

What is Organic Chicken?

People must have heard about the nasty conditions which broiler chickens - which are bred for their meat - are raised in? These chickens have no more floor space than a sheet of A4 paper. Chickens are over-fed to reach slaughter weight in six weeks, when it would normally take four months.

Modern intensive systems of poultry production have produced cheap meat for the consumer - but at a price. Inside the intensive chicken houses, which are appearing in increasing numbers in the countryside, up to 40,000 birds are crammed, at 2 birds to the square foot, into a single windowless building, with almost continuous low levels of artificial light, they are then given drugs to speed up their rate of growth. Keeping so many animals packed together in such a stressful environment can only contribute to their rates of infection. It seems logical that the Chinese flu infections that we were seeing transmitted to humans comes from this same intensive farming. It isn't necessary to produce food in this way.

Organic farmers do a number of things to ensure that chickens are reared as naturally as possible. For starters, antibiotic growth promoters cannot be used but sick organic birds must be treated with appropriate veterinary medicine, so they can be given antibiotics if they're very poorly. But they cannot be given drugs on a regular and routine basis, something that almost all non-organic poultry have to endure. Organic poultry is reared on a specially formulated feed containing only cereals, vegetable protein, a small amount of fish meal, and a vitamin/mineral supplement. These chickens are often guaranteed to be fed on feed which is free from genetically modified feedstuffs (GMOs). To be fully organic, chickens must be fed a diet containing grain which has been grown organically, without artificial fertilisers or sprays. Such feed is expensive, and therefore organic chicken is more expensive as well.

Also, on Soil Association registered farms, the number of chickens housed in a single shed is restricted to 1,000. A non-organic intensive chicken farm may have as many as 40,000 in the same shed. Organic birds are kept free-range, having continuous daytime access to clean pasture, except in adverse weather. Non-organic birds are almost always locked up night and day.

In addition, the Soil Association insists on full and clear labeling of processed chicken products. They are able to trace back to the farm all ingredients used in any Soil Association chicken products. Their organic certification standards state that food must undergo as little processing as is practical. Organic standards are legally binding. All organic businesses must be licensed by law, and are fully inspected at least once a year. So if you want to see for yourself how organic animals are reared, why not visit an organic farm?

Find [Organic Farms](#) in the Organic Directory.

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About the Author

Davinos Greeno works for the [organic food](#) and [ethical clothes](#) directory that lists 100s of Organic and Ethical Companies and we also have [Health Articles](#) for you to read or publish.