactions, by restricting the use of sulphur dioxide (Soil Association standards carry even higher restrictions)[266]***
- ***Organic food will only contain added vitamins, minerals, amino acids, micronutrients and trace elements if this is the law[267]***

GM

Genetically modified, or genetically modified organisms (GM or GMOs)

Organic food systems are opposed to GM, for environmental, health and social reasons. All GM ingredients are therefore banned under organic standards. Whilst GM foods are very limited in the UK (all imports from outside Europe), most non-organic livestock are fed them. As such GM-fed meat, egg and dairy is widespread and unlabelled in supermarkets.

- ***No GM crops[268]***
- ***No GM ingredients[269]***
- ***Non GM[270]***
- ***No use of GM[271]***
- ***GM crops and ingredients are banned in organic standards[272]***
- ***GM animal feed is prohibited under organic standards[273]***
- ***The use of genetically modified organisms is banned under organic standards[274]***
- ***To meet organic standards, farmers and processors cannot use GMOs and must show that they are protecting their products from contamination with prohibited products from farm to fork[275]***
- Most non-organic British chickens, pigs and cows are fed with imported GM crops[276]

Organic standards prohibit the use of toxic substances

> What you feed farm animals and how you treat them affects the quality of the food. The hard work organic farmers put into caring for their animals pays off in the quality of the food they produce, giving real value for money.
>
> Helen Browning, CEO of The Soil Association

Nutritional Differences

Following the three major meta-analyses which looked into the nutritional differences between organic and non-organic crops, meat and dairy, we have worked closely with the team at Newcastle University and have sought legal advice to establish whether it is possible to make advertising claims in relation to the results, which demonstrate significant nutritional differences.

However, whilst organic milk and meat do contain up to 50% more omega 3 fatty acids, these fail to meet the minimum requirements needed to make a nutritional claim for these products, which requires organic milk to not only provide much more omega 3 than non-organic milk, but also to supply 30% of the Required Daily Amount of omega 3, which it does not. For milk, this is due to the lower fat content (around 4% for whole milk). We will continue to work with researchers to ensure we evaluate each study as it is released to establish whether we can make nutritional statements on a product by product basis.
We can, however, make the following statements:

- Organic farming affects the quality of the food we eat
- Organic is different
- "What you feed farm animals and how you treat them affects the quality of the food. The hard work organic farmers put into caring for their animals pays off in the quality of the food they produce, giving real value for money."
  – Helen Browning, CEO of The Soil Association
- How we farm affects the quality of the food we eat
- The difference in Omega 3 is because organic animals eat a more natural, grass-based diet containing high levels of clover - clover is used in organic farming to fix nitrogen so that crops and grass grow (instead of manufactured/ chemical fertilisers)

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   (a) establish a sustainable management system for agriculture that:
   (i) respects nature's systems and cycles and sustains and enhances the health of soil, water, plants and animals and the balance between them;
   (ii) contributes to a high level of biological diversity;
   (iii) makes responsible use of energy and the natural resources, such as water, soil, organic matter and air;"
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234.Soil Association Standards for Farming & Growing v. Jan 2020. Standard 2.6.2

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247.Calculations: in 1990, area of cereals treated = 161,213 hectares. In 2016 = 1,752,144 ha. (Source: Fera Science Ltd, Pesticide Usage Statistics https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/pusstats/index.cfm)

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252. Article 6 of EU Organic Regulation 834/2007

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261.Soil Association Standards for Food and Drink v Jan 2020. Standard 6.1.5

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263.Soil Association Standards for Food and Drink v Jan 2020. Standard 6.2.3

264.Soil Association Standards for Food and Drink v Jan 2020. Standard 6.5

265.Soil Association Standards for Food and Drink v Jan 2020. Standard 6.6.5

266.Soil Association Standards for Food and Drink v Jan 2020. Standard 6.9.6

267.Soil Association Standards for Food and Drink v Jan 2020. Standard 6.6.12

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269.Soil Association Standards for Farming and Growing v Jan 2020. Standard 1.11.2 and Standards for Food & Drink v Jan 2020. Standard 5.11.2

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272.Soil Association Standards for Farming and Growing v Jan 2020. Standard 1.11.2, Standards for Food & Drink v Jan 2020, Standard 5.11.2, EU Directive 2001/18/EC, Regulation (EC) 1829/2003 or Regulation (EC) 1830/2003 and USDA National Organic Program

273.Soil Association Standards for Farming and Growing v Jan 2020. Standard 1.11.2, Standards for Food & Drink v Jan 2020, Standard 5.11.2, EU Directive 2001/18/EC, Regulation (EC) 1829/2003 or Regulation (EC) 1830/2003

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