



# Growing Students' Mindset: A Lesson to Analyze Perceptions About Organic Food

Kevin J. Donnelly, J. Anita Dille, Kim J. Kerschen  
Department of Agronomy  
Kansas State University

# Background

- Senior Agronomy Capstone Experience course
- Focus on critical thinking to analyze current agricultural issues
- Group projects, homework assignments, class activities, case studies, guest speakers, debates and discussion
- Meets for 3-hour block once per week

# Background

- This presentation describes a lesson focused on organic food (homework plus one full day of activities)





# Objectives of Organic Food Lesson

- Increase student awareness of the availability and cost of organic food in the community
- Compare taste and quality of selected organic versus conventionally grown foods
- Analyze facts and opinions comparing organic versus conventional production
- Consider future demand and opportunities for organic food production



# Step 1 - Homework Assignment

- Students are provided with a 20-item grocery list of common food items
- Go to two different stores, preferably a large chain store and a smaller, private store
- Try to find organic and conventional versions (name brand and store brand) of each item and record per unit prices
- Two weeks to complete shopping trip



## **Agronomy 602 – Capstone Experience**

- Homework assignment: **Due in two weeks – Week #3 – January 30, 2018**
- 1. **Complete a price comparison chart** for the following grocery items. Visit at least two grocery stores and fill in the following chart for each store you visit.
- 2. **Write about and summarize your shopping experience in a ½ page**, highlighting how easy or difficult it was to locate these items? Do different grocery stores seem to promote different types of products?

Item	Name brand		Store brand		Organic	
	Store 1	Store 2	Store 1	Store 2	Store 1	Store 2
1 lb pork loin roast	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
1 lb Red Delicious apples						
½ gallon 2% white milk						



# Observations From Homework

- Finding organic sources was challenging, especially in stores where there was not a separate section
- Stores varied widely in the amount of organic products available (Walmart vs. Dillons)
- Organic was usually higher priced, but price differences are quite variable depending upon the product



