



**What you can
say when selling
organic food**





Introduction

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Since the beginning of 2013 the organic market has begun to show signs of recovery. The Soil Association believes this is a crucial moment for everyone in the organic movement to come together with a clear call to consumers – organic is food you can trust, better for the environment and animal welfare.

We believe that there is strong scientific evidence to back up most of the benefits that those of us involved in organic farming and food know it delivers.

For decades the Soil Association has worked tirelessly to help prove the key tangible consumer benefits of organic food and farming and has regularly published guidance on approved statements.

This document contains all the latest statements you can make in support of organic farming and food – which have been agreed by Copy Advice.

Advertising Standards Authority and Copy Advice

In the UK, marketing statements are overseen by a voluntary system, funded by the advertising and related industries, and run by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Businesses wanting to know if statements they make about their products will be found to be inaccurate by the ASA if a complaint is made about what they say, can check in advance with the Committee of Advertising Practice – called Copy Advice.

Copy Advice say they are 'responsible for writing and maintaining the UK Advertising Codes and providing authoritative advice on the rules'. They are funded 'by an arm's length levy on advertising space and a small amount of income raised from charging for some training seminars and premium advice services'. The Advertising Codes are administered by the Advertising Standards Authority. Copy Advice are linked to but say they are independent of the ASA, and always take pains to stress that if they advise that a statement is acceptable, it still may be found to be unacceptable by the ASA. Nevertheless, Copy Advice's view carries some weight with the ASA, and certainly provides a useful guide to advertisers.

You can't say everything that is true!

The rules governing what you can say to sell a product, as administered by the ASA, do not simply rely on a statement being true. For example, you are not allowed to say something that the ASA might feel 'denigrates' other products.

Recently, the European Union introduced new, very strict, rules about any statements implying that a product has nutritional benefits or will make people healthier – such statements are now extremely difficult to make, and the new rules are still very unclear, and will remain so until they have been subject to rulings by the European Court. The ultimate outcome is likely to reflect well on the organic movement, because whilst the number of nutritional/health claims overall will be reduced, some of the spurious claims made by elements of the food industry will be banned for good.



How to use the statements in this document

1. Once you have decided to use a statement, we strongly recommend you then check your actual advertisement with Copy Advice. The context in which the statement is used, and any associated imagery, can alter the meaning of the words.

Copy Advice can be reached via their website at www.cap.org.uk/Advice-Training-on-the-rules/Bespoke-Copy-Advice.aspx and proposed statements can be submitted via the website for free advice. Copy Advice always undertake to respond within 24 hours, and in the Soil Association's experience their staff are generally helpful, and willing to explain the basis of their advice. However, remember that Copy Advice will always qualify their opinion by stressing that it does not bind the ASA itself.

2. You need to hold any evidence that might be required, to substantiate the statements you make, when you make them. The Soil Association has a fully referenced version for the statements in this document, some referring back to the Soil Association's own organic standards, and where appropriate to the relevant scientific research. This information is available to SA licensees on request. Please contact Katie Stinchcombe at kstinchcombe@soilassociation.org

Promoting the benefits of organic farming and food

As the statements in this document show, almost all the positive attributes of organic farming and food can be communicated to customers and potential customers. Organic farming and food deliver a huge range of public benefits, from animal welfare to less pollution. Many advertisers look for a single 'killer fact' to promote organic food – and this may work where there is a very clear audience. But the real strength of organic farming is that it is a system, governed by legal standards and regularly and independently inspected, that produces food in ways that benefit people, farm animals, society and the environment. No other system of farming and food production gets anywhere near delivering all of these public goods – we believe that by working together as an organic community we will be able to tell a fantastic and compelling story about the complex and multiple benefits of organic.

There is certainly more we could say

This collection of statements is always work in progress, and if anyone feels there are other statements about organic farming and food which result from the application of organic standards, or for which there is good scientific evidence, we would be delighted to hear them, and to check them with Copy Advice.

The Soil Association - Organic marketing statements



September 2013

Explaining the basics

What is organic?

