Why Organic?
(Adapted from CASFS 3.1/p 5-7)

Sustainable
Good (Best) management
Agroecology
[IPM, No-till, Bio-rational, Low input]
20th Century trends in Developed world agriculture

- Fewer farmers, larger farms
- Labor saving technology
- Increased yields and productivity
- Increased off-farm inputs
- Stagnation of net farm income
- Share of food dollar to farmers declines
- Concentration of ag input suppliers
- Concentration of food processing businesses
- Concentration of food retailers
Land use and settlement

• >90% of US population involved in ag before 1900
• Super abundant land = low incentive to care for it
• Early land settlement policies favored small scale agriculture except in slave states
• Abundant immigration = abundant labor
Agriculture, Science and technology

• Pre-1860: techniques and yields per acre static
• Post 1860: World-wide establishment of agriculture as a subject for science
• Extremely fast technological and scientific development
Science Tech & Ag

• Rapid understanding of crop production science post 1860. Ecology lagged behind
• Mechanization 1920’s
• Fertilizer from fossil fuels 1940’s -
• Chemical crop protection, 1940’s -
• Reclamation, irrigation 1930’s -
• Plant and animal breeding
• Refrigeration & transportation 1920’s-
Effects

- Very large reduction in labor needs
- Huge rural to urban migration
- Increased scale of Ag production
- Specialization and monoculture
- Crops separated from animals
- Input production and processing off-farm
Return to Organic

- Silent Spring* 1962, Consumer fear of pesticides
- Labor unrest
- Pollution
- Diminishing oil reserves
- Scientific backing for Agroecology
- Mid-size industrial farmer poverty
- Green consumers willing to pay more $$
Organic is…

• The legal method of describing crops grown using a set of regulations
• Organic is not necessarily sustainable, ecological, defensible nor understandable!
• Organic will only be profitable as long as consumers will pay, and some (most?) producers are kept out. Unless the entire food system changes