

SUSTAINABILITY: KEEPING OUR ENVIRONMENT IN SHAPE

Sustainability Defined

Sustainability is all about meeting our current needs without compromising the needs of future generations. In other words, it's the world we leave our children and grandchildren.

Sustainability practices include:

- Alternate energy sources
- Crop rotation and crop diversity
- Cover crops or no-till farming
- Beneficial insects and animals
- Managed grazing
- Selling locally and directly to consumers

Many alternative farming systems are being implemented to promote more sustainable options, such as

- Hydroponics
- Aquaponics
- Urban Agriculture, which can include community gardens, rooftop farms, vertical farms, and living walls



Organic Defined

While you are on the hunt for hormone-free, antibiotic-free, and pesticide-free food, it can be helpful for you to know *how* the USDA defines a 100% Organic food – food that is produced without using synthetic pesticides, petroleum, or sewage sludge-based fertilizers, bioengineering, or ionizing radiation. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products must come from animals fed 100% organic feed and given no antibiotics or growth hormones. With that in mind, 100% organic does imply a food is free of antibiotics, hormones, and pesticides, but it does not imply that an animal has been grass-fed. Labels may make singular claims such as a milk carton saying “rBGH free.”

It's important to note that nutritional quality and benefits for both organic and conventional foods, such as produce, are similar. Determine what works best for your lifestyle, health goals, and budget.

Other ways to be a sustainable shopper include buying seasonal produce, shopping local at farm markets, or joining a CSA.

While “sustainable” and “organic” can often be used interchangeably, they are not in fact the same. Not all organic farmers follow sustainable agriculture practices, and not all sustainable farms are certified organic.

Likewise, “natural” only refers to no artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives used in food production.

Resources

To learn more about sustainable, organic, and safety practices, visit the following resources:

Sustainability

USDA National Agriculture Library (www.nal.usda.gov): learn about sustainability agricultural practices in the US

USDA Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (www.nal.usda.gov/afsic): information on alternative farming practices and developments in agriculture technology for sustainability

Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov): government organization for all environmental and health matters relating to quality of air, chemicals, toxins, pesticides, and more.

Seafood

Seafood Nutrition Partnership (www.seafoodnutrition.org): nonprofit working to inspire a healthier America through partnerships and outreach to raise awareness about the essential nutritional benefits of eating seafood

Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch (www.seafoodwatch.org): consumer guides on seafood sustainability based on country and region (also available as an app)

Fish Watch U.S. Seafood Facts (www.fishwatch.gov): digital guide with seafood facts

Livestock

USDA Animal Welfare Information Center (www.nal.usda.gov/awic/standards-and-guidelines): learn standards and guidelines across various animal industries including livestock and chicken.

A Greener World (agreenerworld.org): standards, certifications, and consumer information for sustainable livestock farming

Produce

Produce for Better Health Foundation (fruitsandveggies.org): nonprofit dedicated to increasing daily consumption of fruits and vegetables in the US

Lettuce Info (lettuceinfo.org): resource for lettuce facts and safety