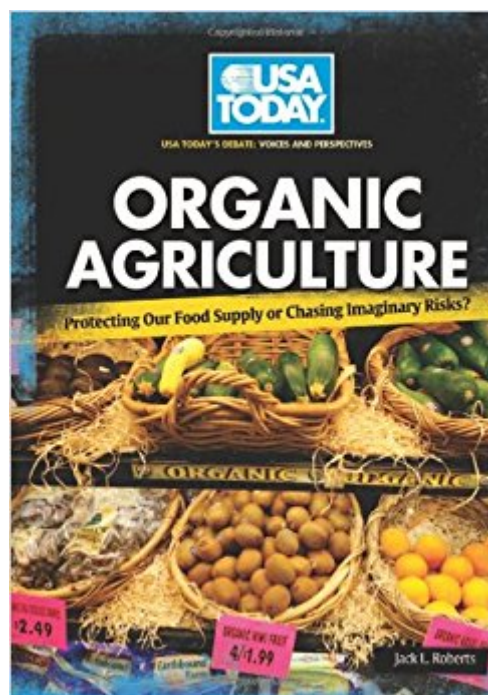




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Organic Agriculture: Protecting Our Food Supply Or Chasing Imaginary Risks? (USA Today's Debate: Voices & Perspectives)



Synopsis

According to public perception, organic food is a healthy option. Critics argue that organic farming leads to the risk of contamination with potentially dangerous bacteria and mold toxins. This book debates arguments for and against organic foods in a fair and objective manner.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jack L. Roberts is the author of more than a dozen biographies for children and young adults. For more than 30 years he was an editor and writer at Children's Television Workshop (producer of Sesame Street and The Electric Company) and Scholastic, Inc. More recently, he has written several science kits for Teacher Created Materials' Discovering Science Through Inquiry series, including kits on Rocks and Minerals, Biomes and Ecosystems, and Earth and Space Science. Jack divides his time between Key West, Florida, and West Hollywood, California.

If you live in a rural area you may have noticed the sharp divide or difference of opinion between those who practice traditional farming and those who use organic methods. Perhaps there is no right or wrong way to farm, but organic farmers need to follow strict guidelines set forth by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Organic agriculture can be defined as "farming without the use of conventional fertilizers and synthetic pesticides." Stringent guidelines are also enforced for farmers who raise livestock. Organic agriculture is nothing new and in this book you will explore its

origins that began more than 150 years ago with chemist Justus von Liebig. Farmers have used pesticides for thousands of years. In fact, "The Sumerians--an early civilization in southern Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) more than five thousand years ago--used sulfur to control pests." Sir Albert Howard and J. I. Rodale "saw the conflict of organic versus nonorganic agriculture as a struggle between two different visions of what agriculture should be become as they engaged in a war of words with the agricultural establishment." After WWII the production of pesticides increased enabling farmers to "increase crop production," reduce plant disease, and keep the cost of food down." Were pesticides such as DDT a blessing or a curse? People began to question other things such as the potential for developing cancer, yet "supporters of chemical pesticides dismiss concerns as overblown." Other debates centered on feeding the world's population and whether or not organically grown foods are more nutritious. In 1970 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was formed to "protect human health and the environment." Both factions were searching for answers. Advocates of organic farming wanted very specific guidelines for both the production of plant based foods and livestock. Factory farms and the humane treatment of animals was a "hotly debated" topic. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) came under the scrutiny of those who were concerned about animal welfare. On the other hand 800,000 beef producers "say they follow sound production practices." There are so many unanswered questions and opinions on both sides of the fence, but who is right? In this book you'll also hear about people like Rachel Carson, you'll learn about CAFOs and antibiotics, genetically modified food (Frankenfoods), processed foods, benefits of GM foods, how people view the future of agriculture, and you'll learn many other interesting facts about both conventional and organic farming methods. Summarily, as Andrew Kimbrell states, "We find ourselves in the midst of a historic battle between two very different visions of the future of food in the twenty-first century. The decades-long domination of the industrial model of food production is now being challenged by a strong grassroots movement in favor of organic, ecological, and humane food." This is an excellent overview of organic agriculture and the conflict with conventional food production. This book obviously focuses on organic agriculture, but I was pleased to find a nicely balanced debate. This well written book does not settle on one side or the other, but leaves it up to the reader to make his or her own decision. Interspersed throughout its pages are sidebars and period USA Today articles that focus on issues discussed in the book. For example, when there is a debate over DDT we find an article on nations who would choose DDT over malaria and a sidebar discussing DDT and the effect on the American bald eagle. There are numerous informative snapshots, charts, and photographs in these pages. The reader can easily find enough interesting material to use as a stepping stone for a school report. In the

back of the book is an excellent index, a glossary, a timeline, source notes, a selected bibliography, a list of organizations to contact, and additional recommended book, brochure, and website resources to explore. This book courtesy of the publisher.

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