Abstract:

There is a general presumption that buying organic food is impractical because of the high cost and difficulties accessing organic foods. For most it is a challenge to incorporate eating organically into ones' lifestyle, as they believe they lack the money and time required. We proposed to explore this presumption by finding measurable differences between buying organic and buying non-organic in the city of Buffalo, by comparing costs and accessibility. We expected the results of our research to show that buying organic food does not have to be extremely costly, time consuming, or difficult to achieve. To measure these differences, we created two grocery lists for a weeks worth of groceries: one for a single individual and one for a family of four. We intended our research to clarify the differences in cost and availability of organic food, and the extent to which buying organically imposes a financial burden.

Methodology:

To generate our data we created a grocery list including common food items bought weekly. These items included Milk, Bread, Eggs, Chicken, Apples, Celery, Carrots, Pasta and Orange Juice. Then we gathered data from three different grocery store locations in Buffalo; Tops, Wegmans and Lexington Co-op. We collected prices for both organic and non-organic versions of the items. We totaled each grocery list and plotted the resulting data on the bar graph to your left.

Relation to Sustainability:

As sustainable agriculture develops it can be expected that organics will be a large part of the transition to a more sustainable world. There is a general presumption that organic versus nonorganic food in United States is produced with fewer pesticides and maintains the integrity of the land it is grown on, and thus has less negative consequences than the production of nonorganic foods. In the city of Buffalo, it is not a lack of availability but much rather the perception of high costs, that deter the general public from buying organically. A likely solution could be to buy a mixed cart including both organic and nonorganic, and would be a positive step towards a more sustainable lifestyle. Producing food organically is an important aspect of sustainable agriculture as we look towards increasing the efficiency of food production while avoiding detrimental consequences to our health, environment and land. With greater awareness, and lower costs, individuals will be more able to afford organic food options while achieving sustainable lifestyles.

Comparison of Organic and Non-Organic Costs


Organics for Everyone?

With availability of organic foods spreading to a majority of grocery stores across the country, an increasing number of people from all income groups are gaining easier access to organic food products. At the same time, it is true that organic products are almost always more costly than nonorganic food products. Unfortunately, the cost of nonorganic products doesn’t account for the externality costs, such as negative health effects and pollution cleanup costs. However, choosing to buy organic won’t cost an arm and a leg, with some commitment and extra planning, considering all the benefits of organic food, it could be well worth the effort.