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ORGANIC BYTES

Organic News with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association

A Wicked Case of the Jitters

Last week activists and concerned consumers across the US gave coffee giant, Starbucks, a wicked case of the jitters. As the company held its annual shareholders meeting in Seattle, activists protested outside while Starbucks headquarters were inundated with faxes, emails and phone calls. The Organic Consumers Association (OCA) brewed up more than 2,000 faxes and emails, urging CEO Orin Smith and Starbucks shareholders to actually practice the business ethics the company so proudly wears on its sleeve. Ronnie Cummins, national director of OCA, said "Despite repeated

pledges, Starbucks is still loading up its coffee drinks with rBGH (recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone) tainted milk, and buying coffee and chocolate produced under exploitative labor conditions, and in the case of cocoa plantations in Africa, workers who are actually slaves."

Learn more about OCA's Starbucks Campaign: www.organicconsumers.org/starbucks

Quick Facts to Get Buzzed On

Caffeine is an addictive drug, affecting 90% of all Americans, stimulating the brain in a manner similar to the amphetamines cocaine and heroin.

Starbucks currently has over 6,000 coffee shops in 18 countries, serving over 20 million people every week and reporting revenues of nearly \$3.3 billion in 2002. In contrast, the average family farmer growing coffee for Starbucks makes \$500 to \$1,000 per year.

Fair Trade coffee provides small family farmers with a fair wage and most of it (85%) is organic and shade grown.

Sources: Kim Keidat-Biomedical Chemist with CQ Network Inc.; Starbucks corporate website; Global Exchange, Transfair USA



STARBUCKS
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Titillating Tidbit

Today, the drug war budget is over \$20 billion, three times the environment budget, 50 percent more than the energy budget and approaching 30 percent of the entire agriculture budget. Source: *Santa Fe New Mexican* 3/13/2003

Quote of the Week

If you don't learn to laugh at trouble, you won't have anything to laugh at when you're old. -Edgar Watson Howe

The Fine Line Between Food & Drugs

It's legal for companies like Starbucks to sell billions of dollars worth of caffeine drugs each year, but trying to sell a health food product containing a drug-free hemp seed can land you in jail. As of February 6, 2003, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) made it illegal to sell foods containing hemp seeds. Most hemp seeds used in food products contain no THC, the drug found in Marijuana. Proponents of hemp seeds are now saying they're ready to challenge this DEA ruling. For example, Wild Oats supermarkets are continuing to stock hemp-seed products, claiming they can prove there is no THC in their foods. According to John Roulac, a hemp seed granola bar entrepreneur, legalization of industrial hemp would relieve struggling family farmers while invigorating health and the nation's economy. "It doesn't require pesticides or herbicides, its fibers are stronger than [those of] trees and its seed is considered among the most nutritious in the world because of its protein and good fat ratios," he said. "Hemp never needs weeding because it grows faster than any weed. It's probably the best rotation crop in the country from a biological standpoint." Read all about it: www.organicconsumers.org/clothes/032703_dea_hempfoods.cfm

Wardrobe Slavery

The Daewoosa factory which produced garments for JC Penney and Sears was recently discovered to have 251 immigrant workers toiling in conditions Attorney General John Ashcroft is calling "nothing less than modern-day slavery." They lived in 36-bed dormitories and were fed inadequate meals. Pay was routinely withheld. Attempts to strike for back pay were met with brutality. The workers, mostly women from Vietnam and China, were lured with promises of good wages into paying thousands of dollars to get these jobs-then found they could not make enough to repay the debt. Thickening the plot, Daewoosa is on American Samoa, which makes it legally part of the US. Exporters out of this country need pay no tariffs, and can put "Made in USA" labels on the clothing. The great distance, however, means there is virtually no chance of a labor inspection, ever. Although officials claim American Samoa has learned its lesson and will not allow such exploitation again, Charles Kernaghan of the National Labor Committee is not convinced. "There's no way out of this without laws," he said. "It will never be cleaned up by corporations monitoring themselves." JC Penney has agreed to pay back wages to the Daewoosa workers, but the others, including Sears, so far, have not. Read all about it: www.organicconsumers.org/clothes/sears031403.cfm



OK, would you like the shirts that really are made in the US, or the ones that just say they are?

Speaking Of Addiction...

Scientists are now claiming that fast food is actually addictive, offering evidence that over-consumption of calories leads to a dampening of the sense of fullness. They speculate that such a diet in children leads to a lifetime of obesity (sixty percent of US adults are now overweight). The Washington Post recently stated, "Fast food's marketing strategies, which make perfect sense from a business perspective, succeed only when they induce a substantial number of us to overeat."

For example, to capture a larger share of the market, in the mid-Eighties, Taco Bell began slashing prices. This drew in the customers, but didn't lower revenues. Within seven days, the average check was right back to where it was before: customers were simply buying greater quantities of food. Competitors followed suit, until prices were as low as they could go-and then the franchises had to look for a new gambit to increase revenues. They found it in super-sizing. As a result, the average American waistline is growing faster than ever. "Big Food has trained us to think that oceanic drinks and gargantuan portions are normal" writes the Washington Post. Read all about it: www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/fastfood032103.cfm



Seeing the Forest from the GE Trees

Adopting a policy that is the first of its kind, Kinko's announced on March 11 that it will not align itself with suppliers that use genetically engineered trees. The goal of GE tree research is to replace the vast, complex web of life found within a natural forest with a severely impoverished, simplified fiber-production plantation. Some applications would also increase pesticide use, polluting water supplies; and any application is likely to create irreversible contamination of native forests with GE pollen. The Organic Consumers Association salutes you. Way to go, Kinko's!

Read all about it: www.organicconsumers.org/ge/kinkos032103.cfm

For many more food issue daily headlines: www.organicconsumers.org/log.html

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