

## Viewpoint: Environmental Working Group's 'Dirty Dozen' produce list stokes pesticide fears in an 'already anxiety-ridden world'

Each year, the pro-organic think tank [Environmental Working Group](#) (EWG) releases its 'Dirty Dozen,' a list of fruits and vegetables allegedly contaminated with high levels of pesticide residues. EWG has been [consistently criticized](#) by farmers and scientists, who allege the Dirty Dozen exaggerates the human health risks posed by pesticide exposure through food and discourages consumers from purchasing perfectly safe produce.

The following letter was penned by Teresa Thorne, executive director of the [Alliance for Food and Farming](#), an industry group representing fruit and vegetable growers. Thorne challenges the scientific basis for the Dirty Dozen, arguing the list has been repeatedly discredited by pesticide experts and should no longer be published. Given the "troubling and uncertain times" we live in, Thorne adds, releasing "inaccurate and fear-based messaging into an already anxiety-ridden world" is highly irresponsible.

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Mr. Ken Cook, President  
Environmental Working Group

Your announced plan to release the so-called "Dirty Dozen" list under current circumstances is misguided and concerning. As you are well aware, this list is not only [scientifically unsupportable](#) but [peer reviewed research](#) has shown it negatively impacts consumers and discourages consumption because it erroneously raises produce safety fears.

On behalf of the organic and conventional farmers we represent, we ask that you rethink your decision to release and promote this list due to its undermining effect on health efforts to increase consumption of the [very foods we are urged to eat more](#) of to boost immunity and prevent illness. Now is not the time to release more inaccurate and fear-based messaging into an already anxiety-ridden world.

In addition, your list has been repeatedly discredited by scientists. A [peer reviewed analysis](#) has shown that your organization follows no established scientific procedures in the development of the so-called list. Moreover, this analysis found that your list's recommendations to substitute organic forms of produce for conventional forms does not reduce risk to consumers simply because residues are so low, if present at all, on conventional fruits and vegetables.

Further calling fruits and vegetables "dirty" is exceptionally disrespectful to organic and conventional fruit and vegetable farmers. These are the farmers who continue to work hard every day to ensure Americans (as well as citizens in other countries) have an adequate and accessible supply of food in these very troubling and uncertain times. It should be noted that the government has deemed farmers and farm employees as "essential" to our nation's security – something most of us have recognized for a long long time.

Mr. Cook, we all must adapt to this evolving environment, make difficult decisions and change. We have called on you previously to abandon releasing this list. But, now more than ever, we ask for your leadership to stop your organization's practice of knowingly stoking misplaced food safety fears and denigrating the work of farmers through the release of this list.

Now is the time to put consumers first and support their choices whether they choose organic or conventionally grown produce. Now is the time to use your organization's considerable resources to help promote a healthy diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables. With only one in 10 Americans eating enough each day, the EWG could help make positive and important strides in improving diets. Please, do the right thing.

Teresa Thorne, Executive Director  
Alliance for Food and Farming

#NoMoreDirtyDozen, #FactsNotFears, #EatMoreProduce

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