

## **Organic vs. Conventional: comparison of online shopping food prices in Poland.**

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Demand for organic food in Poland is increasing continuously for twenty years. This is due to positive trends resulting from an increase in consumer awareness and orientation on quality. The quality of organic food is a key source of competitive advantage in relation to food produced by conventional methods. Although the organic food market in Poland is growing, the share in the total food market is still low. Sales of organic food is done through four main channels of distribution: direct sales from producer to consumer via farm shops, sales via specialized shops, sales via conventional supermarkets and sales via online shops. The last one is developing distribution channel. In 2003 the first online grocery shop in Poland was established. Currently on the e-market there are about 330 shops. The advantages of shopping via internet are primarily time savings and ease of order. That is why in recent years, the online shopping has become a place where Poles make regular grocery shopping. The main groups of organic products sold via internet are vegetables and fruit, cereal products, juices and beverages.

The subject of the research were the prices of organic and conventionally food (59 products) sold in online shops. Organic and conventional food prices were collected monthly from March to September in 2013. The prices of 6 food products groups (cereal products, milk and dairy products, meat and meat processed products, vegetables, fruits and juices) from 3 online specialized shops and 6 online shops offering conventionally food were collected.

For all compared food products the organic prices were higher more than one time than the conventional one. In the case of dairy products the more a foodstuff was processed the higher price difference was. The highest difference was for wheat flour, milk UHT, sour cream, natural yogurt, strawberry yogurt, minced pork meat, ham, onion, beetroot, white cabbage, butterhead lettuce, iceberg lettuce, celery, paprika, apple and apple juice, orange and orange juice. Also, during the period of data collection the prices of food prices were changing, in particular for fruit and vegetables.

The main conclusion is that organic products are more expensive than their conventional equivalents. The price of organic food is higher because of limited food supply, production costs, post-harvest handling costs, organization of marketing and distribution chain. It is expected that along with increasing consumer awareness and increasing income the consumer willingness to pay higher prices of organic food will grow.

Key words: organic food, conventional food, prices, online shopping