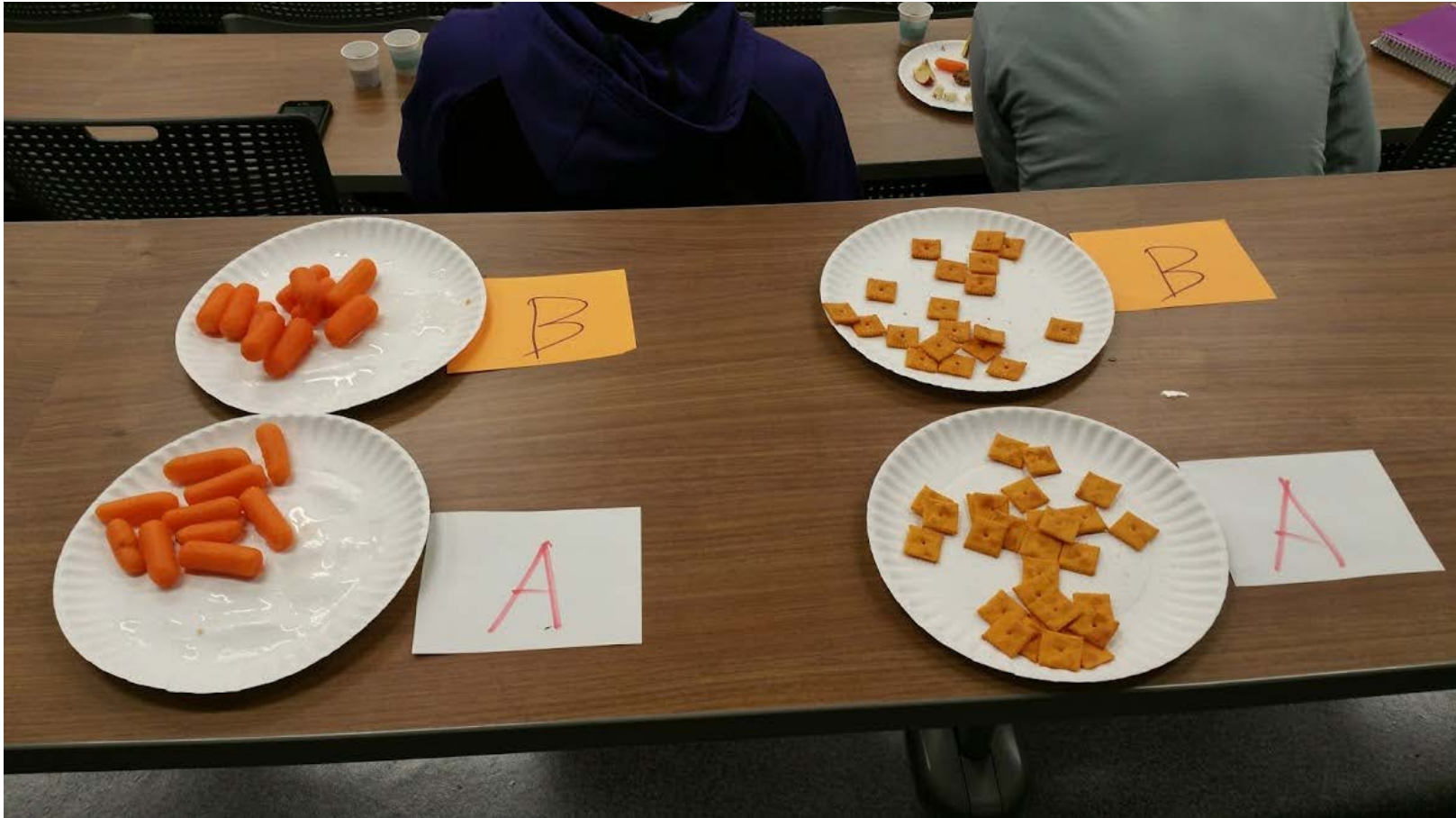


# In-Class Activities

- Class discussion of shopping trip homework on availability and price of organic food options
- Organic versus conventional “taste test” and personal preference ranking
- Class vote followed by analysis and discussion of class results
- View a documentary movie on food trends followed by discussion
- Instructor presentation on organic food options in large metropolitan cities

# Snack Time – Taste Test Event









# Student Evaluation Form

<b>Item</b>	<b>Conventional Unit Price</b>	<b>Organic Unit Price</b>	<b>Better Taste? (A or B)</b>	<b>Which is Organic? (A or B)</b>	<b>Class Survey</b>
Chocolate milk	1.99/gal	5.98/gal			
Colby cheese	0.332/oz	0.598/oz			
Bananas	0.59/lb	0.69/lb			
Gala apples	1.69/lb	1.99/lb			
Carrots	1.79/lb	1.69/lb			





# Taste Preference Summary

(86 students over four years)

Students' Personal Preference	Percent of items
Organic Clearly Preferred ( $\geq 2:1$ )	14%
Conventional Preferred ( $\geq 2:1$ )	37%
No Clear Preference	49%





# Correct Identification Summary

(86 students over four years)

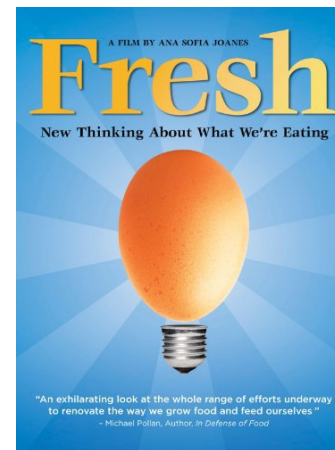
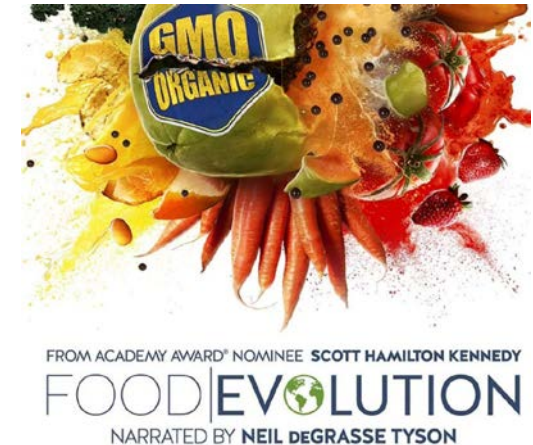
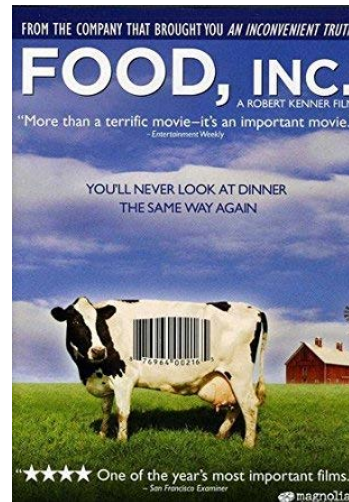
Identification of Organic Version in Paired Samples	Percent of items
Clearly Correct ( $\geq 2:1$ )	52%
Clearly Incorrect ( $\geq 2:1$ )	11%
No Clear Consensus	37%

# Movie Time – With Choice of Popcorn!



# Documentary Movies We Have Used

- Food, Inc.
- Food Evolution
- In Organic We Trust
- Fresh



# Food System in the Urban Environment



# Good Availability of Organic Choices





LOW PRICE  
1.89



**Dillons Grocery,  
Manhattan, KS**



# Key Food, Queens New York City





# Conclusions

- Homework valuable for awareness since most students had not shopped for organic food
- Food tasting provides a fun and engaging activity with surprising results
- Students realized preferences were likely based on flavor differences (ie. saltier, sweeter) among the paired products, rather than organic vs conventional



# Conclusions

- Movie stimulates considerable discussion since most are critical of conventional production
- Topic creates great opportunity think critically and argue based on facts versus opinion
- Awareness of growing organic demand may lead to niche production options or future career opportunities
- Lesson has been positively evaluated by students as one of their favorite sessions

# Thank You

