

Viewpoint: Challenging fearmongering — Environmental Working Group's annual 'Dirty Dozen' uses chemophobia to scare people about safe produce

EWG claims that it is not out to scare the public, that it only strives to alert consumers as to which fruits and vegetables harbour the most pesticide residues and should therefore, if possible, be purchased in their organic versions. That may be the stated motive, but I suspect EWG is not averse to the donations reaped by the wide publicity the Dirty Dozen list generates.

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Here is a headline, a la EWG, that can be devised to reflect the findings. "97 per cent of apples sampled were found to contain pesticide residues with some being contaminated by as many as 12 different pesticides." That sounds pretty scary, especially when one considers that pesticides are designed to cause harm to living things. But let's keep in mind that the presence of a residue does not equate to the presence of risk. The question that needs to be asked is how many of the residues detected were in excess of the Environmental Protection Agency's carefully established maximum tolerance level? These tolerance levels are not random guesses, they are based on determining the maximum dose that causes no observed adverse effects (NOAEL) in animals, and then building in a hundred-fold safety margin for humans.

So, how many of the 531 samples had a residue of any pesticide that exceeded the EPA's tolerance level? None! Zero!

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)