



# School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives  
Beyond Pesticides, 701 E Street SE, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20003  
info@beyondpesticides.org ■ www.beyondpesticides.org

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## Pediatricians Say Organic Reduces Pesticide Exposure

The American Academy of Pediatricians (AAP) has weighed in on the organic food debate, recognizing that lower pesticide residues in organic foods may be significant for children. AAP also notes that choosing organic is based on larger environmental issues, as well as human health impacts like pollution and global climate change.

This is the first time the AAP has made a statement on organic foods, concluding that it is most important for children is to eat a wide variety of produce, but that pediatricians should talk to patients about the potential health and environmental benefits of choosing organic. The report, *Organic Foods: Health and*

*Environmental Advantages and Disadvantages*, was published in the journal *Pediatrics* and is available online at <http://bit.ly/RZf2TX>.

Though there have been conflicting messages in the media on AAP's report, the academy is clear that organic foods *do* provide health advantages by way of reducing exposure to pesticides, especially for children. It also finds "sound evidence" that organic foods contain more vitamin C and phosphorus.

According to the report, "in terms of health advantages, organic diets have been convincingly demonstrated to expose consumers to fewer pesticides associated with

human disease. Organic farming has been demonstrated to have less environmental impact than conventional approaches."

AAP recommends that "pediatricians should incorporate this evidence when discussing the health and environmental impact of organic foods and organic farming while continuing to encourage all patients and their families to attain optimal nutrition and dietary variety."

The report reviews the health and environmental issues related to organic food production and consumption. It defines the term "or-

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## Pesticides Are Key Contributor to Childhood Disease

Children are more sick today than they were a generation ago, finds a new report released by Pesticide Action Network (PAN), which highlights the growing body of research linking pesticides to the rampant rise of childhood diseases, learning disabilities, cancer and asthma in the United States.

Confronting the serious health challenges from pesticides and

other chemical exposures that previous generations were unlikely to face, the report outlines a series of urgent recommendations for state and federal policymakers to better protect children's health and intelligence.

"Enough scientific evidence is in –we can't fail our children. While individual household choices can help, protecting kids from the health harms of pesticides requires

real and swift policy change," said Dr. Marquez, report co-author and staff scientist at PAN. "Dramatically reducing pesticide use, starting with those most hazardous to children, is the best way to protect current and future generations."

Beyond Pesticides' believes that the report underscores the urgent need to shift from systems that depend of toxic pesticides to systems

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## **AAP Organic**

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ganic,” reviews organic food-labeling standards, describes organic and conventional farming practices, and explores the cost and environmental implications of organic production techniques. It also examines the evidence available on nutritional quality and production contaminants in conventionally produced and organic foods.

“At this point, we simply do not have the scientific evidence to know whether the difference in pesticide levels will impact a person’s health over a lifetime, though we do know that children—especially young children whose brains are developing—are uniquely vulnerable to chemical exposures,” said Joel Forman, MD, one of the lead authors of the AAP clinical report.

### **On Nutritional Content**

In its analysis, the AAP notes that research comparing the nutritional value of conventionally grown produce and organic produce is “not definitive,” citing that nutritional

content is affected by various factors including geographic locations, soil characteristics and climatic conditions. Better quality research accounting for these variables is needed to make accurate comparisons, and therefore at this time, there is no convincing evidence of a substantial difference in nutritional content of organic and conventional foods.

### **On Milk and Meat**

The AAP again notes that due to variability in cattle breeds and genetics, comparisons of milk composition must be “interpreted with caution.” AAP finds little significant differences, but organic milk does have slightly more protein than conventional milk. Milk derived from organic and low-input systems yield higher conjugated linoleic acid. AAP also notes that hormone supplementation, which is prohibited in organic, does not adversely impact nutritional composition of conventional milk, but the “biological effects in humans, if any, are unknown.” Furthermore, AAP states that studies are needed to inves-

tigate the risks to women and the development of breast cancer. The AAP calls for large, well-designed studies that measure environmental exposures, such as estrogen at low levels, to understand the impact of hormonal exposure of children through milk and meat.

### **On Antibiotics**

The evidence is clear that non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in livestock can promote the development of drug-resistant organisms, which can then spread through the food chain. Organic farming prohibits the use of these agents, therefore reducing this threat and, by extension, lowering the risk of human disease caused by drug-resistant organisms.

### **On Environmental Impacts**

Organic farms use less energy and produce less waste, have soils with higher organic quality and water retention. AAP finds that organic systems can have comparable productivity to conventional fields, while using less pesticides and reducing environmental pollutions.

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## **Childhood Disease**

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that incorporate organic principles of pest management.

Beyond Pesticides began tracking similar studies with the launch of the *Pesticide-Induced Diseases Database* in summer 2010, which captures the range of diseases linked to pesticides through epidemiologic studies. The constantly updated database is a tool to support efforts to eliminate the continued use of hazardous pesticides in favor of green strategies that emphasize non-toxic and least-toxic alternative practices

and products.

Alternatives assessment in environmental rulemaking would create a regulatory trigger to adopt alternatives and drive the market to go green. The alternatives assessment approach differs most dramatically from the current approach of risk assessment by rejecting uses and exposures deemed acceptable under risk assessment calculations, but unnecessary because of the availability of safer alternatives.

For example, where there are clear links to pesticide use and multiple

types of cancer, it would no longer be possible to use hazardous pesticides in agriculture, when there are clearly effective organic systems with competitive yields (as demonstrated by the AAP findings). This same analysis can be applied to home and garden use of pesticides where households using pesticides suffer elevated rates of cancer.

The report, *A Generation in Jeopardy: How pesticides are undermining our children’s health and intelligence* is available online at: [www.panna.org/publication/generation-in-jeopardy](http://www.panna.org/publication/generation-in-jeopardy).