

Proponents of organic diet craze reject GMOs, swear by health benefits

Over the past several years, the organic food craze has definitely grown. But some people feel that genetically modified foods — or GMOs as they are commonly known — are just as good, if not better.

Tammy Rodriguez and her husband, Juan, started incorporating organic foods into their diet in 2005. Now, almost everything they eat is organic. Rodriguez attributes their change in diet with dramatically improving their health. Both had been on several prescription medications and were overweight.

On the other hand, GMO foods, which stands for genetically modified organisms, require far fewer pesticides to control disease and insects, said Dr. Michael Aide, Agriculture Department chairman at Southeast Missouri State University.

The agriculture department at Southeast supports organic and GMO foods, as well as plants and foods that are in the middle ground. “I see no intrinsic advantage to [eating one way or the other],” Aide said. “The different markets exist due to people’s personal preference.”

Roger Little, a produce clerk at Schnucks in Cape Girardeau, has seen a big growth in the organic food market over the years. “There has been a big surge in the last 10 years in organic foods,” Little said. “Approximately 20 percent of the items in our produce department are now organic.”

Little also sees the value of GMOs. “Some, like the genetically modified oranges, are more drought-resistant and more resistant to pests without changing the taste or texture.”

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