Cost-Benefit Analysis

- 6 possible options can exist at a store: imported conventional, imported IPM, imported organic, local conventional, local IPM, and local organic.

- The Environmental Working Group ranks apples #2 out of 47 produce items for having the most residual pesticides.

Therefore:
You should strongly consider buying apples from organic or very conscientious IPM orchards. Local growers from either program can provide more information about their pesticide use.

What consumers should know about purchasing apples in Minnesota

BUYING LOCAL

What Local Growers Want You to Know

- Growing organic apples in MN is more difficult than in other parts of the country
- Local food doesn’t always cost more
- Don’t assume something is the best available product just because it’s organic
- Fresh food imported from long distances is not necessarily good food
- Local apples come with more information on when they were picked or last sprayed
- Small growers often live on their orchards, not just work there, so they have extra incentives to take care of their land

Recommendations for Consumers

And information on:
- the local food movement
- pesticide use
- Minnesota’s orchards and apple growers

How to Make a Difference

- Plan meals around what local foods are in season, shop at farmers’ markets or co-ops, and take trips to local farms and orchards.
- Don’t buy imported food that is produced in your area, especially when it’s in season.
- Be willing to try apple varieties that you are not already familiar with.
- Try to talk directly to a grower. If that’s not an option, find a grocery store or co-op whose produce buyers seem trustworthy.

Costs and Benefits to Consider

| Cost of buying local: less variety | Benefit: fresher food, supports local growers and community |
| Cost of buying organic: more money | Benefit: no synthetic pesticides |

A major debate: local vs organic. Which should you pick if you can’t have both?

If you must choose, decide what is most important to you. Remember, organic food often isn’t locally grown. At least one-third of it is imported to the U.S.!
Buying Local Food

- U.S. food typically travels about 1,500 miles from farm to table

- In the past 40 years, the amount of food shipped between countries has quadrupled

- The growing popularity of farmers’ markets is a testament to the rising demand for fresh, local products

Benefits of buying local:
1. Often costs less
2. Fresher and better-tasting
3. Fewer chances for contamination
4. Money stays in community
5. Encourages crop diversity among local growers
6. Fosters a stronger connection between people and food

The State’s Challenging Climate

- Lots of rain
- Each time it rains, the possibility of a pest infection (like apple scab) increases

- Very cold
- Winters are too extreme for many trees

- Short growing season
- Less time and less room for error

Apples: A Historic Food Economy

- Minnesota growers have successfully produced apples for over 100 years

- Two-thirds of the apples now grown in-state were created at the University of Minnesota’s Horticultural Research Center, one of the foremost test centers in the world

- Arguably the country’s most popular apple, the Honeycrisp, was developed by the U of M in 1991

Pesticide Programs

All 3 types of pest control are practiced in MN. IPM is the most popular.

1. Conventional
- Sometimes referred to as “traditional”; pesticides applied on a calendar schedule

PROS: Little to no planning or outside time

CONS: Crops are sprayed whether they need to be or not, which can be expensive and harmful to the environment

2. Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Pesticides applied if pests reach critical thresholds, which are determined by insect monitoring and weather calculations

PROS: Better for the environment and saves money; growers more attuned to orchards

CONS: Monitoring takes extra time; many believe IPM is poorly defined and regulated

3. Organic
- Must follow strict guidelines set by the USDA for 3 years before certification; no synthetic pesticides allowed

PROS: Most environmentally friendly and potentially most lucrative; growers intimately involved in fruit production

CONS: Certification is expensive and time-consuming, which can deter smaller growers