

# FACES NEWSLETTER

Family and Consumer Science



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## Sustainable Agriculture? Certified Organic? GMO? What does it all mean?

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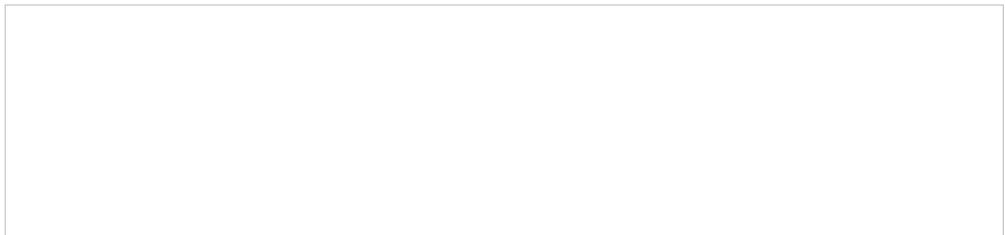
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From health claims, to environmental concerns, to labeling regulations, all the buzz in the air about sustainability, organic foods and GMOs can get a little overwhelming. To help you make sense of it all, we define these common, but often misunderstood terms.

As defined by Congress, *sustainable agriculture* is: "an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term:

1. satisfy human food and fiber needs;
2. enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends;
3. make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls;
4. sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and
5. enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole."

As defined by the United States Department of Agriculture, who are responsible for developing and executing federal government policy on farming, agriculture, forestry, and food, *Organic food* is produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation.





*Before a product can be labeled "organic," a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket or restaurant must be certified, too.*

*The term **GMO, or genetically modified organism**, refers to a living organism whose genes have been altered by inserting gene from an unrelated species. This type of technology is called "transgenic" technology and has been used in over 40 species of plants for food and fibers. In crops, the technology has generally been used to incorporate genes that enhance resistance to insect resistance, or tolerance to herbicides or pesticides, enhance drought tolerance, encourage higher yields or promote the ability to plant more in a smaller area.*

Today's consumers are concerned with knowing what is in the food they eat and what methods were used to produce it. This has led to more interest in buying locally grown and produced foods.

Because of the cost and time required for organic certification, many small farmers are not certified organic producers, but do use organic and sustainable methods. The ability to talk directly to the farmer who grew the product is invaluable to knowing what you are buying. Currently, there are no standards concerning the labeling of GMO, so if you want non-GMO it's best to buy organically grown food. For more information on sustainable agriculture, organic farming methods or certification program requirements contact the NC Cooperative Extension office. In Onslow County, the number is 910-455-5873.



### **Is gluten-free right for me?**

It's all the rage right now; in fact, you may even be thinking of going on a gluten-free diet yourself. Before you do, here's something to think about. Originally, gluten-free diets were designed to combat celiac disease, a serious autoimmune disorder that virtually destroys the intestinal tract. Celiac affects about 1 percent of the population and is reversed by taking gluten out of the diet. Therein lies the danger taking gluten out of your diet

prematurely. If you remove gluten and reverse the symptoms, you would never be able to get an accurate diagnosis. An intestinal biopsy is the only way to detect celiac definitively.

People who try gluten-free diets in response to feeling tired, bloated or depressed, often find that eliminating gluten correlates with feeling better or losing weight. But that outcome is more likely because they've cut out the excess calories found in many flour-based snack foods, and they mistakenly attribute feeling better to taking out the gluten. So, before you rush into a gluten-free diet, why not try something simple, say choosing an apple over that slice of cake ... or exercise?

**If you think you might have gluten sensitivity, follow these steps to check and see if a gluten-free diet might be right for you.**

1. Have a complete check-up with your family physician.
2. Consult with appropriate specialists, such as an allergist for wheat allergy and a gastroenterologist for celiac or another gastrointestinal disease. If you have a wheat allergy, you must avoid wheat, but you do not have to avoid gluten from other grains. If you have celiac disease, you must avoid gluten — even the tiniest amounts. (But remember,

you must be eating gluten for the diagnosis to be made).

