

GROWTH IN ORGANICS IS GOOD FOR NON-GMO BUSINESS

The increase in demand for organic food, and the subsequent increase in supply, means more non-GMO products continue to become available for export from the United States.

In order to be labeled "certified organic" in the United States, a crop must start with non-GMO seed. "The use of GMOs is prohibited in organic production," says Barbara Haumann, senior writer/editor for the Organic Trade Association, Greenfield, Massachusetts. However, this does not account for contamination, such as drift or GMO residues in the soil. "We can't make the claim that it's GMO-free. But if someone wants a food that's made without genetic engineering, then organic is it."

That does not mean organic food cannot be labeled non-GMO, but to do so, the supplier does need to take a step further.

"One of many of the standards of 'organic' means that we plant seeds that are non-GMO," explains Mark Vollmar, president of Organic Bean & Grain, Caro, Michigan. "We test all of our seed. We also test the production. We do on-site testing, and we send our seed out for PCR testing."

"Organic producers already have an edge in the marketplace because of the rigorous tracking systems and audit trails required by the organic industry, which are actually more demanding than IP [identity preservation] systems," says Sue Bisco, director of certification and administration, Northland Organic Foods Corp., Winona, Minnesota.

And, she adds, "As consumers become aware of and seek out non-GMO food products, they become more aware of the organic market as well and the benefits of eating organic food. The two seem, to me, intertwined — as the organic market has grown, the interest in non-GMO foods has grown, and vice-versa."

non-GMO products, as we pay growers a high premium in order to maintain non-GMO as well as traceability," says Tesch of SK Food International. "And we have additional costs related to testing and traceability. The actual difference can vary with the

different products."

Variations in standards from country to country can account for some of these costs. Korea, for example, has a zero-tolerance policy toward GMOs in its organically labeled food, making production of affordable non-

GMO soy and corn nearly impossible, according to Leavitt. "GMOs are in the seed stock. Now that GMOs are in the stream, you can't go back."

In the European Union, where the standard is 0.9 percent or less, non-GMO food becomes more affordable because that standard allows for the occasional speck of genetically modified material.

While many regions are able to provide cheaper non-GMO products than what is available from the United States, Skiff says products from the United States are still in high demand. "China and Brazil have been coming into the market very strong," he explains. "But we're selling more beans overseas than we ever have before, and we've been told it's because of the quality American companies can bring. The varieties and the quality that are available in the United States for food use are better than that of other countries."

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