Organic Trade Association: Aversion to GMOs Drives Organic Purchases

Organic Trade Association

WASHINGTON (PRNewswire-USNewswire) — Of all the thoughts that race through the mind of a mom or dad as they do the weekly grocery shopping and decide whether to put an organic or non-organic item in the shopping cart, the desire to stay away from foods that have been genetically modified has never been greater.

Avoiding GMOs (genetically modified organisms), for themselves or their children, is an increasingly important reason why parents choose organic food, according to the Organic Trade Association's (OTA's) U.S. Families' Organic Attitudes and Beliefs 2014 Tracking Study, a survey of more than 1,200 households across the nation with at least one child under 18.

Almost 25 percent of parents buying organic said that wanting to steer clear of genetically modified foods is now one of their top reasons for selecting organic, the most in the four years the survey has been taken, and up significantly from 16 percent who said the same in 2013. Of the fifteen reasons for buying organic that parents were asked to rate, not buying GMOs showed the biggest jump by far from attitudes a year ago.

"Each year we see an increase in parents' self-described knowledge of organic topics. Parents have become more informed about the benefits of organic, and they have also become more aware of the questions surrounding GMOs. That heightened awareness is being reflected in their buying decisions," said OTA CEO and Executive Director Laura Batcha.

Demand for organic products is booming, with sales in the United States jumping to $35.1 billion in 2013, a 12 percent hike from the previous year and a new record. OTA's survey shows that eight out of ten American families now make organic products a part of their grocery list if not all the time, at least sometimes.

As parents have gotten more educated on organic issues (seven in ten parents in the survey said they feel "extremely well informed" or "know quite a bit" about organic), their familiarity of the term GMO has risen. The OTA survey revealed that 73 percent of parents – whether they were buying organic or not – know what GMO stands for. Further, when shopping for organic products, almost 70 percent of moms and dads watch for the "non-GMO" or "Produced without GMOs" label to help guide their purchase decision.

OTA's Gwendolyn Wyard, Regulatory Director for Organic Standards & Food Safety, however, stresses that while parents can be assured when buying an organic product with the USDA Organic seal that it will always be non-GMO, products with only the non-GMO label are not necessarily organic. Wyard notes that the non-GMO

assurance is just one of the benefits of buying organic, and that the organic seal conveys a swath of other characteristics that parents value, such as no artificial colors, no preservatives, no synthetic hormones.

Parents have apparently caught on. The big decider when purchasing organic products appears to be the USDA Organic seal, with nearly three-quarters of parents saying they actively seek out that organic seal.

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) *[1] is the membership-based business association for organic agriculture and products in North America. OTA is the leading voice for organic trade in the United States, representing over 6,500 organic businesses across 49 states. Its members include growers, shippers, processors, certifiers, farmers' associations, distributors, importers, exporters, consultants, retailers and others. OTA's Board of Directors is democratically elected by its members. OTA's mission is to promote and protect the growth of organic trade to benefit the environment, farmers, the public and the economy.*

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