3. If you do not have a wheat allergy or celiac disease, visit a registered dietitian to verify that you are eating a balanced diet with plenty of nutrient-dense, naturally fiber-rich foods and that you are getting adequate physical activity. A healthy diet and lifestyle reduce negative gastrointestinal symptoms and inflammation, boost the immune system, improve brain function and reduce depression and anxiety. If you are overweight, you need to lose weight, as body fat can be toxic. It produces hormones and pro-inflammatory chemicals that regulate metabolism, the immune system, inflammation and the progression of artery hardening. When you have less body fat, you get many biological benefits and feel better.
4. If symptoms persist (though they will not in most cases), you may be one of the rare people who are "gluten sensitive" — though hopefully not, as it's a tough life. Gluten-free can be difficult to do and studies have found gluten-free diets can be seriously nutrient-deficient — low in fiber, iron, folate, niacin, thiamine, riboflavin, calcium, vitamin B12, phosphorus and zinc. That's because so many "gluten-free" products are made with refined, unenriched grains and starches, which contain plenty

of calories but very few vitamins or minerals. The new gluten-free industry is making millions from Americans' desperation to feel better. There has been an explosion of gluten-free junk foods, and I hope you don't become a victim.

The good news is that many people who think they might need a gluten-free diet, but when they work to simply improving their nutrition and life balance, their symptoms vanished! Perhaps that could work for you, too?

**LOW IN SODIUM!**

### **How to Minimize Sodium in Your Diet!**

Pass the salt, you say? Most of us would actually benefit from passing *on* the salt. Sodium puts us at a higher risk for heart disease and elevated blood pressure, and even without a shake here and there, our food is already brimming with it. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends limiting sodium intake to less than 1,500 milligrams a day, yet the average American eats over 3,000 milligrams a day, according to the AHA. Lots of food manufacturers have been making foods more palatable by putting a lot of salt in them, and people buy a lot of

processed foods. In fact, about 77 percent of the salt we consume is already in the prepared foods we eat—it's not coming from our saltshakers. Plus, people are eating fewer fresh, home-cooked meals and dining out more, which adds up to Americans consuming more than double the amount of sodium that's recommended.

It's not easy to combat the sodium overload, but it can be done. Eating fresh, whole foods is best. Shop the perimeter (the outer edges of the grocery store); this is where you'll find fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meat and dairy—all of the fresh items that are vital to a balanced, low-sodium diet.

Below, are the American Heart Association's "Salty Six," (i.e. six foods that sneak salt into our diets) for Go Red, and offers tips on how to reduce sodium intake.

#### **1. Bread and rolls**

Most bread will have 100 to 200 milligrams of sodium per slice. If you're eating a sandwich, those numbers add up quickly. Read the label and find a whole-grain bread that has less than 200 milligrams of sodium per serving. Also consider switching to whole-grain pita pockets, whole-grain English muffins or whole-grain bagel thins, all of which have fewer than 150 milligrams of sodium. And limit

how much bread you eat throughout the day. Two slices should be the maximum.

## **2. Cold cuts and cured meats**

Just six thin slices of deli meat can add up to half of a day's worth of recommended sodium intake. Ham is a particularly high offender, and there's no close alternative. If you do indulge in lunchmeats, find a low-sodium variety, but be sure to read the labels; even those cold cuts marketed as low-sodium may run high. One viable alternative is to substitute hummus, egg whites, veggies or low sodium tuna, as alternate sandwich options.

## **3. Pizza**

Pizza brings together a melting pot of high-sodium ingredients: cheese, pepperoni, sausage, tomato sauce and crust. Lessen the blow by choosing an olive oil sauce instead of tomato, ask them to go light on the cheese and opt for veggie toppings instead of meat. Limit yourself to two small slices, and have a salad or steamed vegetable to round out the meal.

## **4. Poultry**

This one can be sneaky. What looks like a natural fresh or frozen piece of chicken could actually be injected with broth or sodium solution preservatives that boost sodium content up to 200 milligrams per serving. Read the

label, and if has anything other than "chicken," look for another brand. Even fresh poultry will have some inherent sodium. When purchasing chicken, avoid any prepared or processed products, which are packed with seasonings and sodium and are often fried. Consider fresh fish to bake or grill as another low-sodium alternative.

## **5. Soup**

Many prepared soups are a hidden bunker of salt. You can easily blow an entire day's worth of your allotted sodium intake just by eating a single serving which often measures in at 600 to 1,000 milligrams per serving (with two servings per can). It helps to choose a lower-sodium variety, but even those can score 400-plus milligrams per cup. Homemade soups (ones made without store-bought broth or bullion) are an option, but for those people who are used to high-sodium soups, the transition may seem flavorless and bland but with time your taste buds will adjust.



## 6. Sandwiches

Burgers and sandwiches are another hidden trove of salt, particularly if the meal is coming from a restaurant. It's extremely challenging to follow a low-sodium diet if you dine out, particularly if you eat at fast food spots, where a single sandwich can contain a day's worth of sodium. One way to lower sodium content is to request the burger or sandwich grilled and not fried, without cheese and with the condiments on the side (BBQ sauce and ketchup, in particular, add sodium and sugar). A better way to go is to share a sandwich and order a fresh side, such as a salad, fruit or low fat yogurt.