- The European Commission states that organic production is an overall system of farm management and food production that combines excellent environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, the application of high animal welfare standards and a production method in line with the preference of certain consumers for products produced using mainly natural substances and processes. Organic production delivers public goods contributing to the protection of the environment and animal welfare, as well as to rural development.
- Organic certification and labelling is agreed nationally and across Europe and is a guarantee of food quality, independently inspected and certified all over the world.
- Organic farming and food production is not easy and takes real commitment and attention to detail, backed up by rigorous, independent inspection and certification.
- Organic farming reduces environmental pollution and the release of greenhouse gases from food production by severely restricting the use of artificial chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Instead, organic farmers rely on developing a healthy, fertile soil and growing a mixture of crops.
- No system of farming has higher animal welfare standards than farms working to Soil Association organic standards.
- No system of farming has lower pesticide use.
- No system of farming has higher wildlife benefits.
- Organic farming is better for bees (because of the complete absence of herbicides and the severely restricted use of fungicides and insecticides)
- No system of farming is more bee-friendly.
- Bee friendly farming and food (accompanying text must explain the headline).
- No system of farming has milk with higher nutrient levels.
- No system of farming has milk with higher levels of omega 3 fatty acids.
- No system of farming does more to protect natural resources like fresh water and healthy soils.
- No system of farming has lower use of antibiotics
- Animals are reared without the routine use of drugs, antibiotics or wormers, animal feed is GM-free and poultry is always free-range.
- Organic standards prohibit GM crops and ingredients, hydrogenated fats and controversial artificial food colours and preservatives.
- Organic farming works with nature, using crop rotations and clover to build fertility in the soil.
- Organic farmers provide their animals with the best quality of life possible and support biodiversity by providing natural habitats for wildlife.
- Food you can trust. Organic food must be certified by law so you can be assured that the product and ingredients come from verified sources.
- Food you can trust. The standards for organic food are laid down in European law, so a licence is required to grow, process and market organic products, plus all organic farms and companies are inspected at least once a year.
- More fresh air for the animals (accompanying text must explain the headline).
- More flowery meadows (accompanying text must explain the headline).
- Healthier Soil, happier animals (accompanying text must explain the headline).



Reasons to choose organic

Knowing what's in your food

- GM ingredients, hydrogenated fats and controversial artificial food colours and preservatives including the preservative sodium benzoate, aspartame and food colour tartrazine are banned under organic standards.
- Only 36 of the 314 food additives approved for use across the EU are permitted in organic food. Amongst the additives banned by the Soil Association's standards are hydrogenated fat, aspartame (artificial sweetener) and monosodium glutamate. Generally, permitted additives are derived from natural sources such as citric acid from lemons.
- Nanotechnology is banned under Soil Association organic standards.
- High standards.
- Organic food comes from trusted sources. All organic farms and food companies are inspected at least once a year. The standards for organic food are laid down in European law, and in places these are exceeded by the Soil Association's stricter standards.
- Conventional food production makes wide use of pesticides, which can pollute water and the environment. Organic food, instead, is produced with natural fertilisers, less energy and more respect for animals that provide it.
- One way to reduce your exposure to pesticides is to eat more organic food.
- Over 320 pesticides can be routinely used in non-organic farming and pesticides are often present in non-organic food.
- Many pesticides remain in some of the food we eat, despite washing and cooking.
- Pesticides are found on one in three non-organic foods tested each year, and multiple residues of up to seven different compounds are not uncommon. In contrast, pesticides are rarely found in organic food.
- Soil Association organic farmers are able to use just eight pesticides, derived from natural ingredients, but only under very restricted circumstances.
- Soil Association standards ban the routine use of antibiotics.
- Organic dairy farmers don't use manufactured (or artificial) fertilisers, herbicides or GM feed.
- 'Zero-grazing', where cows are kept indoors and grass taken to them, is banned by organic standards.
- Many shoppers choose organic because it tastes good.
- Avoiding chemicals in food is the biggest motivation for purchase with organic shoppers.





