

Student Scientist Studies Health Benefits of Organic Food Crops



Briana Young, a senior at Detroit Edison Early College of Excellence and a research assistant at Ecotek Lab, recently completed a Department of Defense funded internship at Oakland University in Rochester Hills, Michigan. Her research was focused on examining the difference in the protein, glucose and water concentration levels found in organically grown and harvested zucchini versus zucchini that had been grown and harvested using conventional methods (e.g. use of pesticides, use of chemically treated soil, use of artificial fertilizers). She also examined the role of soil quality on the germination rate of organic corn.

Briana's interest in organic crops was sparked by observing the increase in demand for whole foods at area schools and farmers markets. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, organic products are now available in nearly 20,000 natural food stores and nearly seventy five percent (75%) of conventional grocery stores. According to data published in the April 2012 issue of Food Business News, U.S. sales of organic products were nearly \$26.7 billion in 2010 compared to \$29.2 billion in 2011, an increase of 9.3 percent.

Briana spent five weeks working at the Oakland University Student Organic Farm under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Faye Hansen, a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences. "Everybody eats right?" says Dr. Hansen. "Knowing where your food comes from and how it was grown is a huge issue today. Beyond that simple fact, a farm is a business. Students not only grow the food, but they also sell it, so they need to promote their items and set up a successful farm and business plan". As Briana enters her senior year of high school, she plans to use her internship experience as a guide for identifying, selecting and applying to food science programs at major universities in the Fall.

About the Ecotek Science Program

Ecotek is a science research lab program for young inventors and researchers in grades 5 thru 12. Student scientists work on projects aligned with the issues being addressed by world leaders at the United Nations. To learn more about Ecotek Lab go to <http://www.ecotek-us.com>

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