### New Twist on Grandparent Scam Observed



The Elder Fraud Unit of the

Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division is noticing a new twist in the way overseas scam artists are running the "Grandparent Scam." Whereas in recent years the scammers have claimed that they were the victim's grandchild vacationing overseas, and that they were facing criminal charges in a country such as Peru, Mexico, Spain or England for

causing in a terrible traffic accident, now some of them are claiming to be incarcerated in the local jail of the community where the grandchild actually resides. They claim that the persons they injured were foreign tourists who were travelling in a rental car here in the U.S. and that release from jail on bond will not be considered until thousands of dollars are wired to the injured foreign tourists, who have returned to their home country to recuperate. The payments usually are represented to be for medical care. This new twist may stem from the fact that targets of the Grandparent Scam often will not believe that their grandchild has gone on an overseas trip, especially without telling them. Or, the victim might have spoken with the grandchild in question just hours or days before. Victims are more likely to believe, however, that their grandchild was just involved in a local traffic accident. One target was told recently that her grandson was in the local jail here in North Carolina. Another NC target was told that her grandson was in the local jail in his current town in New York State. In both instances the targets of the scams were told to wire \$6000 to individuals in Bogota, Columbia.

**The other common features of a Grandparent Scam appear to remain the same:**

1. The supposed grandchild explains that his or her voice sounds different because of injuries sustained in the wreck.
2. The supposed grandchild implores the grandparent not to tell his or her parents until he gets out of jail – and describes terrible conditions in the jail.
3. Third parties claiming to be the grandchild’s attorney or jailer will place calls to the grandparent, describe the grandchild’s deteriorating physical or legal situation, and press them to wire money (or more money) immediately.
4. The grandparent is told not to bother with calling the grandchild’s cell phone number because it has been confiscated by jailers.
5. Once money has been wired, the grandparent is called again and told that additional monies need to be wired because the medical condition of a victim has deteriorated, or a victim has died, or because the victims’ rental car company wants to be compensated for damages, or because charges have been

increased, necessitating more money for bail or attorneys fees. In the U.S., a person arrested because of an automobile accident cannot be held in jail until the other party’s medical or property damage bills are paid.

Individuals or businesses who think an older adult is being targeted with this or any other type of cross-border scam should contact the Elder Fraud Unit of the Attorney General’s, telephone 1-877-5-NOSCAM, and ask to speak with one of the Telemarketing Fraud Duty Agents.



**How You Can Help Us Serve You Better**

Through daily practice, we at Onslow County Cooperative Extension strive to promote a culture among staff and the community of positively impacting our environment. The Cooperative Extension conducts programs addressing a variety to topics to help you reduce your negative impact and increase your positive impact on the environment.



Programs focus on sustainable practices in economy, society and the environment. In order to further our impact we are asking you to consider helping us reduce our environmental impact in a very simple way, requesting electronic correspondence from us, rather than paper correspondence. Why is it so important? Consider some of the environmental impact we make by using paper in our newsletters:

- Cutting trees that release oxygen for our environment
- Energy usage and environmental impact in pulp and paper industry
- Fuel consumption by air, rail, and road transport distributing reams of paper
- Fuel consumption sending paper documents via ground & air courier services

Consider the following facts about the paper and ink industry:

- Paper consumption has tripled since 1960 and Americans generate 85 million tons of paper into the waste stream

- The U.S. pulp and paper industry is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest consumer of energy
- EPA estimates that more than 400 million ink and 100 million toner cartridges end up in landfills each year
- The average U.S. office worker prints 10,000 pages per year

Consider the environmental impact of just 10 million pages:

- 2,500 trees
- 56,000 gallons of oil
- 450 cubic yards of landfill space
- 595,000 KW (kilowatts) of energy

(Data Source: [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov))

These numbers do not even take into account the cost of mailing newsletters, the increase workload on those who print, fold, address, stamp, and deliver these letters. The money and time saved could be used to enhance the service we offer to the community. Neither does it consider the waste that comes from newsletters, once they are read, being discarded in your trash, then picked up by your garbage service and dumped into the landfill. Even when recycled there is the impact and cost of that process that we must consider.

So why not make the “GREEN” choice to Go Paperless on your correspondence from us, if possible? All our newsletters are already available online at <http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/> or we will be happy to add your email to our existing databases. Your email will be secure and will not be shared with any other agency. It’s as simple as sending us an email to Peggie Garner at [peggie\\_garner@ncsu.edu](mailto:peggie_garner@ncsu.edu), include your email address and the names of the newsletter you wish to receive via email.



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