

A Study of Organic Food Labeling In the United States Compared to Denmark

Abigail Joy Vlasak & Anne Donnelly, PhD

University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

College of Liberal Arts and Science

Introduction



Riegens. Netto Stores (Denmark). 2017.

Organic food production has been developing in the United States for almost half a century. Since the 1990s, consumer demand for organic goods has significantly increased. In 2002, the USDA established requirements for farms to achieve organic certification of their produce.

It took the USDA almost a decade of much debate to agree on the standards and requirements for certification. 90 US agricultural organizations were given the training needed to help farmers gain organic certification. The United States comprises a large share of organic agricultural land coming in 4th place worldwide, yet its overall percentage devoted to organic production is relatively low. Europe's organic market has experienced faster growth due to greater public awareness of the environmental benefits of transitioning to organic farming. Since the 1980s, there has been a major global shift in farms moving away from conventional production methods to organic. The organic agriculture sector is worth over 80 billion dollars and has experienced consistent annual growth.



ColourBox. Danish Rape Field with Danish Field (Denmark). 2017.

Kate Magee. Patriot Project (USA). 2017.

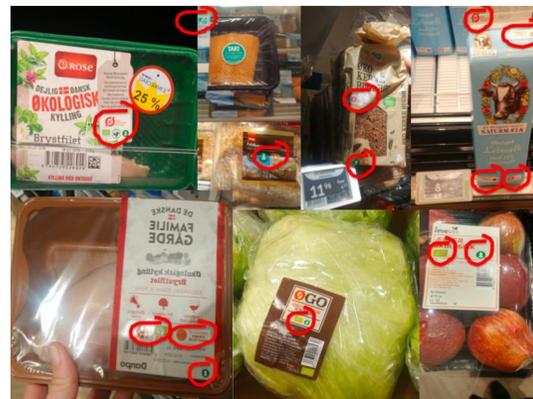
Objective

This project assesses current organic practices in the United States and Denmark. Following research and analysis of the existing literature, an in-depth study of how organic practices are reflected in labels and requirements for their certification is conducted.

Methods

- 1) An online search was conducted regarding organic certification labels found in the United States and Denmark. Key words used to find different types of labels included "organic labeling in United States/Denmark," "sustainable labeling United States/ Denmark."
- 2) Online investigation of the labeling requirements needed to adhere to different levels of "sustainable," "wholesome," and "organic" certification.
- 3) For in store analysis, an updated American food pyramid was used to select one food item from each group. Then, labels were explored in 3 grocery stores in both the US and Denmark. The grocery stores chosen were categorized into discount, intermediate, and gourmet grocery stores.

Identifying Danish Food Labels



Vlasak, Abigail. Danish Food (Denmark). 2018

Identifying American Food Labels



Vlasak, Abigail. American Food (USA). 2017

Methods

- 4) Categorically representative foods chosen as benchmarks for data collection included iceberg lettuce, apples, cow milk, cookies, salmon, and chicken meat. Pictures were taken of one conventional and one organic food item from each category.
- 5) The different labels were organized and compared to determine differences in organic certification and labeling between the United States and Denmark.

Results

The results demonstrate that the United States had fewer types of organic certification, as well as a different process to becoming organically certified. The USDA makes the standards and labeling requirements in the US. In Denmark, labels have to adhere to many similar standards with the addition of other qualifications. Table 1 shows the list of labels typically seen on a variety of products. Table 2 shows the different labels seen on some US products.

Danish Food Labels

	This label is used to inform customers of healthier food choices. The foods have less sugars, fats, and carbs than similar choices without the label.
	Foods with whole grains get this label (i.e. cereal, bread, pasta). Whole grain is important because it has more proteins and fiber and is sparse in Danish diets.
	This is a label created by an animal welfare organization to indicate if meat or eggs were produced in a "fair" environment.
	Used for sustainable and fairly caught fish and seafood that did not harm the waterways.
	Within the European Union all organic foods must be labeled with the common EU label. It is a law among the agriculture business.
	The Danish organic label seems to be the most trusted by citizens of Denmark. The Danish learns about this label from a young age, and that it signifies products having limited artificial pesticides and additives. There is ongoing verification of qualification for this label.

American Food Labels

	This is a voluntary label put on food products by the manufacturer to provide additional information about the product. The label tells if a food is derived from genetically modified plants. It is typically put on food products to provide more information about the product or for marketing purposes.
	This is a label that helps differentiate organic products approved by the USDA. The label is standardized and there are certain requirements to receive this status as a food producer such as: oversight/ approval by the USDA produced using certified substances, and production using certain methods (i.e. no GMOs).

Conclusion

Despite the similar definition for organic in both the US and Denmark, food labeling is different beyond visual appearance. Even though both places have the same definition for what constitutes "organic," production and consumption levels do not compare (consider the entirety of Denmark would fit multiple times over inside the state of Florida alone). Denmark is a global leader in both categories when considering the total percent of agricultural production and store sales to that of the US, where less than 1 percent of farmland is certified under organic production.

Acknowledgements

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