



What Goes Into the Cost of Our Food?

As is the case throughout North America, Yukoners have become accustomed to relatively inexpensive food. We have had a few questions about why food sold through the Potluck Food Co-op is more expensive than in some local grocery stores.



The mandate of the Potluck Food Co-op is to provide food to our members that is either organic or sustainably grown, is produced as close to home as possible, and that provides producers with a fair wage. We believe this is something our members expect of us. But it does sometimes mean higher costs. Here are some reasons why:

No chemicals = more labor

Conventional farmers often use chemicals and synthetic pesticides, allowing them to reduce the cost of production. The hidden costs to the environment and people's health are not taken into account in their bottom line. Sustainable/organic farming on the other hand is much more labour intensive, and that means a higher price for the consumer.

A matter of quantity

This is an issue for us on two counts: 1) sustainable/organic farms tend to produce less than conventional farms, meaning their cost per unit is typically higher; and 2) at the current time we have certain restrictions placed on our retail space that prevent us from buying larger quantities in bulk (at a lower per unit cost) and then dividing them into smaller sizes for sale to our members at a savings. We do hope to be able to offer this service in the coming months.



Limited Scope

Local grocery stores have the ability to offset the cost of the organic food they sell with other items. Since we are more narrowly focused in what we offer, we don't have that advantage.

Higher cost of fertilizer for organic crops

Conventional farmers often use sewage sludge and chemical fertilizers because they are inexpensive and cheap to transport. Organic farmers instead use more expensive compost and animal manure.



Crop rotation

Instead of using chemical weed-killers, organic farmers usually rely on crop rotations to keep their soil healthy. This reduces the frequency in which farmers can grow food in a particular area, and that drives up their costs.

Organic certification

Acquiring organic certification is no easy — or cheap — task. In addition to the usual farming operations, farm facilities and production methods must comply with certain standards, which may require the modification of facilities. And organic farms must pay an annual inspection/certification fee, which can be several hundred dollars or more a year.

Better living conditions for livestock

Higher standards for animal welfare also means more costs for organic farms. Organic feed for cattle and other livestock can cost twice as much as conventional feed.

Convenience food

The Potluck Food Co-op considers our business to be one of convenience. No running from store to store looking for that special item (think of the money you save on gas!); just place your order on-line, we do the work of sorting it for you and having it ready for you to pick up.

Want more information about our operation? Visit www.potluckcoop.com.