



# ORGANIC BYTES

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[www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org)

Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association  
Please forward this publication to family and friends, websites, print it, & post it. Knowledge is power!

## **ALERT:** Another Sneak Attack on Organic Standards

The USDA has announced a controversial proposal, with absolutely no input from consumers, to allow 38 new non-organic ingredients in products bearing the "USDA Organic" seal.

Most of the ingredients are food colorings derived from plants that are supposedly not "commercially available" in organic form. But at least three of the proposed ingredients, backed by beer giant Anheuser-Busch and pork and food processors, represent a serious threat to organic standards, and have raised the concerns of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), as well as a number of smaller organic companies and organic certifiers.

Specifically, the OCA disagrees with the "Budweiser exemption," allowing conventionally grown hops, produced with pesticides and chemical fertilizers, to be used in beers labeled as "USDA Organic". Also, OCA strenuously objects to the USDA's proposal to allow the use of conventionally raised factory-farmed animals' intestines (we'll spare you the gory details of what these animals have been fed) as casing for sausages labeled as "organic."

Adding salt to the wound, the USDA has indicated the public comment period will not be the standard 30-60 days. Although the USDA has been working closely with industry on these proposed changes as far back as 2002, the agency will only be accepting public comments for seven days.

Take action now and forward this alert to interested friends and colleagues. Learn more and sign the OCA petition to the USDA: [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_5225.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5225.cfm)

## **Stop Congress from Cutting Sustainable Ag Programs**

Congress is currently putting together the 2007-2012 Farm Bill, a massive bill of taxpayer subsidies and incentives that will have a major impact on food and farming in the US over the next five years. Next week (May 21), the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation will decide whether to make cuts in the Conservation Security Program, an innovative program that helps sustainable and organic farmers protect the environment and preserve wetlands. Congress has already cut this program by \$4.3 billion and is considering making further cuts.

We need to send a strong message to Washington that it's time to move our food and farming system away from chemical and energy-intensive industrial agriculture towards conservation, organic practices, and less dependence on petroleum-based inputs.

Contact your Congressional Representative now and tell them to please use taxpayers' money wisely by restoring full funding to the Conservation Security Program.

Take action: [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_5226.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5226.cfm)

## **Bee Colony Collapse Not Affecting Organic Hives**

As previously reported in *Organic Bytes* #104, beekeepers in 24 states are experiencing record losses of honeybees. Some states have reported up to 70% disappearances of commercial bee populations. Researchers are struggling to find the causes of this mysterious collapse.



A crucial element of this story, missing from reports in the mainstream media, is the fact that organic beekeepers across North America are not experiencing colony collapses. The millions of dying bees are hyper-bred varieties whose hives are regularly fumigated with toxic pesticides by conventional beekeepers attempting to ward off mites.

In contrast, organic beekeepers avoid pesticides and toxic chemicals and strive to use techniques

that closely emulate the ecology of bees in the wild. Researchers are beginning to link the mass deaths of non-organic bees to pesticide exposure, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and the common practice of moving conventional bee hives over long distances. [www.organicconsumers.org/bees.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/bees.cfm)

## **More Ways to Prepare for Peak Oil**

We began posting Sharon Astyk's insightful tips in *Organic Bytes* #104, which highlighted her first 50 peak oil tips. Here are some excerpts from her most recent posting of tips #50 - #100:

52. If your community doesn't have a food coop, start one now. This can be a powerful tool for creating local food economies. Download a guide to starting a co-op at: [www.cgin.coop/manual.pdf](http://www.cgin.coop/manual.pdf)
66. Learn basic first aid, herbalism, and any other useful medical information you can come by.
94. If others don't seem to be responding to your message or sharing your concerns, remember that the evidence was there before you saw things too, and that everyone is ready to hear things at a different time.
99. Think of peak oil and the other challenges that face us as an optimization exercise - how do I get the most fun, the best life, the most happiness, the most love, with the fewest inputs - the least money, the least energy, the least waste. Get excited about making it work.

[www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_5209.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5209.cfm)

## 100% Pure Fruit Juice is No Longer Linked to Obesity

New research presented at the Pediatric Academic Societies' annual convention in Toronto last week indicates that 100% pure fruit juice does not add to childhood obesity and may actually help children maintain healthy weight.

