ADSA’s Journal of Dairy Science Study Finds No Nutritional Advantage for Organic Milk Compared with Conventional Milk

Dateline—In a new study published in the May issue of the American Dairy Science Association’s Journal of Dairy Science, scientists at Cornell University found little nutritional difference between organic and conventional milk. The study focused on comparing the nutritional profile of milk labeled as organic and recombinant bST (rbST)-free to that of conventional milk.

“Consumers are increasingly health conscious and want to understand if there are differences between conventional milk and specialty labeled milk such as bST-free or organic,” said Dale Bauman, Cornell University professor, American Dairy Science Association member and a member of the National Academy of Sciences, “yet most Americans rarely look beyond package labeling and retail marketing. The goal of our study was to see if milk with different labels do indeed have real nutritional differences.”

To investigate the nutritional value of different milk types, researchers tested 292 samples of milk purchased from stores throughout the United States and evaluated the fatty acid composition of the different samples. Analyses included saturated and unsaturated fatty acids and bioactive fatty acids that may influence health. Researchers concluded there were no differences among milk label types that would be of importance from a public health perspective.

“Milk labeling is related to a series of management practices but provides no information related to quality, which can lead to consumer misunderstanding,” Bauman continued. “Our study found no difference in nutritional value among the milk types we evaluated and concluded that all milk types were nutritious and of similar high quality.”

The scientists concluded that dietary components (what the cows eat) and formulation (the mix of feeds used to provide cows with a nutritious, balanced diet) are far more relevant than production management practices in determining the nutritional profile of milk. For example, scientists cited research that indicates feeding cows supplemental fish oil or other products rich in omega-3 fatty acids like EPA and DHA can alter the fatty acid profile of their milk and may lead to some health benefits. The bottom line of this study was that milk produced under either organic or conventional management systems is of similar high quality and nutritional value.
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**About the American Dairy Science Association**

Founded in 1906, the American Dairy Science Association® (ADSA®) is an international organization of educators, scientists, and industry representatives who are committed to advancing the dairy industry with a keen awareness of the vital role the dairy sciences play in fulfilling the economic, nutritive, and health requirements of the world's population. ADSA publishes the Journal of Dairy Science®, the top-ranked, peer reviewed dairy science journal in the world.

The organization provides scientific leadership and technical support to sustain and grow the global dairy industry through the generation, dissemination, and exchange of information and services. Members of ADSA have discovered new methods and technologies that have revolutionized the dairy industry, helping provide consumers with a safe, affordable supply of nutritious dairy products.