

'Organics', 'sustainability' and 'natural' are words thrown around far too often by marketers – misleading customers into purchasing products that are neither healthy for them nor good for the environment at all. Supermarket & Retailer spoke to a range of manufacturers, retailers and organic living South Africans to separate fact from fiction.

Fast facts

Glenda Moore of the Bryanston Organic & Natural Market explains what it means for a product to be organic: 'The essential difference with fresh produce is that no synthetic pesticides or fertilizers are used in the growing process. In the case of livestock, no growth hormones or antibiotics are used and the animal feed is natural and appropriate for the animal type. In the case of processed foodstuffs such as jams and pickles, there are no artificial additives or preservatives and other added substances such as sugar, are of organic origin.'

She adds that where both organic and non-organic foodstuffs are stored in the same place, organic foodstuffs should be kept separate, and preferably packaged to prevent cross contamination.

But what's the big deal?

Considering the organic trend continues to grow internationally and in South Africa – despite the tough economic climate – organic is a big deal. Besides the argument that organic foodstuffs have greater nutritional value and taste better than non-organic foods, the real benefits lie in a cleaner environment.

"Synthetic pesticides and fertilizers contaminate the soil and the water systems. Pesticides used for the growing of fresh produce, as well as the growth hormones and antibiotics used in the production of dairy and meat products, are the cause of many allergies experienced by humans," comments Moore.

BY LAURA DURHAM



Organics

Are you capitalising on this trend yet?

Make your store a stronghold for sustainable products

"People with health complications are discovering the food they eat plays a significant role in their well-being. Many have food intolerances and through avoiding certain foods they manage or indeed in many cases, remove the symptoms – purely by changing their diet," comments Rita Bachmann of Sprouts Kitchen, a Johannesburg-based business that produces healthy and organic snacks.

And consumers are now starting to ask questions about where their food comes from and how it was manufactured.

Organics overseas

South African retailers seem to be behind their international counterparts in terms of

organic offering. In 2010, the turnover from organic food in Germany rose by 2% to 5.9 billion Euros, according to the official Anuga Organic website. This figure represents an almost threefold increase within 10 years and makes Germany the largest organic food market in the EU. This growth is no doubt due to the fact that all of the important German retail chains are also offering extensive ranges of own brand organic products, leading to significantly more intense competition.

Growing awareness of Fairtrade

According to a new global survey of 17 000 consumers in 24 countries conducted for Fairtrade International by international

ORGANIC FEATURE ►

research consultancy, GlobeScan, six out of ten consumers (59%) feel empowered to make a difference through their shopping choices. This conviction remains as strong as or stronger than at the outset of the global economic downturn in 2008 when the survey was first conducted.

The study of more than 17 000 consumers was carried out in 2011 across a number of countries, including South Africa. The results showed that French, Irish, and South African shoppers feel the most empowered among all consumers, with around 70% believing that their shopping choices make a difference. And people are backing their beliefs with concrete action – South African shoppers' Fairtrade purchases tripled (314%) in 2010. Of course, this does come off a very small base.



Wine is one of the biggest Fairtrade product categories in South Africa with almost forty businesses involved in Fairtrade winemaking and certified accordingly.

Arianna Baldo, marketing and business development officer at Fairtrade Label SA says that the growth of Fairtrade, organic, green movements is very recent in South Africa. "South Africans are becoming more aware of the potential of sustainable farming and trade and the positive repercussions this has on the future of our country – economically, environmentally and socially," she says. On top of that, she says, sustainable products also guarantee that what you eat was not grown with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or harmful chemicals (in the case of Fairtrade) or with chemicals at all (in the case of organic) – and this can make consumers feel more secure in terms of health risks.

Consumer demand on the rise

Moore says the Bryanston Organic & Natural Market has seen a constant growth



Incorporate messages about your sustainability initiatives into the décor of your store to constantly remind customers that you are thinking of their future in your business.



Organic baby food is a growing segment in the organic market as more and more mothers choose to bring their children up as naturally as possible.

of about 30% year-on-year over the past three years on the sale of organic and natural foodstuffs – a good indicator for the growing demand by consumers.

Furthermore, she says, "the development of mega stores such as Pick n Pay on Nicol is evidence of the growth in demand for organic foodstuffs and for corporate business to play their part in environmental issues".

According to Cindy Jenks, GM of corporate brands at Pick n Pay, there has been an increasing demand by customers for organic products and as a result, Pick n Pay has introduced a range of these products in selected stores.

"Pick n Pay's private label brand, Pick n Pay Organics is closely monitored and offers the customer the best organic

products possible," she says. Although, she adds, organic produce is not always readily available due to product seasonality.

