Be label-savvy to stay healthy

Check for certification by regulatory bodies for the real deal, say experts

PETALING JAYA: The multibillion-ringgit global organic food and beverage market is expected grow

more by 2030, according to market research firm Grand View Research.

For Malaysia, there is a growing appetite for organic food among health-conscious consumers.

But how do people know whether the "organic" foodstuff they buy are truly organic?

An important source is the myOrganic sticker that is usually found on the packaging of organic foodstuff sold at shops.

The myOrganic certification scheme is used to promote, implement and facilitate

> the adoption of organic agriculture, explains Agriculture Department (DOA) director-general Datuk Nor Sam Alwi. "This certifica-

tion scheme covvarious organic activiincluding ties, produce fresh ing, the breeding of organic plant varieties and wild

harvesting. "The Malaysian Organic Certification Scheme is now known as myOrganic," she said in in a statement to The Star.

legitimate trademark.

"In cases where fraud

"For vegetables to be certified as organic, all input must be completely natural. This includes compost fertilisers, organic pesticides and non-genetically modified organism seeds."

Dr Juju Nakasha Jaafar

to three years or both.

myOrganic logo.

where appropriate.

she said.

ing company may be prosecuted

under the Trademarks Act 2019,"

may face a fine of up to RM10,000

per item bearing the misused

trademark, imprisonment of up

has issued guidelines to certifi-

cate holders outlining the terms and conditions for the use of the

Nor Sam said the department

"However, we also rely on the

cooperation of consumers to

address the risks of fraud and

logo misuse by lodging complaints

"Matters related to processing,

repackaging or importation of

organic products fall strictly

under the jurisdiction of the

To create awareness, the

department is actively carrying

out promotional activities target-

ing consumers through physical

events and social media plat-

forms, as well as by engaging with

moting Good Agricultural Prac-

tices (GAP), highlighting the impor-

tance of recognising the myOrgan-

ic logo, encouraging the purchase

verify the validity of organic certi-

fication by visiting the DOA web-

site at www.doa.gov.my under

the list of certified recipients," she

Dr Juju Nakasha Jaafar, senior

lecturer at the Faculty of Agri-

culture at Universiti Putra Malay-

sia, said there has been confusion

on the authenticity of organic

"For example, a seller might

"Additionally, consumers can

"These initiatives focus on pro-

Health Ministry," she said.

local organic associations.

of certified farm produce.

said.

products.

Upon conviction, offenders

farming, beekeep-

To safeguard the authenticity of certified organic products, the regulation of organic items is primarily governed under the Food Act 1983 and Food Regulations 1985, overseen by the Health Ministry, she added.

The Agriculture and Food Security Ministry has also registered the myOrganic certification logo with the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO) as a

"If the DOA receives complaints about the misuse of this logo, the matter will be referred to the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry for further investigation.

is confirmed, the offend-

claim he is selling pesticide-free or chemical-free vegetables, which gives consumers the impression that the products are organic.

"In reality, these vegetables may be free from chemical pesticides but are still grown using chemical fertilisers and thus do not qualify as organic," she said.

"For vegetables to be certified as organic, all input must be completely natural.

"This includes compost fertilisers, organic pesticides and non-genetically modified organism seeds."

These are outlined in the myOrganic certification guidelines.

"Consumers can look for the myOrganic logo on vegetable products to ensure they are truly organic.

"The DOA strictly regulates this certification," she said, adding that more details can be found on the DOA website.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) secretary-general Dr Saravanan Thambirajah said traders must verify the certification documents provided by suppliers before selling or labelling any product as

"They should only use the term 'organic' when backed by certification," he said.

Saravanan said consumers should look for official certification logos on packaging and not rely solely on general claims like 'natural'.

"If you suspect a product is being falsely marketed as organic, you should report it to the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry or lodge a complaint with Fomca," he added.



Verify for trusted organic certification logos

Genuine organic products are certified and will display an official logo such as commonly used logos below:



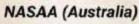
myOrganic (Malaysia)



CERTIFIED ORGANIC

GAP (Malaysian Good

Agricultural Practices)





USDA Organic (United States of America)

Don't buy it: If the product only says 'organic' or 'organik' with no certification logo

Make sure to look for the country of origin

EU Organic (Euro Leaf)

(European Union)

E.g. Product of Australia / Product of Malaysia / Product of China.

Are flavouring agents allowed in organic food?

Organic flavouring extracts may be used or natural flavours from plants, animals or minerals.

How should your organic

products be packaged? They shouldn't be placed in polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and aluminium packages, reused bags or containers that have been in contact with any substance likely to compromise the organic integrity.

The Star graphics

Source: Various