In their study, researchers analyzed the juice consumption of 3,618 children ages 2 to 11 using data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Increased risk for obesity was linked to beverages that contained artificial sweeteners like high fructose corn syrup, which makes up the vast majority of beverages on the market (note: most high fructose corn syrup is made from genetically engineered corn). "The bottom line is that 100 percent juice consumption is a valuable contributor of nutrients in children's diet and it does not have an association with being overweight," said study chief Dr. Theresa Nicklas.

[www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_5108.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5108.cfm)



## Avoiding Fruit Juice Scams

Large beverage manufacturers are notorious for putting labels on their products that mislead consumers into believing that these junk-food drinks are pure fruit or else contain more juice than they really have. If you are shopping for 100% pure fruit juice, here's how to avoid getting scammed:

- 🍏 Always read the ingredient label on the back of the product. If there's anything other than fruit juice in the product, it must be listed there.
- 🍏 "Made with REAL Fruit Juice" could mean it really only has a small percentage of fruit juice.
- 🍏 All beverages that imply they contain juice must declare the percentage of juice on the information label near the top of the Nutrition Facts panel.
- 🍏 If a product is labeled as Fruit drink, juice beverage, juice cocktail or "ade"—the product is likely full of artificial sweeteners and contains very little juice.
- 🍏 Oftentimes a "100% juice" product contains juice fillers. Read the ingredient label, and you'll frequently find your cranberry juice, for example, is mostly apple juice.
- 🍏 Keep in mind that conventional fruits and juices contain pesticide residues, and that industrial scale fruit production is an environmental disaster. Protect your health and the health of the planet by consuming organic fruits and fruit juices.

## Soap, Drugs, and Rock & Roll

In a recent bizarre encounter between the punk rock band, The Germs, and law enforcement officials in California, it was discovered that standard field drug testing kits could distinguish the difference between soap products that are made from natural and organic ingredients and products that may claim to be organic but really contain synthetic detergents made in part or entirely from petroleum. Watch this humorous short clip to see if some of your favorite so-called natural or organic "soaps" may actually be synthetic: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6E19OUBNhM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6E19OUBNhM)

## Quote of the Week:

"Worldwide, so many people shop at Wal-Mart that this year 7.2 billion visits will be made to Wal-Mart stores. Earth's population is only 6.5 billion, so this year the equivalent of every person on the planet will visit a Wal-Mart, with more than half a billion visits left over." -Charles Fishman, *The Wal-Mart Effect*, 2006

## Organic Bytes Readers Talk Back

**Reader's Question:** In *Organic Bytes* #107 you wrote about the USDA passing a new regulation that will require almonds to be pasteurized even though they may be labeled "raw". I understand the public comment period is over, but I'd still like to let the USDA know how I feel about this. Can you help?

**OCA's Response:** We've received a lot of emails and calls from our readers on this issue. The USDA approved this regulation with little public notification. As a result, the only comments the agency received were from the industrial agriculture lobbyists. One of the FDA-recommended pasteurization methods requires the use of propylene oxide, which is classified as a "possible human carcinogen". Organic and family-scale almond farmers are protesting the proposed rule, saying it will effectively put them out of business, since the minimum price for the pasteurization equipment is \$500,000. We feel this issue is too important to let rest.

**Take Action:** [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_5227.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5227.cfm)

## Tools For Changing The World

Everyday we are flooded with depressing news about what's happening to our planet. Not enough attention is given to those positive solutions that are emerging across the globe.

**WorldChanging.com** is a new public interest website providing examples of sustainable and positive change. According to the Worldchanging.com founders "We pay special attention to tools, ideas and models that may have been overlooked in the mass media. We make a point of showing ways in which seemingly unconnected resources link together to form a toolkit for changing the world." Learn more: [www.worldchanging.com](http://www.worldchanging.com)

## Organic Consumers Association on MTV

OCA's Environmental Scientist, Craig Minowa, and his band **Cloud Cult** were featured on MTV this week in a piece highlighting efforts to link the environmental movement with the music industry. Take a peek at this MTV video to see how one of OCA's offices shares space with the world's only environmental non-profit record label, located on an organic farm. OCA's educational materials are distributed to audiences nationally via this touring band. [www.mtv.com/overdrive/?name=news&id=1559417&vid=148618](http://www.mtv.com/overdrive/?name=news&id=1559417&vid=148618)

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Written and Edited by Craig Minowa & Ronnie Cummins