

This glossary will help you understand the variety of terms used throughout this guide and by many farmers when describing their products.

GENERAL TERMS

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs): GMOs are plants and animals that have had their genetic make-up altered in the laboratory to exhibit traits that are not naturally theirs. For example, tomato plants can be genetically altered so that the tomatoes will store longer. In general, genes are taken (copied) from one organism with a desired trait and transferred into the genetic code of another organism. Genetic modification is currently allowed in conventional farming in the United States.

Locally grown food: Food grown near the point of its consumption. There is no standard definition for "local" when it comes to food -- a particular definition of "local" might be based upon county, state, region, watershed, or another boundary. Ideally, local food means the buyer can meet the farmer or food maker and find out details about how the food was raised, and that the crops and livestock are unique to a certain area.

Sustainable agriculture: Sustainable agriculture is a system that utilizes an understanding of natural processes along with the latest scientific advances to create integrated, resource-conserving farming systems. These systems will reduce environmental degradation, are economically viable, maintain a stable rural community, and provide a productive agriculture in both the short and the long term.

Sustainable cuisine practices:

- Purchasing sustainably and locally grown/raised products.
- Using ingredients that are seasonal and plentiful (not in danger of depletion).
- Purchasing product locally, and encouraging local purveyors to provide diverse products including heirloom varieties and rare breeds.
- Minimizing waste by using all edible parts of a product (i.e. making stock out of scraps and bones), composting, and recycling.

Vine-ripened/Tree-ripened: "Vine-ripened" or "tree-ripened" is a term applied to fruit or vegetables that have ripened on the vine or tree and then picked when ripe. They often taste better because their flavor and sugars have developed naturally. They can be delicate to the touch and too fragile to ship. Fruits shipped long distances may be picked while still unripe, and later treated with ethylene gas to "ripen" and soften them prior to being sold.

FARM PRODUCTION TERMS

Biodynamic: Biodynamic farming uses organic practices (see definition below) such as crop rotation and composting, with special plant, animal and mineral preparations. Production practices are done according to the rhythms found in nature.

Conventional: Refers to typical farming practices that can include use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, "mono-cropping", antibiotics and hormones.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM): A pest (insect, disease or weeds) management strategy that seeks to decrease pesticide use. Methods may include using traps to monitor for insect pests and attracting beneficial insects to control those pests, removing post harvest field residue and physically scouting the field. If these measures are not adequate and pest damage threatens the farm's economic viability, then the farmer may apply pesticides in such a way that they pose the least possible hazard.

No Spraying/Pesticide-free: Some farmers may avoid the use of pesticides, herbicides & fungicides even if they continue to use conventional approaches such as synthetic fertilizer. "No Spraying" or "Pesticide-free" indicates that while the farm may not be organic, there are no toxic sprays applied to the produce. These claims are not verified by any outside parties. Ask the farmer if anything has been applied to the surface of the produce if this is a concern for you.

Organic: The original principles of organic farming are based on the minimal use of off-farm inputs and on practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony. When ecological harmony is achieved, the need for measures to control pest damage is reduced because the plants are healthier and do not attract the pests. Organic farming practices do not ensure that products are free of residues; it stresses methods to minimize pollution to the air, soil and water by using products that readily break down in the soil. Organic is a method used to produce food, not the food product itself.

Organic Certification (Certified Organic): Under the USDA National Organic Program, all products sold as "organic" must be certified. Certification involves a farm submitting a production plan and being inspected annually by a certifying organization. The process is very similar to quality control programs used in other industries. The organic certification process is designed to assure customers that the organic products they purchase have been produced using appropriate organic practices, with records that allow traceability.

Organic but not certified: Many farmers adhere to accepted organic practices but are not certified. They cannot label their product organic, so they use descriptive terms such as "organically grown", "organic methods", or "organic but not certified". By not being certified, there is no guarantee that the farmer is using the methods defined by the National Organic Program. To find out more about a farmer's reason for not pursuing certification, ask them.

Transitioning to Organic (Transitional): Farmers need to practice organic production methods for three years on a given piece of land before the products grown there can be certified as "organic". Transitional means that the farmland is in this transition period, moving towards organic certification.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY TERMS

Free-range: Free range (or free roaming) implies that a meat or poultry product comes from an animal that was raised in the open air or was free to roam. When used on meat poultry products, "free range" is regulated by the USDA and means that the birds have been given access to the outdoors but for an undetermined period each day. "Free range" claims on red meats and eggs are **not** regulated. Ask the farmer what practices s/he follows to label their products "free range".

Grass and Pasture: These two words are used within the terms **Grass-based, Pasture-based, Grass-fed, Pasture-fed** and **Pasture-raised**. Meat, dairy and eggs with this label mean that pasture or grassland provided a significant part of the animals' life and diet. In raising ruminant animals (cattle, sheep, bison and goats), "grass-based diet" means that a majority of their diet is grass, possibly supplemented by grain and other feed. Hogs and chickens usually do require a grain supplement to what they are able to consume on pasture. To learn more about feeding practices, ask the farmer.

Grass finished: The ruminant animal was allowed to grow to its slaughter weight while eating grass. Their diet consists of freshly grazed pasture during the growing season and stored grasses (hay or grass silage) during the winter months or drought conditions. This process is slower than "finishing" with grain but produces tender and leaner meat.

No antibiotics: Antibiotics are given to animals such as cows, hogs and chickens in order to prevent diseases that run rampant in the cramped conditions that many food animals are kept in. In the chicken industry, antibiotics serve much the same function as hormones do in the beef industry: they act as growth enhancers that make chickens bigger, faster. The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that 26.6 millions pounds of antibiotics are used for animals each year, with only 2 million pounds used to treat sick animals. (These figures are estimates because farmers can buy many antibiotics without prescriptions.) When a ranch or product states "no antibiotics," this means that they do not engage in these practices.

No hormones: Hormones are commonly used in the commercial farming of animals such as cattle to increase the size of beef cattle or to increase the production of milk in dairy cattle. Some of these hormones are natural, some are synthetic, and some are genetically engineered. About 90 percent of U.S. cattle raised for beef receive growth hormones at some time during their life. These hormones are added to feed and implanted under the skin on the back of the ear, where they provide a steady, small amount of additional hormone. If a ranch or product states "no hormones," this means that they do not engage in this practice.

Adapted from CUESA, Michigan Farmers' Market Association, and the Worldwatch Institute