

Organic vs Non-Organic

Language surrounding local foods such as organic, certified, and natural can be mystifying. Read on to learn the truth about these terms!

What is the difference?

Purchasing local food for your school and home offers numerous nutritional, financial, and environmental advantages. However, the terms associated with these products can often be confusing. For example, research indicates that two-thirds of consumers who buy items labeled as "all natural" or "organic" believe they are healthier and safer. It's important to note, though, that "natural" and "organic" are not synonymous. Understanding the distinction between these terms can assist you in making informed choices when purchasing local food.



Organic

Organic products have a set of **strict regulations** that are set by the USDA and FDA to **govern** them. An "organic" label means:

- No use of synthetic herbicides, fertilizers, or artificial colors.
- No regular use of antibiotics.
- No genetic modification.
- Limited use of pesticides.

Local

Local foods are produced and sourced within a limited geographic region, usually within a specific radius. These foods **may or may not** be grown using organic practices. They could include conventionally grown or even genetically modified crops.

Natural

There is **no legal definition** for the term "natural". A "natural" label only grants that:

- Components must come from plants, flowers, and mineral origins.
- It's never tested on animals.
- There's no use of sulfates or other man-made chemicals.

Certified

Food products labeled as "certified" indicate that a **third-party organization** has **verified** that the product meets specific standards or claims. These certifications can cover a wide range of aspects, including organic production, fair trade practices, and more.