



Organic Farming: Methods, Markets, and Meaning

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

Organic farming is an agricultural system that prioritizes ecological balance, biodiversity, and the avoidance of synthetic inputs. Rather than relying on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, organic farmers manage soil fertility through **composting**, crop rotation, and the integration of livestock. The approach represents not merely a set of techniques but a philosophy about the relationship between food production and the natural world.

Central to organic practice is the concept of soil health. Organic farmers view soil as a living ecosystem populated by microorganisms, fungi, and invertebrates that collectively **sustain** plant growth. Synthetic fertilizers can disrupt these communities over time, while compost and organic matter restore and enhance them. This long-term view of soil management distinguishes organic farming from conventional methods that prioritize short-term yield increases.

Pest control in organic systems relies on **integrated** strategies rather than blanket chemical applications. These include biological controls—introducing predator species to manage pest populations—as well as physical barriers, companion planting, and crop rotation schedules that break pest cycles naturally. While these methods require more knowledge and planning, they reduce chemical runoff into waterways and minimize risks to non-target species.

The global market for organic products has expanded significantly, driven by consumer concerns about food safety, environmental impact, and animal welfare. However, the higher price of organic food reflects real production costs: without synthetic inputs, organic yields are often lower, and **certification** processes add administrative burdens for farmers. Critics argue that organic farming cannot feed a growing global population at scale, while proponents counter that its long-term benefits to soil and ecosystems outweigh the immediate productivity gap.

The debate around organic farming ultimately touches on deeper questions of **sustainability**. Industrial agriculture has dramatically increased food production, but at significant ecological cost—soil degradation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss. Organic farming offers an alternative model, though one that requires land, labor, and consumer willingness to pay premium prices. How societies resolve this tension will shape not only what people eat, but what kind of environment they inherit.

A. Vocabulary

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. composting ____ | a. an official process that confirms something meets specific standard |
| 2. sustain ____ | b. made artificially by chemical processes, not from nature |
| 3. integrated ____ | c. to keep something going over a long period of time |
| 4. certification ____ | d. the amount of crop produced from a given area of farmland |
| 5. sustainability ____ | e. the ability to continue without harming future resources |
| 6. biodiversity ____ | f. the variety of living species in an area or ecosystem |
| 7. synthetic ____ | g. the process of turning organic waste into rich soil material |
| 8. yield ____ | h. combining several different elements into one whole system |

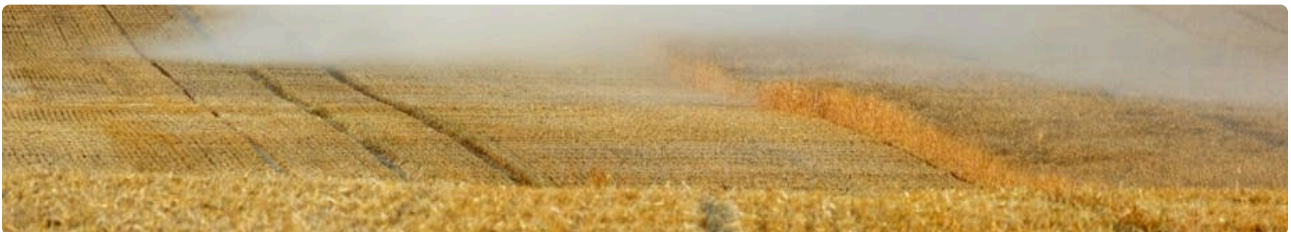
B. True or False

- ___ 1. Organic farmers rely heavily on synthetic fertilizers.
- ___ 2. Soil health is considered a living ecosystem in organic farming.
- ___ 3. Crop rotation helps break pest cycles naturally.
- ___ 4. Organic food is always cheaper than conventionally grown food.
- ___ 5. The market for organic products has been growing globally.
- ___ 6. Certification processes help reduce costs for organic farmers.
- ___ 7. Industrial agriculture has contributed to biodiversity loss.
- ___ 8. Organic yields are often lower than conventional farming yields.
- ___ 9. Biological controls involve using predator species to manage pests.
- ___ 10. The article says organic farming is the only solution to feeding the world.

C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: composting, sustain, integrated, certification, sustainability, biodiversity, synthetic, yield

- 1. Organic farmers avoid _____ fertilizers and use compost instead.
- 2. Soil microorganisms help _____ plant growth over time.
- 3. Organic pest control uses _____ strategies, not just one method.
- 4. Getting organic _____ adds extra administrative work for farmers.
- 5. Long-term _____ is one of the core goals of organic farming.



D. Comprehension Questions

- 1. Why do organic farmers consider soil a "living ecosystem"?
- 2. What arguments do critics make against organic farming at scale?
- 3. How does the article suggest organic farming connects to broader questions of sustainability?

E. Discussion Questions

- 1. Is it fair that organic food costs more? Who should bear that cost—consumers, governments, or farmers?
- 2. Can organic farming and industrial agriculture coexist, or must one replace the other?

Answer Key

Organic Farming: Methods, Markets, and Meaning | Level F

Teacher Reference Only | tahricteaches.com

Source: tahricteaches.com

A. Vocabulary: 1-g, 2-c, 3-h, 4-a, 5-e, 6-f, 7-b, 8-d

B. True/False: 1-F, 2-T, 3-T, 4-F, 5-T, 6-F, 7-T, 8-T, 9-T, 10-F

C. Fill Blanks: 1-synthetic, 2-sustain, 3-integrated, 4-certification, 5-sustainability

D. Comprehension:

1. Because it contains microorganisms, fungi, and invertebrates that work together to support plant growth.
2. That organic yields are lower and organic farming cannot feed a growing global population at scale.
3. It frames farming as a choice about long-term ecological health versus short-term productivity—a decision that shapes the environment future generations inherit.