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# Organic Farming

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## Videos:

“Organic Farmers in the Face of Climate Change”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gd2un845CPA>

(4:49 minutes)

“The Greens’ New Target”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE5TrVEGP20>

(5:47 minutes)

## Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

## Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
3. John Stossel said that Americans paid little attention when Sri Lanka banned non-organic farming. Did you hear anything about this before watching Stossel’s video? If not, why do you think it wasn’t covered more by the media?
4. Mike Appel said: “I think the more people support organic, the more they’re voting for a more resilient food system.” What did he mean by “resilient”?
5. John Stossel said that Sri Lanka’s switch to organic farming caused food prices to rise by 80%. What would be the impact of an 80% increase in food prices? Who would it impact the most? The least? Is it worth it for everyone to pay more for organic? Why/Why not? Who should decide if it’s worth it or not?
6. Mac Stone explained that “because of all the hoof action and moving of nutrients back into the soil,” cattle can actually prevent more carbon emissions than they produce. Had you heard this before? Does this contradict the common argument that eating less meat is good for the environment? Why/Why not?
7. Michael Shellenberger said “synthetic fertilizers are a friend to saving nature because they reduce how much land we need.” Why is this?

8. Jeremy Barker said that the pandemic revealed that local farms can do a better job of feeding people than grocery stores. Did you experience this during the pandemic?
9. John Stossel and Michael Shellenberger argued that farmers will continue to get better at reducing pollution from synthetic fertilizers, because they have a financial incentive to not waste expensive fertilizer through pollution. Can we rely on farmers to be efficient in their fertilizer use on their own, or should it be more heavily regulated? Why/Why not?
10. The Organic Farming Research Foundation video argued that while commercial farms excel at achieving short term gains, organic farming is better at achieving long term gains. Should we be more focused on long term gains? Why/Why not? What are the pros and cons of long term vs. short term?
11. John Stossel said: “Modern technologies like chemical fertilizer make people’s lives better. Stopping that progress brings disaster.” Do you agree? Why/Why not?
12. Do you/your family buy organic produce? Why/Why not?
13. In many debates on climate change, the conflict seems to be long term concern over climate change itself vs. concern over the immediate impact regulations will have on the lives of people, such as Sri Lankans who went hungry due to the switch to organic farming. Which side concerns you more? Is there a reasonable compromise between the two positions? If so, what is it?
14. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
15. What else would you like to learn about this topic?