

Organic Cotton Vs. Traditional Cotton: What's the difference?

By Alyson Pisani

Before you buy any cotton made product, what questions come to your mind before you buy it? Does it fit? Is it comfortable? Is it made from 100% pure organic cotton, made with sustainable fuel sources and alternative energy that will help maintain and protect the ecological structure and integrity of our global environment? Chances are you probably wouldn't think that much about it, but today's generation almost forces you to look at things a little differently.

A few years ago, it was the select few that knew anything about organic cotton, but today the numbers are rising and there are still so many questions regarding traditional cotton vs. organic cotton. So what **IS** the difference?

Aesthetically, organic cotton, is not that much different from traditional cotton, but environmentally, they are worlds apart. When you put on a cotton shirt, or slip into cotton sheets, you probably can't tell the difference, but take a close look at how traditional cotton is manufactured, and you will probably think quite differently the next time you cozy up in bed or get dressed in the morning.

My Tee Shirt is Toxic?

The thought that comes to mind when you hear about organic cotton is "clean" and "pure", so if that's the case what makes traditional cotton "dirty"? There are multitudes of reasons but just to name a few:

- The following pesticides: cyanide, dicofol, naled, propargite, and trifluralin, are used on cotton in the U.S. and are KNOWN cancer-causing chemicals. These are classified by the U.S. EPA as Category I and II— the most dangerous chemicals and these are only just a few mentioned.
- Conventional cotton uses more insecticides than any other single crop. World wide, cotton producers use \$2.6 billion worth of pesticides annually.
- Pesticide runoff has killed wildlife, contaminated domesticated animals and unintentionally kills approximately 67 million birds in the U.S. annually.

The list goes on and on, but you get the picture. Little by little, the important facts about traditional cotton production has raised flags with consumers who are now beginning to wake up and pay attention to what goes in and on the clothes they wear. Clothing manufacturers and designers who realize the impact this kind of manufacturing has on the environment, are now beginning to look at organic methods as well.

Nothing But Pure Cotton:

So what separates organic cotton production from traditional? Well first, organic cotton producers do NOT use any of the above mentioned insecticides and pesticides and second, for cotton to be considered "organic", the production MUST be certified.

Just following organic standards does not render it organic. One of the largest factors of organic cotton farming is the soil fertility. Organic farming uses a system that maintains and replenishes the soils fertility without the use of harmful pesticides, fertilizers or genetically modified seeds.

The benefits to the environment, by implementing this type of farming are enormous and the advantages are endless, but just to name a few:

- Healthy soil creates clean runoff so wildlife and domestic animals are no longer at risk for toxic poisoning.
- Protecting the environment for the next generation
- Reduction in pesticide related health problems including birth defects

Since the risks of traditional cotton farming and the benefits of organic cotton farming are being recognized by retailers around the world, the increase in organic production has skyrocketed. In 2007/2008 the amount of organic cotton farmers, worldwide, grew an astonishing 152%.

The message is clear. Our bodies have the capacity to absorb the toxic substances found in traditional cotton production which is why the use of organic cotton is more important than ever for healthy living as well as a healthy environment.

Understanding the importance of stringent organic standards is paramount for Zehn Naturals organic clothing. Visit them on line at: www.zehnnaturals.com and see how large of an impact, one little organic Tee, can have.