

Eat to Your Advantage®

Thoughtful Questions to Ask a Produce Farmer

After each question, I list some of the keywords you want to be listening for in their answers.

- **How did you get into farming?**
 - Farmers are a passionate bunch. The answer to this question may tell you a lot about their farming philosophy.
- **Can you tell me a little about your growing practices?** (This is a nice broad question that doesn't feel confrontational and gets the conversation started)
 - Listen for—sustainable, regenerative, organic, no-sprays, etc.
- **Is everything you sell produced on your farm?**
 - The answer does not have to be no, but you want to make sure ALL the items for sale meet your standards.
- **How do you control for insects, weeds, disease?** If they say they use pesticides, ask which ones. Write it down if you need to and research them.
 - Listen for—healthy soil, intercropping, mulching, compost, companion planting, manual control, organic controls.
- **What kinds of fertilizers do you use?**
 - Listen for—compost, manure, cover-cropping, companion planting, intercropping, rotational grazing (which is having livestock on the land part of the year to fertilize).
- **How do you protect soil fertility?**
 - Listen for—cover-cropping, compost, mulching, rotational grazing, no-till.
- **Do you grow any GMO crops?**
 - You want to hear no.
- **Do you ever offer farm visits?**
 - It's ideal to see the farm your food comes from, and many farmers have customer events or open-door policies. To me, it's not a deal-breaker.