

**DAVID RUSSELL
CONTINUES TO
DEMYSTIFY THE
FOOD BUSINESS.**

Onward 4 Organics – Bring on the Facts



The Great Organic Debate that has raged for decades took a decisive turn last month when a £12.6 million EU funded project released some convincing research to prove that organic food really is better for you. Early results of the biggest ever study into the pros and cons of organic farming show that organic fruit and vegetables have up to 40 per cent more antioxidants than non-organically grown produce, together with higher levels of beneficial minerals like zinc and iron. Even greater contrasts were found for milk, with organic milk containing up to 60 per cent more antioxidants and healthy essential fatty acids.

The four year Quality Low Input Food (QLIF) project, conducted by the Tesco Centre for Organic Agriculture based at Newcastle University, aims to publish the results in full within the next twelve months, but its early findings already contradict advice from the government's Food Standards Agency (FSA), which states that organic produce is no healthier than non-organically produced food.

Leader of the QLIF project Professor Carlo Leifert says that the research suggests that eating organic food is equivalent to eating an extra portion of fruit and vegetables a day – and so it could help those of us who struggle to reach our recommended Five a Day fruit and veg intake by providing more nutrient-dense produce.

The scale may be unprecedented but evidence of the beneficial effect of organic farming on nutrient levels is nothing new. For example a ten-year study comparing organic tomatoes with standard produce found that they contained almost double the amount of a group of antioxidants called flavonoids. Flavonoids are anti-inflammatory substances with many positive effects in our bodies, including helping to prevent high blood pressure. Equally, organic milk not only contains more of the good stuff – such as the heart and brain-friendly omega 3 fats – than non-organic milk, it also contains less of the bad stuff. It has consistently been shown to contain far lower levels of somatic cells than milk from non-organically reared cows. Just what are somatic cells you might ask? These are dead white blood cells and dead bacteria from the animal, or, to put it bluntly, pus! That alone is enough to see me reaching for an organic pint, or two, of the white stuff.

