

July 24, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Study: Organic Dairy and Meat Improves Quality of Mothers' Breast Milk

CORNUCOPIA, WI: A new study, published in the *British Journal of Nutrition*, showed that organic dairy and meat products in a mother's diet positively affect the nutritional quality of her breast milk—markedly increasing beneficial fatty acids.

Specifically, a diet in which 90% or more of dairy and meat products are organic is correlated with measurably higher levels of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA). CLA is a type of fat that is believed to have anti-carcinogenic, anti-atherosclerotic, anti-diabetic and immune-enhancing effects, as well as a favorable influence on body fat composition. For newborns specifically, CLA is believed to especially aid immune system development.

“These findings provide scientific support for common sense, by showing that organic foods are healthier,” says Dr. Lukas Rist, who is the lead author of the study and the head of research at the Paracelsus Hospital in Switzerland. The study involved 312 breastfeeding women with 1-month old infants from the Netherlands.

“The study shows that breastfeeding mothers can influence the supply and quality of fatty acids for their infants, by eating a diet with organic dairy,” adds Rist.

Other recent studies add support to the growing body of evidence that organic foods offer measurable nutritional benefits. Cows that acquire most of their nutrition from grazing pasture have been shown to produce milk with decreased levels of saturated fat—the “bad” type of fat—and increased concentrations of unsaturated fatty acids and CLA—the “good” types of fat.

In the European Union, where the study took place, organic standards require that dairy farms make maximum use of pasture. U.S. organic regulations also require that organic dairy cattle not be confined with pasture being a major feed source. Research has proven that meat and milk from pastured animals contain elevated levels of antioxidants and other nutritionally beneficial compounds, including CLA.

“Many consumers know, based on increasing media coverage of scientific and medical research, that organic foods reduce their exposure to pesticides, hormones, and antibiotics, but this study shows that organic foods also offer superior nutritional quality,” says Charlotte Vallaeys, Farm and Food Policy Analyst at The Cornucopia Institute. “The benefits of consuming organic food are of paramount importance when thinking about their impact on the development of very young children and fetuses,” Vallaeys added.

The relationship between a mother’s organic diet and the quality of her breast milk is an important topic that has caught scientists’ attention. Additional studies that look at the health status of newborns fed by breastfeeding mothers with an organic diet are under way and will be published in the near future.

“There is a synergy and logic to the approach that organic farmers take in their production model,” said Dave Minar of Cedar Summit Dairy, an organic farmstead producer in New Prague, Minnesota. “Concentrating on the health and fertility of soil results in pastures and feed of superior nutritional quality—and that results in incredibly vibrant, long living, and healthy livestock. It should be of no surprise that there is an increasing body of scientific evidence now substantiating the benefits of an organic diet, especially for infants and children.”

— 30 —

EDITOR’S NOTE:

A copy of the full report is available on The Cornucopia Institute website at:
www.cornucopia.org/Rist_2007_study.pdf

*The Cornucopia Institute is dedicated to the fight for economic justice for the family-scale farming community. Through research, advocacy and economic development our goal is to empower farmers both politically and through marketplace initiatives. **The Organic Integrity Project** acts as a corporate watchdog assuring that no compromises to the credibility of organic farming methods and the food it produces are made in the pursuit of profit.*