Reasons to choose organic

The environment

- Organic farming releases less greenhouse gases per hectare than non-organic farming – choosing organic, local and seasonal food can significantly reduce your carbon footprint.
- Organic farming reduces disruption to the natural environment.
- Organic farms do not use manufactured chemical fertilisers. Instead, crop rotation is at the core of organic production. Crops and livestock are rotated around different fields within the farm on an annual basis.
- Organic farming creates a healthy living soil.
- Organic farmers aim to select crop varieties with natural resistance to particular pests and diseases, with the aim of reducing or avoiding disease problems and the need to control them with chemical inputs.
- Organic agriculture helps reduce our dependence on mined phosphate, a non-renewable resource that is becoming increasingly scarce and expensive.
- Overall organic farming uses less energy.
- Organic farming does not rely on artificial fertilisers made from finite fossil fuels.
- Organic farming is more drought resistant and therefore more resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Organic farming is better for the long term health of the soil.
- Organic farms have healthier soils.
- Organic farms have a more diverse range of microbes living in the soil. This helps the crops to grow without the expense of artificial fertilisers.
- Organic agriculture can help fight against climate change by sequestering carbon in soils.
- Organic farming will result in higher soil carbon levels compared to non-organic farming.
- Cleaning up of nitrogen pollution from non-organic farming costs each person in Europe around £130 – £650 a year.





Reasons to choose organic

Animal welfare

- No other international farming standards deliver higher standards of animal welfare than organic.
 - Organic standards insist that animals are given plenty of space and fresh air to thrive and grow – guaranteeing a truly free-range life.
 - An organic pig/cow/sheep has more space to play/roam (accompanying text must explain the headline).
 - High animal welfare.
 - Free-range (for use in reference to organic poultry).
 - Animals reared organically are encouraged to forage and graze.
 - Bans routine use of antibiotics.
 - No animal welfare standards are higher.
 - Chickens must be completely free range. They live in smaller flocks, have better access to fresh grass and air and more space in their houses than non-organic chickens. Chickens must not be beak-tipped and must be allowed natural behaviour like scratching in the dust for food.
 - Under Soil Association standards pigs must be free range and allowed to forage without painful nose rings.
 - Animals are reared without the routine use of drugs, antibiotics and wormers common in intensive livestock farming.
 - Animals are raised in conditions that suit their natural behaviour and are fed a mainly organic diet.
 - No other system of farming has higher animal welfare standards. Organic systems for pigs and poultry are free-range, and encourage the animals' natural behaviour. Organically reared animals are fed a more natural, mainly organic and completely GM-free diet.
- No system of farming has higher levels of animal welfare standards than organic farms working to Soil Association standards. Compassion in World Farming believes the "Soil Association's welfare standards are leaders in the field". (Joyce d'Silva, Director, Compassion in World Farming.)
 - Organic standards ban the use of cloning and embryo transfer.
 - Organic standards ban the routine use of antibiotics and wormers.
 - Compassion in World Farming say that intensive animal husbandry relies on a greater use of antibiotics to treat stressed, disease-prone animals. Resistance to antibiotics is a well-known consequence of such misuse.
 - The application of Soil Association standards ensures that farm animals enjoy the very highest levels of animal welfare in any farming system.
 - Animal welfare is central to the Soil Association's organic principles.





Reasons to choose organic

- Soil Association standards for meat and animal products rigorously protect all aspects of animal wellbeing from rearing, feeding and shelter, to transportation and slaughter.
- Compassion in World Farming say we should eat less, but better meat- coming from animals that have lived a happy and healthy life.
- Compassion in World Farming says that farming to organic standards has huge benefits for farm animals and the environment.
- Compassion in World Farming strongly supports organic as the best form of humane and sustainable agriculture. For Compassion, organic means first and foremost high animal welfare standards. For chickens, laying hens, pigs and cows it means a better and longer life, mainly with outdoor access, a balanced diet and freedom from stress.
- Organic chickens are usually breeds that are slower growing, and more robust. Their life is usually almost twice as long as the one of an intensively reared bird.
- Pigs reared in organic systems are weaned much later than standard ones, at 40 days rather than 28. The Soil Association advises its farmers not to wean until they are eight weeks old.
- Calves born on organic farms are not exported to the continent, have a natural milk diet and outdoor access.
- Organic is not only better for animals but the planet too.

