

The New Organic Dairy Report and Scorecard – Empowering Consumers with Informed Choice

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The organic seal is the only federally regulated label that directly mandates how a product is produced. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) oversees the label, giving certified farms and processors access to a niche market. Consumers seeking safer and nutritionally superior food see the organic seal as an alternative to the industrial food system.

Originally, the organic movement focused on superior environmental stewardship, a more humane animal husbandry model, and sustainable financing for family farmers. These principles remain the backbone of organics. Unfortunately, the organic label is being co-opted by corporate interests and poor government oversight. The Cornucopia Institute's role as an organic industry watchdog was established in response to this commandeering.

As a nonprofit farm policy research group, Cornucopia has always been interested in the evolution of the organic dairy market. One of the organization's first projects was investigating 'factory farms' that, despite milking thousands off cows in confinement conditions, were still marketing organic.

To combat lax oversight by the USDA, Cornucopia started independently rating dairy brands. Now, many years later, the organic dairy report is being updated to reflect emerging trends and issues in the market. Some of the topics covered in detail include the regulatory history and challenges, the importance of grass-based dairy, and how to differentiate between the big-industry cohorts and the brands with true authenticity.

In conjunction with new dairy report, Cornucopia will release an updated web-based scorecard which will empower consumers and wholesale buyers who want to invest their food dollars to protect true organic integrity. **The four Biodynamic® dairies currently selling retail products excel in the new iteration of Cornucopia's scorecard – all will be top-rated in the final version.**

Cornucopia's scorecard, which will rate all organic dairy brands available at retail, was compiled by farmers filling out a detailed questionnaire along with background investigation of each dairy. Apart from rewarding dairies that go beyond the bare minimum required in the organic regulations, the scorecard values transparency.

With a planned publication in the spring of 2017, look for the new dairy report and scorecard on The Cornucopia's Institute's website (www.cornucopia.org). In addition to media coverage, the release of the dairy report and scorecard will be announced in Cornucopia's free electronic newsletter.