

For the Record

March 2007

Straight talk about antibiotic use in food animal production presented by ALPHARMA Inc., Animal Health

FICTION AND FACT ABOUT ORGANIC MEAT AND MILK

He enraged food activists in January when England's Environment Secretary, David Miliband, told consumers who willingly pay 50 percent higher food costs to buy organics that they get no health or food-safety benefits in return. Organics, he said, are but a "lifestyle choice."

Miliband's uncharacteristically British bad form in pointing out the obvious echoed a reality that even most advocates of the organic lifestyle concede in the [scientific literature](#): Little hard evidence exists that the organic production process makes food any safer or more nutritious than conventional production.

Still, that hasn't discouraged organic marketers from trying to scare food consumers by repeating pet fictions, including: **FICTION:** Organic meat, milk and eggs are safer because they don't have antibiotics in them, like conventional foods.

FACT: No animal drug is approved for use in this country until the manufacturer has proven that any minute traces that could remain in the final product are so minuscule [as to be harmless](#). Mandatory pre-marketing drug withdrawal periods and

monitoring ensure no harmful residues reach consumers. Plus, many feed antibiotics aren't absorbed from the gut and thus can't possibly leave residues in meat.

FICTION: Growing livestock without antibiotic feed additives will stop promoting the development and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria to people.

FACT: Although some studies suggest a theoretical risk that animal antibiotics could cause human drugs to fail, no studies have proven a clear cause and effect. Antibiotic resistance is a complex phenomenon. Simply eliminating animal antibiotics could, in fact, [increase human disease](#).

FICTION: "Natural," non-confined production keeps animals healthier, making their products safer for people.

FACT: [Research concludes](#) organic production can actually increase *Salmonella* contamination in eggs, poultry and pork. Other studies have shown free-range poultry have a higher risk of being infected with *Campylobacter*. Pastured animals and birds also have higher rates of parasitic worm infections than their confined counterparts, studies prove.

Organic, more-ganic

[Consumer studies](#) show shoppers buy organics first and foremost because they believe they're getting safer, more nutritious food. As those claims fall under doubt, the organics movement is left searching for a "deeper organic" — to paraphrase world-famous expert on the [eating habits of monkeys](#), Jane Goodall. This new organic includes vague notions of social justice and anti-free-market "intimacy" with local food sources. For more about organics' [growing identity crisis](#), click on *For the Record* at www.alpharmaah.com.

Antibiotics prevent disease and improve meat, milk and egg production. These important, safe and proven tools remain absolutely necessary to meet the world's growing demand for affordable protein. ALPHARMA Inc., Animal Health sponsors this educational series to provide facts to help set the record straight. Comments or questions? [E-mail Steve Kopperud](mailto:Skopperud@poldir.com) at [skopperud@poldir.com](mailto:Skopperud@poldir.com) or [editor Mike Smith](mailto:MikeSmith@CustomMedia.com) at CustomMedia@Food360.com. [To read past issues](#), see www.alpharmaah.com.

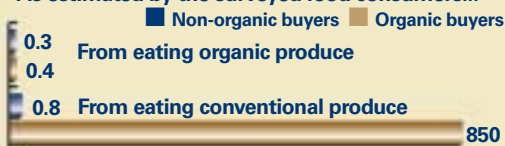
Organic consumers: Running from an irrational fear of their food

A RAND Corp. focus-group study found consumers who regularly bought organics rated the pesticide-related death risk from eating conventional produce more than 1,000 times higher than those who didn't buy organics. Half believed it to be as risky as the known cancer risk from smoking a pack a day.

Source: Hammitt JK. Risk perceptions and food choice: an exploratory analysis of organic- versus conventional-produce buyers. Risk Analysis. 1990 Sep;10(3):367-74.

Annual risk of dying (chances in a million)

As estimated by the surveyed food consumers...



Vs. some actual known risks for comparison...

