

## Information Regarding Pesticide Levels in Produce

Since 1991, the USDA's Pesticide Data Program ([https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-05/documents/aceappendixb\\_pesticidedataprogram.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-05/documents/aceappendixb_pesticidedataprogram.pdf)) has annually measured residual pesticide levels on a variety of produce that has been prepared (washed and/or peeled) as typical for consumption, and has reported results to the public. Since its inception, the program has expanded the number produce items sampled and the number of pesticides tested. The results can be viewed not only by produce item, but also by geographic source of the produce, whether or not the produce is labelled "organic," and the level of specific pesticides.

Independent consumer advocate Consumer Reports reviewed the testing results and assessed the relative health risk posed by ingesting specific produce items, based on the prevalence, concentration, and toxicity of the pesticides found. The results of this interpretive analysis and other information potentially useful to consumers can be found in the Consumer Reports article "Stop Eating Pesticides" (October 2020), which is available at the library.

**SUMMARY** The above report noted that, while half of the tested produce poses little risk, certain items contained concerning levels of pesticide toxicity. Consumers wishing to minimize risks to their health should understand safer options for the following produce items of greatest concern:

### **Vegetables of Concern for Pesticide Toxicity Risk**

**Spinach** (Consider buying *imported* organic fresh spinach, or organic frozen spinach. US-grown fresh spinach—organic or not—are a high risk, as are imported non-organic.)

**Green Beans** (Consider buying *imported* fresh green beans, or canned or frozen green beans. US-grown fresh green beans—both non-organic and organic—are a high risk.)

**Potatoes** (Consider buying *imported* potatoes, as even non-organic imported potatoes had a much lower risk than US-grown organic or non-organic versions.)

**Kale** (Consider buying *imported* kale, as even non-organic imported kale had a much lower risk than US-grown organic or non-organic versions.)

**Celery** (While US-grown organic is good, even non-organic imported is better. Avoid non-organic US-grown celery, which has a very high pesticide risk.)

### **Fruits of Concern for Pesticide Toxicity Risk**

**Peaches** (Consider buying canned or imported peaches, as US-grown fresh peaches—even organic—had very high risk.)

**Cherries** (Consider buying imported frozen cherries. US-grown frozen and especially fresh cherries pose a very high pesticide risk.)

**Pears** (Consider buying *imported* pears. US-grown pears, even organic, pose a very high risk.)

For more information, please see the full Consumer Reports article, "Stop Eating Pesticides," October 2020 (available at your library).

*The above information was compiled by T.Newman on behalf of the Pequannock Environmental Commission on September 9, 2021.*