Protecting wildlife

- Encourages wildlife.
- Builds soil fertility naturally using compost and clover.
- Champions biodiversity.
- More buzzy bees – (accompanying text must explain the headline).
- Organic means working more with nature, not against it.
- Soil Association organic avoids most chemical sprays, promotes biodiversity.
- Organic production aims to maintain a healthy living soil and positive plant and animal health. Organic free range systems encourage healthy animals avoiding the need for routine antibiotics. Natural, sustainable soil fertility is cultivated through composting and crop rotation rather than synthetic fertilisers.
- Food produced organically encourages more wildlife and generally releases fewer greenhouse gas emissions than food produced conventionally.





Reasons to choose organic

- Overall, organic farming supports more farmland wildlife than non-organic farming because of the way land is managed and treated.
- The UK government has said that organic farming is better for wildlife, causes lower pollution from sprays, produces less carbon dioxide and fewer dangerous wastes.
- Organic farms are havens for wildlife and provide homes for bees, birds and butterflies. Overall plant, insect and bird life is 50% more abundant on organic farms, and there are 30% more species.
- Birds, mammals, spiders, earthworms, beetles, bats and plants benefit from organic farming.
- Overall, organic farming supports more farmland wildlife than non-organic farming.
- The RSPB supports the expansion of the area of organic production in the UK
- 'Research has shown that a wide range of plants and animals, including butterflies, birds and bats, benefit from organic management than from other types of farming and that biodiversity can increase at every level of the production chain' (RSPB).



GM free farming

- No GM.
- GM ingredients and crops are banned under Soil Association Organic Standards.
- Genetically modified crops and ingredients are banned under European Union and international organic standards.
- Over a million tonnes of GM crops are imported each year to feed the majority of non-organic livestock which produce chicken, eggs, pork, bacon, milk, cheese and other dairy products.

Avoiding antibiotics

- Soil Association standards ban the routine use of antibiotics for farm animals.
- Organic animals are reared without the routine use of drugs.

Increasing employment

- Organic farmers are on average younger.
- At 49, organic farmers are on average seven years younger than non-organic farmers.
- Organic farms provide almost 50% more jobs per farm and over 30% more jobs per hectare than non-organic farms.
- Organic farming creates more jobs.



Reasons to choose organic

European Commission marketing statements – statements from the Organic Farming section of the Agriculture and Rural Development pages of the European Commission website (as amended by UK ASA's Copy Advice – and in the UK for the first four statements the advertisement would need to explain how the claim is justified). If these EU marketing statements are used exactly as produced by the European Commission, and are attributed to them, they cannot be used to promote a particular organic brand or organic product, but only organic food and farming in general.

- Organic farming. Better for nature.
- Organic farming. Be more natural!
- As nature intended.
- Organic farming. In nature we trust.
- Organic farming. It's in our nature.
- Organic farming. In goodness we trust.
- Organic farming. Simply good.
- Organic farming. Wickedly good.
- Organic production contributes to a high level of biodiversity and the preservation of species and natural habitats.
- Organic production makes responsible use of energy and natural resources.
- Organic production takes account of local and regional balances and encourages the use of on-site resources.
- Organic production enhances soil life, natural soil fertility and water quality.
- Organic production promotes animal health and welfare.
- Organic production has strict standards to help meet the specific behavioural needs of animals.
- Organic products meet consumer demand for authentic, high quality food.
- Organic labelling offers consumers confidence that their goods are produced under controlled organic standards.
- Organic production offers diversified varieties of products to the market, available through various distribution channels.
- Organic production offers consumers the guarantee that all enterprises in the organic sector are regularly inspected by authorities.
- Consumer demand for organic products is growing, offering increased business opportunities for all sectors of the food supply chain.
- The growth in organic farming is creating more employment opportunities and wealth for rural economies and contributes to the maintenance and improvement of rural landscapes.
- Organic farming allows opportunities for members of the food supply chain to reconnect with consumers.
- The organic food supply chain requires workers who are highly experienced and well-qualified.



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