CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY

MARCH 2017 **FACT SHEET**

HOW CAN YOU HELP PROTECT POLLINATORS:
Buy Organic

HEALTHY POLLINATORS ARE critical to a sustainable and resilient food system. One in every three bites of food we eat is from a crop pollinated by bees; and in the U.S., the value of pollination services is estimated to be $20-30 billion annually. Unfortunately, since the mid-2000s, we have witnessed an alarming decline in honey bee and other pollinator populations around the world.

While there are several factors threatening the health of pollinators, there is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence linking plummeting pollinator populations to pesticide use and illustrating the far reaching impacts that toxic synthetic pesticides have on a wide range of environments. For instance, neonicotinoids—a highly toxic class of systemic insecticides—are a leading culprit in bee declines. Scientists have also linked the endangerment of monarch butterflies to the destruction of milkweed habitat as a result of widespread glyphosate use on genetically engineered crops.

Fortunately, there are solutions. Organic is a form of agriculture that is not only good for the planet, but good for pollinators too. That's because organic food is grown without the use of toxic synthetic pesticides; and organic growing practices are mindful of preserving biodiversity and soil health. In many ways, organic agriculture is a system of farming that guarantees future generations' access to viable farmland, ensuring the preservation of farm communities to feed our nation in perpetuity.

NATIONAL OFFICE: 660 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Suite 302, Washington, DC 20003
CALIFORNIA OFFICE: 303 Sacramento St., 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94111
NORTHWEST OFFICE: 917 SW Oak Street, Suite 300 Portland, OR 97205
HAWAI'I OFFICE: 1132 Bishop, Suite 2107, Honolulu, HI 96813

TOP 5 REASONS BUYING ORGANIC SUPPORTS POLLINATORS!

1. **Organic certifies a baseline prohibition of synthetic pesticides—including neonicotinoids.** As more consumers support organic agriculture by choosing organic products, the acreage of organic farms that are free of such bee-toxic chemicals will increase.
2. **Organic protects soil health.** Organic is founded on the premise of protecting and nurturing soil health. With 70% of native bees nesting in the ground, soil that is free of toxic chemicals and burgeoning with biological activity helps to protect crucial wild bee nesting habitats.
3. **Organic mandates on-farm biodiversity conservation practices** that maintain or improve soil, water, wetlands, woodlands and wildlife. Organic producers are required to implement conservation practices. This includes creating habitat for beneficial insect populations and providing a diverse array of crops and plants that support pollinator communities.
4. **Organic uses growing methods specific to their local environment,** including regionally adapted plant varieties. These methods and varieties attract native pollinator species and create an environment in which they can thrive.
5. **Organic prohibits the use of glyphosate.** Glyphosate, best known for its use in Monsanto's RoundUp, is an extremely effective killer of milkweed plants, which are critical to the monarch butterfly's survival. Milkweeds are the only plants monarch larvae will eat and without milkweed plants monarchs are unable to lay their eggs or feed their young. By prohibiting the use of synthetic pesticides, organic ensures a safe breeding ground for monarch butterflies, free of glyphosate.

HOW TO ENSURE YOU ARE BUYING ORGANIC

Look for the Certified Organic label! At the farmers market or farm stand, look for the official certified organic certificate required by law to be prominently posted.

At the grocery store, look for an overhead sign or bin that says organic. Individual fruits and vegetables must be individually marked with an organic sticker or imprint.

For processed foods, look for the USDA organic seal on the front of the package which guarantees that 95-100 percent of the ingredients in the product is organic.

All non-organic ingredients used in certified organic products and those labeled made with organic ingredients (which may contain up to 30 percent non-organic ingredients, indicated on the label) must come from the USDA's National List of approved substances for use in organic. Such ingredients cannot be produced using excluded methods such as genetic engineering, cloning, nanotechnology, and irradiation, and they cannot harm human health or the environment.