

In debate over organic or conventional, is there third way to feed growing, warming world?

Proponents of organic agriculture say it leads to better soil management, uses fewer pesticides and fertilisers, and is a better protector of biodiversity. However, when it comes to increasing food production for a growing global population, others argue that organic's lower average yields would mean clearing more land for agriculture.

According to [a 2012 meta-analysis](#), organic crop yields average about 80% of those of conventional crops – but there is huge variation depending on the region and crop variety. The researchers found that while organic fruit trees, beans and alfalfa delivered just 5% lower yields, major cereal crops and vegetables yielded about 25% less than their conventionally grown counterparts.

### **Reducing non-renewable inputs**

But while much of the debate has focused on whether organic can match the yields of conventional agriculture, advocates suggest organic foods offer more long-term viability even if yields are lower.

But any move toward more organic systems therefore would need to reduce land use, rather than increase it – a big challenge when the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that food production will need to double by 2050.

### **A third way?**

While debate over organic's role in future food production tends to pit organic against conventional farming, conservation farming may provide a compromise. It doesn't explicitly prohibit any farming practices, but encourages soil and water conservation and the use of mulch to minimise runoff and erosion.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Can organic feed the world?](#)**