

EDIBLE SOYBEAN PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

CURRENT TOPIC

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Edible soybeans are used for making tofu, tempeh, soynut snacks, and other foods. These beans differ from field soybeans by being larger-seeded, milder-tasting, more tender, and more digestible. They also contain a lower percentage of the gas-producing starches. Otherwise, the nutritional value of edible and field soybeans is comparable.

Some buyers require food-grade soybeans to be grown organically. Prices for organically grown food-grade soybeans vary but typically fall in the range of \$10 to \$17 per bushel to the farmer. Prices as high as \$20 to \$22 per bushel have been paid when demand is high, quality good, and supply low. In order for any crop to be marketed as organic, the acreage on which it is grown must be certified. For information on organic certification, request ATTRA's *Organic Certification and The National Organic Program*.

The most important aspect of food-grade soybean production is that the farmer finds a buyer before the seed is planted, since most food-grade soybeans are contract grown. Normally, buyers want large-seeded varieties, high in protein and with a clear hilum (the residual scar where the seed attaches to the pod). Under some circumstances the buyer even provides the seed. Paul Burke (1) of the American Soybean Association says that most growers sell to a broker or to an exporter. He recommends starting out slowly and learning the industry before scaling up. Enclosed you will find a publication entitled *Marketing Food-Quality Soybeans in Japan* by Gil Griffis. For more information request the ATTRA publication *Marketing Organic Grains*.

Production practices are similar to other soybean production (conventional or organic), except for the variety used and a few other details. The enclosed article "Organic Food-Grade Soybeans" details how to grow these beans organically. For further information, request ATTRA's *Organic Soybean Production*. Two high-protein soybean lines especially suited to the Asian tofu market – Ohio FG1 and Ohio FG2 – have been released from Ohio State University. (See the enclosed 1994 news release from Dr. St. Martin for more details.) Six other varieties – Jacques J-231, Burlison, Jack, Beeson 80, HP 204, and Vinton 81 – are mentioned in the enclosed



article entitled “Bonus Beans: Do Specialty Types Pay!” More than 30 varieties are mentioned in the enclosure on marketing food-quality soybeans in Japan. The growing location significantly influences tofu yield, grain yield, protein, and oil content, according to a North Dakota study (2). Processors can benefit from purchasing tofu beans from locations with the higher tofu yields and quality.

Comprehensive information on food-grade soybeans is found at the U.S. Soyfoods Web site sponsored by the Indiana Soybean Board (3), including a directory of soyfoods information resources and professional industry associations. Searches of this site can help locate U.S. manufacturers and distributors of soyfoods, as well. Information is enclosed on Monsanto Ag., in Stuttgart, Arkansas (4), which is involved in food-grade soybeans. They contract with growers using seed from five varieties and buy the beans back at a \$2 premium. They start contracting in January for the coming year. Heartland Organic Marketing Cooperative (5) cleans, bags, and markets soybeans, in addition to serving as a broker. American Health and Nutrition (6) also buys food-grade soybeans, cleans and bags them, then markets them to processors. They do forward-contracting with farmers as well as spot-buying at harvest time. The U.S. Soyfoods Directory, which provides contact information for several industry associations and numerous state soybean associations, is enclosed.

REFERENCES

- 1) Paul Burke, Asia Director
American Soybean Association
12125 Woodcrest Executive Dr., Ste. 100
St. Louis, MO 63141
800-688-7692
314-576-1770
314-576-2786 FAX
- 2) Helms, T.C., T.D. Cai, K.C. Chang, and J.W. Enz. 1998. Tofu characteristics influenced by soybean crop. North Dakota Agricultural Research. Fall. 11 p.
- 3) U.S. Soyfoods Directory
<http://www.soyfoods.com/>
- 4) Roy Owen or Gary Jones
Monsanto Ag.
901 North Park Avenue
Stuttgart, AR 72160
870-673-8565
- 5) Heartland Organic Marketing Cooperative
219 SW 2nd
PO Box 39
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<http://www.heartlandorganic.com>

6) American Health and Nutrition
3990 Varsity Drive
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ahn@organictrading.com
<http://www.organictrading.com>

ENCLOSURES

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Anon. No date. Organic Food-Grade Soybeans. Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program, University of Illinois. 4 p. <<http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/%7easap/research/fs-organic-soybeans.html>>.

Brunoehler, Ron. 1994. Bonus beans: do specialty types pay? *Farm Industry News*. Mid-February. p. 60-61.

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Boes, James R. 1999. [Grower's letter showing buyer's standards.] *Heartland Organic Marketing Cooperative*. May 25. 2 p.

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Indiana Soybean Board. 1998. U.S. Soyfoods Directory. Soyfoods information resources and professional industry associations. 5 p. <<http://www.soyfoods.com/telephone.html>>.

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