"Everything in our PnP Organic range is 100% independently certified organic and food safe, which brings our shoppers quality products the natural way. The range has no artificial food additives or chemicals, no synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers, no genetically modified ingredients or products and are not irradiated." "Pick n Pay is constantly evolving and expanding its range where possible," she adds.

Bryanston Organic & Natural Market's Glenda Moore says that many supermarkets now feature organic foodstuffs on their shelves, although currently the demand far exceeds the supply. "In Gauteng, there is a major problem around the reliable and constant supply of quality produce," says Moore.

Big targets at Woolworths

Woolworths launched a range of organic products in 2008 to meet the growing demand for organic food and non-food products. Justin Smith, head of sustainability at Woolworths, says that while organic food has remained stable in the tough economic climate, organic cotton has not done as well due to the premium price tag attached. The pressure on cotton prices internationally and organic cotton in particular, has made it difficult to achieve their organic cotton targets.

Woolworths aims to reach R1 billion across organic and free-range food sales by the end of 2012 (2011 sales – R678 million). According to the targets of the Good Business Journey Programme through to 2015, as set out by the company's report in 2011, 60% of Woolworths products will have a sustainability attribute by 2015 and 100% by 2020.

Lack of legislation

As there is currently no final legislation governing the production of organic product in South Africa, Jenks says that Pick n Pay's organic produce is grown in line with international regulations, working closely with the Agricultural Product Standards Act 1990 (Act 119 of 1990). All the farmers or processors packing products that are sold as organic in Pick n Pay stores must be certified by certification authorities, such as SGS, Ecocert, British Soil Association, BDOCA, and Afrisco. ►

Food for thought –



why organic is best for babies.



At **HiPP** we believe that organic is best, especially for babies who are even more susceptible to harmful chemical residues that may be found in non-organic foods.

- Animals are guaranteed a truly free range life and are not fed growth hormones or dangerous antibiotics
- Organic farms are a haven for wildlife – birds, plants and insects is 50% greater on organic farms
- Genetically modified crops and ingredients are banned under organic standards.

Why you shouldn't choose non-organic

- Babies' bodies are vulnerable, so it's important that they have the purest and safest foods. Non-organic foods may contain harmful chemical pesticide residues.
- Babies' kidneys are immature and not very efficient at excreting harmful substances, so any toxins, at whatever level, remain longer in the body.
- A baby's digestive system is also more efficient than an adult's at absorbing the nutrients in foods, but this means babies' bodies are more efficient at absorbing harmful pesticide residues too.
- The 'acceptable' levels of pesticide residues permitted in foods are based on adult body weights – not on the smaller size of babies and children.

Choosing to feed your baby organically may be the single most important way to give them the best start in life. Dr Vyvyan Howard, MB, ChB, PhD FRC Path University of Liverpool.

Why organic is better for babies

- Organic food contains no hydrogenated fats, pesticides or additives including tartrazine, MSG and aspartame.
- Organic farming releases less greenhouse gases and choosing local organic seasonal food significantly reduces your carbon footprint

HiPP are passionate about our belief in feeding organic foods to babies and toddlers. Knowing that you want to give your little one the very best start, we ensure that we use only the very **best organic ingredients** to create wholesome and nourishing baby foods.

To do this, our own organic fruits and vegetables are **grown naturally** on dedicated organic farms, where they are left to ripen naturally and are harvested at their plumpest and sweetest. These extra special ingredients are then **gently steam cooked in pure spring water** from our **own protected source** to retain their nutrients and keep every ounce of flavour.

The result is a delicious range of baby foods bursting with **flavour and natural goodness**, suitable for every stage of your baby's development.

Each stage of the process is **quality checked** to ensure that our meals are perfect for little tums – from each farm and animal to the fields to ensure that each jar of **HiPP is perfect for babies**.

We believe organic is best and have continued to make the finest organic food for over 50 years.

Did you know?

On average, organic foods contain higher levels of vitamin C and essential minerals, as well as protective antioxidants and Omega 3

Organic Chicken with Rice –

delicious for babies from 4 months old

we ♥ babies



How to make it

Fry the onion in olive oil until soft and put to one side. Then fry the chicken until brown. Add the onions, chopped tomatoes and herbs. Allow to simmer for about half an hour (add water if the mixture begins to dry out). Then purée through a sieve or in a blender, if necessary. Add the cooked rice or sprinkle on the Baby Rice to achieve the right consistency for your baby.

Portion sizes will vary according to your baby's age and appetite so adjust the amounts used accordingly.

Ingredients

- 1/2 onion, finely chopped
- Dash of olive oil
- 1 chicken breast, cut into strips
- 1/2 tin chopped tomatoes
- 1/4 teaspoon mixed herbs
- 25g cooked rice (or HiPP Organic Baby Rice)



www.hipp.co.za

HiPP Organic Customer Care: 0860 333 993



The Bryanston Organic & Natural Market has seen a constant growth of about 30% year-on-year over the past three years on the sale of organic and natural foodstuffs – a good indicator for the growing demand by consumers.

