



Food and Farming Unit

Lesson 4: Is organic food good for you? Is it good for the planet?

Key Ideas:

- After a slow start, more and more farmers are growing organic food and more and more people are choosing to eat it.
- Although organic food may not contain more nutrients, many people believe that growing organic food without the use of chemicals is healthier and better for the environment.

Starter activity:

A useful starter is the video clip [Modernisation of UK Farming](#) which allows students to appreciate the changes which have happened to many farms, particularly arable farms, over the last 50 years. Students can complete the two column [summary table](#) with 'Type of Change' and 'Reason for Change' as headings.

Some of these changes are also summarised on the Word document [Organic Food Better Than Conventionally Farmed Food](#).

Main activity:

The debate about organic versus conventional farming is a difficult one with many people holding very strong views. Students need to examine the evidence and carefully think through the advantages and disadvantages of each farming system. They also need to think about the fact that not everyone has a real choice in what they eat (including perhaps some of them) as the cost of food is a key factor. We also cannot for practical reasons of food quantity, make all farms organic – there simply wouldn't be enough food to feed our growing population without importing larger quantities.

Activity 1 - The PowerPoint [Organic or not](#) could be shown as is, but is probably better printed out in individual slides which can be given to pairs of students to use as the basis for a one minute presentation. Following the presentations, students can debate the pros and cons, including any further points that they can think of. At the end, students might rank the factors in terms of importance with some justification for their choices.

Activity 2 – In the UK, an increasing amount of food is being grown organically. In poorer less economically developed countries, the reverse process is happening. A lot of food grown in developing countries is grown by traditional 'organic farming' methods, but farmers in these countries are being encouraged to use new seeds and lots of chemicals in order to produce more food – food to eat and surplus food to sell. Ask students to imagine that they are a farmer in a poor less economically developed country, struggling to feed their family. After a brief class discussion about this then ask them to write a short piece, from the position of the farmer, concerning how they feel about changing the way that they grow their food.

Plenary:

Students listen to the audio clip which is an edited clip from an American radio show. It concerns both a small organic farm and some of the customers who use it. Students then discuss in groups or as a class what makes people so passionate about organic food?

[Audio clip: Who is your farmer?](#)