

USDA vague on benefits of organic produce

By Peter Whoriskey, Washington Post

Are consumers right to think that organic food is safer and healthier?

It seems like a straightforward question, especially for Miles McEvoy, the chief of the National Organic Program at USDA. That's the section of the federal government that champions organic farming practices and defines what food deserves the coveted organic label.

But in an interview Wednesday, McEvoy wouldn't speculate about any health benefits of organic food, saying the question wasn't "relevant" to the role of the National Organic Program. Nor would he say whether growing consumer demand for organics reflects widening public skepticism of conventional U.S. agriculture.

Maybe McEvoy is unwilling to tout organics over conventional agriculture because, after all, conventional agriculture is the larger part of the USDA's realm. Or maybe he thinks, as some others do, that the science on organics is too tentative.

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