ORGANICS FEATURE ►

Pick n Pay has developed a three-tiered labelling system for organic products:

- Certified organic – Full organic system. Certified after a period of conversion.
- Organic in conversion – the production system has adhered to organic principles for at least one year.
- First year in conversion – beginning the organic conversion process. First year before organic in conversion.

Pick n Pay works closely with all the organic certification bodies and one of the organic logos appears on all Pick n Pay's organic products, indicating the conversion stage or status awarded by the certifying companies.

Jenks says that Pick n Pay food technologists regularly inspect all organic suppliers and any manufacturers who do not meet the organic specifications will not be accepted as suppliers of Pick n Pay house brands. "Organic product also needs to be prepacked in such a way not to allow the product to be contaminated in any way within the store," she says.

Sustainable systems

Farming for the Future is Woolworths' programme to bridge the gap between organic and non-organic production in South Africa. "One of the challenges of organic produce is that it takes three years to be certified," explains Smith. So if anything happens during that period, such as an insect infestation that can only be

treated by chemicals, the farmer has to start the process again. But for a farmer in the Farming for the Future programme, he would be able to stay on track so long as he neutralises the impact of spraying through composting and natural methods.

Smith says the programme encourages a more responsible way of farming by preserving natural resources while using fewer chemicals and unnatural additions to the farming process. It is also a more sustainable farming method for certain crops. For example, growing potatoes in the Western Cape organically uses up twice as much land and water than non-organic methods. Farming for the Future is therefore a "really good bridge," according to Smith.

The benefits are great for both farmers in terms of better farming methods and for consumers, as the price of produce doesn't change, he says.

The programme is still extremely strict and farmers have to adhere to 80 different checks to earn the Farming for the Future label on their produce in-store. This programme is also supported by the WWF and by 2012, all locally grown fresh produce (other than organically certified produce) will be grown this way.

Local is lekker

A focus on locally sourced products is growing not only in supermarkets but in restaurants too – as the case study on Voodoo Lily Cafe in Birdhaven shows.



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Changing perceptions, one dish at a time

"Organic isn't just vegetables for hippies," comments Beth Cameron, owner of Voodoo Lily Café in Birdhaven, Johannesburg. Since opening in November, she has been trying to change people's concept of food with her menu of organic and locally sourced food.

Even the décor of the restaurant exudes a back to basics concept, with its tables made out of reclaimed aluminium and recycled compressed plastic and husks.

The restaurant buys most of its fresh produce from the Food Garden Foundation, a Soweto NGO that teaches unemployed locals to grow their own vegetable allotments. Voodoo Lily Café is the NGO's pilot restaurant project. They supply their excess produce to the café and what chef, Gareth Lee, does not use to cook with, Cameron sells in the deli to customers at cost price.

The menu is very selective and only locally produced fruit and vegetables in season are used. "We don't buy avocados from Spain when we have so many superb vegetables on our doorstep" she says. The brown paper 'specials' roll changes every



Voodoo Lily Café in Birdhaven, Johannesburg is wowing its customers with tasty and reasonably priced dishes made from organic and locally sourced produce.

day according to the season and availability of the local fare. "The café is not just about organic; it's also about local sourced, we have such amazing products here in South Africa, why would you want to get them from anywhere else?" she asks.

R1 from every main course meal goes to JAM, an NGO that feeds 660 000 children throughout five African countries everyday.

The restaurant also houses a small deli so customers can buy products they are eating on the menu. All the cheeses are locally supplied with 80% of them organic. The café makes its own range of salsa, as well as all their own stone ground flour bread and delicious pastries and cakes. Cameron says they have had a fantastic response from customers and the café's reasonably priced menu highlights the fact that organic doesn't have to be expensive.

There is a strong focus on staff training and Cameron is trying to get the standard to the international level that she has been used to as a restaurateur in Edinburgh for the last few years. "I want to take the waiters to the suppliers so they can see where the food they serve actually comes from," she says.

And the name? "The Voodoo Lily is a very rare find, just like my restaurant!"

Educating customers

It is fantastic to see the number of initiatives that supermarkets in South Africa have got on the ground, literally, but there still seems to be a lack of accurate customer communication.

Fairtrade SA's Arianna Baldo also warns of the 'green washing' marketing trend whereby companies claim more than they actually do in terms of sustainability,

Fairtrade and organic practices.

She elaborates, using the recent example of Kraft Foods' Cadbury Dairy Milk range now boasting the Fairtrade stamp of approval. "It is important to communicate clearly the processes, benefits and limitations of organic or Fairtrade and make sure that consumers understand how a 'small' operation (e.g. Cadbury Dairy Milk going Fairtrade only for their plain

variant) actually has a significant positive impact in the farming communities (e.g. the thousands of Fairtrade certified small-scale farmers that will benefit from selling Fairtrade cocoa to Kraft Foods)."

