


FACT SHEET: Certified Organic Beef

What Does Organic Mean?	<p>The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) sets out the approved methods, practices and substances used in producing and handling crops, livestock and processed agricultural products for the National Organic Program (NOP). Before a product can be labeled organic, a government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to ensure compliance with NOP standards. Companies that handle or process organic food must be certified as well (http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/Consumers/brochure.html).</p>
What is Certified Organic Beef?	<p>The Organic Foods Production Act, effective October 2002, set the USDA standards for all food labeled organic (http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/FactSheets/ProdHandE.html). For beef, this means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cattle must be fed 100 percent organic feed, but may be provided certain vitamin and mineral supplements. • Organically raised cattle may not be given hormones to promote growth. • Organically raised cattle may not be given antibiotics. If an animal is sick, it cannot be denied treatment to ensure its health; however, any animal that is treated with antibiotics must be taken out of the NOP. • All organically raised cattle must have access to pasture, but practically all cattle, regardless of how they're raised, meet this requirement. • Organic beef must be certified through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).
Organic Beef Production	<p>Beef from both grass-finished and grain-fed cattle can qualify as organic. To produce grain-fed, organic beef, cattle are raised on pasture for the majority of their lives, typically 12 to 18 months, and then fed a grain-based diet for approximately four to six months. Cattle in this program must be raised according to organic standards.</p>
Nutritious Value of Organic Beef	<p>Certified organic beef has the same nutritional profile as other types of beef (American Council on Science and Health report, "The Role of Beef in the American Diet," January 2003).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beef has eight times more vitamin B₁₂, six times more zinc and two and a half times more iron than a skinless chicken breast. • 29 cuts of beef (including 15 of the 20 most popular cuts) meet government guidelines for lean, such as the tenderloin, sirloin and 95% lean ground beef.
Organic Beef Labeling	<p>In order for organic beef to be labeled with the USDA organic seal, it must be produced according to the national standards set out by the Organic Foods Protection Act and the NOP. USDA specifically states that organically produced food is no safer or more nutritious than conventionally produced foods. Organic food differs only in the way it is grown, handled and processed.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>
Safety and Inspection	<p>Like all beef, organic products go through a rigorous inspection process and are subject to strict government guidelines to ensure the highest level of safety. All cattle are inspected by a public health veterinarian before entering the packing plant and those with any signs of illness are not allowed into the food supply.</p>
Organic Beef Production Costs	<p>Like many organic products, organic beef tends to cost more for beef producers to provide due to a variety of economic and production factors and therefore, it is more expensive for consumers to purchase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic beef products in the retail meat case average \$5.19 per pound compared to the \$3.56-per-pound average price for all beef products according to FreshLook scanner data from fourth-quarter 2005. This means consumers choosing organic beef products pay approximately 46 percent more.

**For more info, visit www.BeefFromPastureToPlate.org
Updated 10/2006**

