It doesn’t seem too long ago that the sun disappeared before we could break free from our offices or labs to enjoy it, and now the longest day of the year is coming and going. June 21 marks the summer solstice, and the best place to enjoy the more than 15 hours of daylight is anywhere besides your office or lab. So get outside as much as possible these days and get yourself some vitamin D!

Is it Really Worth it to Buy Organic Produce?

Here at the Eco Mosquito, we like to ask the tough questions, especially when there’s the possibility of saving money involved. So we want to know, how much healthier is organic produce, and is it worth it to spend those extra cents per pound? You may have missed the excellent HSPH Forum in May, which focused on pesticides and food as part of the Andelot Series in Current Science Controversies. Ohhh, controversy! So what’s the deal? Well, it turns out that there’s a lack of public health research on pesticide safety because there’s no real control population—we are all exposed to pesticides to some degree. Yikes. We do know that many pesticides are toxic to the human nervous system, but we don’t know if our food is causing enough exposure to do harm. In terms of safety levels, we only have one guide: tolerance. So, while there may currently be an acceptable daily intake, we still don’t know how these chemicals affect us in the long run. We also know that organic food contains less pesticides and will help us to reduce our exposure. So, if you can afford it, buying organic could be a great investment in your health. And if you have to go with non-organic, it’s good to know that some produce is cleaner than others. The Environmental Working Group analyzed pesticide residue testing data from the USDA and FDA to come up with these rankings:

THE DIRTY DOZEN

- Apples
- Strawberries
- Grapes
- Celery
- Peaches
- Spinach
- Sweet bell peppers
- Imported nectarines
- Cucumbers
- Cherry tomatoes
- Imported snap peas
- Potatoes

Always try to buy these organic, and wash thoroughly if you can’t!

THE CLEAN FIFTEEN

- Avocados
- Sweet corn
- Pineapples
- Cabbage
- Frozen sweet peas
- Onions
- Asparagus
- Mangos
- Papayas
- Kiwi
- Eggplant
- Grapefruit
- Cantaloupe
- Cauliflower
- Sweet potatoes

Even in their conventional forms, these are the produce less likely to contain pesticide residue, but you should still wash them!