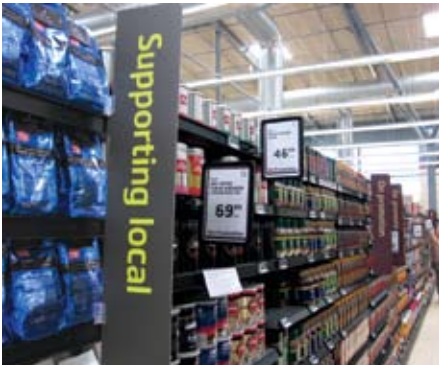
Customer awareness is key to changing trends. "As long as a cheaper, non-organic alternative is available to the customer without informing them of the benefits of eating organic foodstuffs, the organic

ORGANICS FEATURE ►

sector will suffer," comments Glenda Moore from the Bryanston Organic and Natural Market.

For example, Fruit & Veg City has a seasonal bulletin on its website, showing which fresh produce is in season in the country. From the chart, customers could learn that the strawberry season has just ended in December, that apples and pears are ready from January and that potatoes are grown all year round. But how many customers go onto the website? They would probably reach more customers by putting up this chart in-store, advising customers on their menu choices.

Of course, retailers do make sure that almost every fruit and vegetable is available throughout the year by stocking up when the produce is in season and storing it in cold storage.



When choosing the product range for the concept store, Pick n Pay on Nicol, Pick n Pay actively sought to provide a platform for local suppliers, choosing to bring in those that follow sustainable practices.

Regardless, every smart retailer need to start communicating with their customers about all they are doing on and off the shop floor for the betterment of their health and the environment.

Ways to communicate:

■ Take advantage of social media.

Retail groups with a monthly consumer magazine can promote organic ranges in its pages. Others making use of social media should use Twitter and Facebook to draw feet to stores.

- **Use existing platforms.** Initiatives like Fairtrade Week (14-20 November) and Arbour Week in September are a good time in the year to promote your organic and Fairtrade ranges, show customers what you are doing in terms of sustainability and kick off some green social initiative programmes.



■ Support the environment

Organic systems support natural ecosystems by using long-term farming solutions. This restores, maintains, and enhances ecological harmony, and improves the health of the environment.

■ Help protect our health

Organic farmers do not use chemicals that pollute the air, water and food – reducing our exposure to pesticides.

■ Support our future needs

Organic farming embraces agriculture that must meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations – a direct investment in the long-term future of our planet.

■ Preserve diversity

The loss of a large variety of species is an important environmental concern. Organic growers are committed to preserving our delicate ecosystem through relying on natural predators rather than on chemicals to control pests.

■ Support local farmers creating a more sustainable world

Supporting local growers creates a sustainable local economy – vital to the health and well being of the community.

■ Support previously disadvantaged groups

Sustainable organic production is being encouraged in local communities in South Africa to empower previously disadvantaged groups, enabling these farmers to feed themselves and trade off surplus produce through organic entrepreneurial enterprises.

■ Help protect our water resources

The elimination of polluting chemicals and nitrogen-leaching fertilizers, done in combination with organic soil building practice, protects our water resources.

■ Increase productivity of our land

Organic agriculture builds productive nutrient-rich soil that resists topsoil erosion, which has been linked to the agricultural practice of chemical-intensive, mono-crop farming.

■ Save energy

Organic farmers are less reliant on non-renewable fossil fuels due to the integration of practices such as natural insect control, cover crop systems and rotation planting, and the avoidance of synthetic fertilizers, which require a high energy consuming production process. Organic produce also tends to travel a shorter distance from farm to table.

■ Promote high animal welfare standards

Animals on organic farms are happier and healthier. They are themselves nourished with organic food and are raised in a free-range environment. There is no routine use of antibiotics or growth promoting drugs.

■ Organic food tastes great

Organic farming begins with the nutrients of the soil, which eventually leads to the nourishment of the plant and ultimately our palates. Tests have shown that organic produce has up to 80% more nutritional value than commercially grown crops!

Source: www.wildorganics.co.za

■ Create information boards.

Communicating to customers does not have to be left to these 'special' times throughout the year – shelf talkers, information boards and leaflets will provide easy access information to customers throughout your store throughout the year.

- **Get customers involved.** Protecting the future of our planet is not just up to

big business. Encourage customers to do their bit by providing recycling bins and become a centre where customers can exchange their light bulbs for more energy efficient ones.

"Sustainability is not only a trend but a must if we want to respect people, our planet, our future generations and if we want to have food on our plates in the near future," concludes Baldo. 