

PROBIOTIC HEALTH

Let Real Foods Be Thy Medicine

By James McMath

Probiotics are live microorganisms, primarily bacteria, that are beneficial to human health when consumed in adequate amounts. They are found primarily in “real foods” that are organically grown (without toxic chemicals) and help to improve the balance of beneficial bacteria in the body, known as the “**gut microbiota**.”

Until the early 1950s, virtually all foods were grown organically. Since then, the so-called “green revolution” using synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers has had the ability to outproduce traditional organic farming by about 20%. As a consequence, **over 98%** of all foods are now grown with agrochemicals, which are designed to destroy the probiotic organisms present in the topsoil. Agrochemical farming is one of the highest producers of greenhouse gas emissions, increases heavy pollution of our waterways, and promotes the steady depletion of our topsoils – plus chronic illnesses have skyrocketed since the 1950s.

On a positive note, important breakthroughs are being made in organic agriculture that outproduces the industrial agrochemical approach. This pivotal discovery is commonly referred to as “**regenerative agriculture**,” which introduces a diverse community of microorganisms that work together to restore the biodiversity of the soil, reduce the input costs, detoxify the soil, improve the water holding capacity, pull airborne carbons back into the soil, and foster a healthy ecosystem. Once these new biological systems are introduced into the mainstream markets, organically grown foods will become less expensive than chemically grown foods – thereby becoming the predominant means for growing our foods.

For the time being, paying the additional cost for **organically grown foods** is the healthier way for boosting our probiotic gut health. With the predominance of processed sterilized foods designed to kill all bacteria, it is highly recommended to eat organically-grown “real foods” that promote probiotic health such as:

- fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and tempeh;
- whole foods like fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and nuts;
- fibers found in onions, garlic, asparagus, artichokes, and bananas;
- lean proteins from sources like fish, chicken, nuts, and eggs;
- healthy fats like those found in avocados, nuts, and seeds;
- and drink plenty of healthy fluids – especially water!

“**Climate-smart agriculture**” is a win/win approach that offers healthier, more productive ways of growing our foods in a manner that restores and replenishes our natural resources rather than depletes and contaminates them. It represents a paradigm shift that honors the interconnected web of existence of which we are all a part.

* **James McMath** is the founder and president of a 501c3 nonprofit organization, www.livingearthfoundation.org, whose primary purpose is to explore, discover, and advance natural remediation solutions that cleanse and restore the biological health of the soils, air, water, and ecosystems. James has also been a member of UU congregations for over 50 years.