

## Caution about pesticides in fruits and vegetables!

S.N. Ray

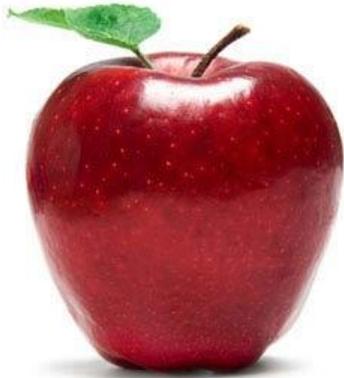
The health benefits of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables outweigh the risks of pesticide exposure. Use Environmental Working Group (EWG)'s Shopper's Guide to Pesticides™ to reduce your exposures as much as possible, but eating conventionally-grown produce is far better than not eating fruits and vegetables at all. EWG lists (2013) fruits and vegetables that have the most pesticide residues and are the most important to buy organic. You can lower your pesticide intake by slowing down on the 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables (**Dirty Dozen**) and choosing 15 least contaminated produces (**Clean 15**). Their 2014 research report adds two more (**Dirty Dozen+ category**) domestically grown produces, namely Kale/Collard greens and Small summer Squash to the list. These + listed crops did not meet traditional Dirty Dozen™ criteria but were commonly contaminated with pesticides exceptionally toxic to the nervous system. Though the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been restricting the uses of the most toxic pesticides, they are still detected on some foods. For example, green beans were on last year's + list because they were often contaminated with two highly toxic organophosphates. Those pesticides are being withdrawn from agriculture. But leafy greens still show residues of organophosphates and other risky pesticides. That's why they are on the Plus list for 2013. Tests in 2008 found that some domestically-grown summer squash – zucchini and yellow crookneck squash -- contained residues of harmful organochlorine pesticides that were phased out of agriculture in the 1970s and 1980s but that linger on some farm fields.

Genetically modified plants, or GMOs, are not often found in the produce section of grocery stores. Field corn, nearly all of which is produced with genetically modified seeds, is used to make tortillas, chips, corn syrup, animal feed and biofuels. Because it is not sold as a fresh vegetable, it is not included in EWG's Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce. Nor is soy, another heavily GMO crop that makes its way into processed food.

The GMO crops likely to be found in produce aisles of American supermarkets are zucchini, Hawaiian papaya and some varieties of sweet corn. Since U.S. law yet does not require labeling of GMO produce, EWG advises people who want to avoid it to purchase the organically-grown versions of these items.

A table of these produces follows.

<b>Dirty dozen</b>	<b>Clean 15</b>
<i>Buy these organic</i>	<i>Lowest in pesticides</i>



**Apple**



**Asparagus**



**Celery**



**Avocados**



**Cherry tomatoes**



**Cabbage**



**Cucumbers**



**Cantaloupe**



**Grapes**



**Eggplant**



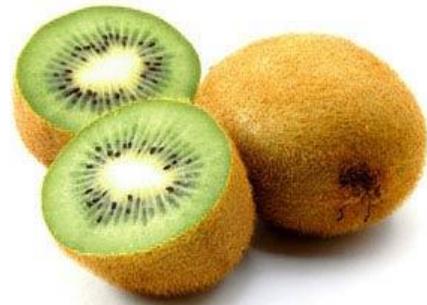
**Hot peppers**



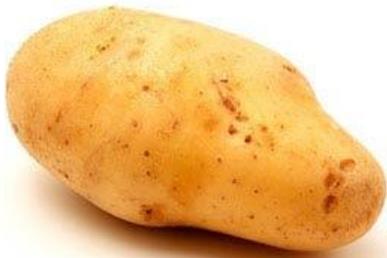
**Grapefruit**



**Nectarines-imported**



**Kiwi**



**Potatoes**



**Mangoes**



**Spinach**



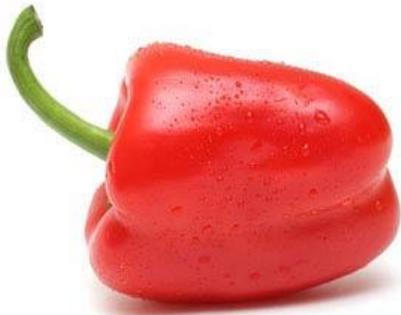
**Mushrooms**



**Strawberries**



**Onions**



**Sweet bell peppers**



**Papayas**



**Peaches**



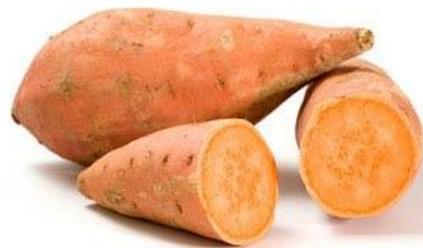
**Pineapples**



**Sweet corn**



**Sweet peas (frozen)**



**Sweet potatoes**

Source: [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)