

Impact of Environmental Working Group's 'Dirty Dozen': 'Consumers shy away from purchasing any produce – organic or conventional'

A legacy of the Environmental Working Group (EWG) is that they are the original food bullies. Yes, they began their legacy of disparagement in 1995 with their creation of the so-called “Dirty Dozen” list, with erroneous safety claims about popular produce items. And every spring for almost 30 years, they have continued to inaccurately and unscientifically call into question the safety of fruits and vegetables raising unwarranted fears among consumers.

Since they released their first “Dirty Dozen” list decades ago, EWG has moved onto disparaging other foods too but we maintain that calling the fruits and vegetables grown by hard-working farmers and farm workers “dirty” makes our food group, not only their first victim, but their biggest victim.

Why engage in food bullying? Because it is a profitable marketing gimmick. It gets EWG attention and publicity and helps with fundraising. Fear sells.

But at what cost? With [only one in 10 Americans eating enough fruits and vegetables](#) each day, why raise unwarranted safety fears about the more affordable and accessible versions of these healthy foods which prevents diseases, improves physical and mental health and increases lifespan?

And we understand from [peer reviewed studies](#) as well as [surveys among registered dietitians](#) that exposure to EWG's messaging and the “Dirty Dozen” list may result in consumers shying away from purchasing any produce – organic or conventional.

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Fortunately, many recognize this list for what it is – an unscientific report designed to disparage one farming method in order to promote another. In fact, fewer media outlets now cover the list and social media has largely turned against it as well.

As government agencies, non-profits, food and health care companies continue efforts to increase consumption of nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables through assistance programs, [produce prescriptions](#) and educational outreach, why would any one or any group actively work and promote disparaging, fear-based messaging about the more affordable and available forms of produce? It goes against public health initiatives everywhere.

Which is why it is so clear that this list isn't about consumers. And it needs to stop. Imagine if EWG ceased food bullying and instead put its considerable resources into improving diets. Now that would truly benefit consumers.

Note: EWG now claims their first “Dirty Dozen” list was released in 2004 instead of 1995. It's unclear why EWG misrepresents how old its list is but we are happy to share media articles from 1995. But think about this – if EWG is misrepresenting a seemingly small thing like when the list was first released, what else

are they misrepresenting?

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