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www.organicconsumers.org

ORGANIC BYTES

Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association
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Alert Update: USDA's Newest Sneak Attack On Organic Standards

Thanks to all of you who joined thousands of organic consumers in late May and signed OCA's petition to the USDA opposing the agency's latest "Sneak Attack" to allow 38 new non-organic ingredients in products labeled as "USDA Organic". (Read full petition at www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5225.cfm)

USDA's controversial proposal to allow 38 new non-organic ingredients in products labeled as "organic" has fueled the anger of organic consumers and generated a backlash of negative press coast to coast.

Over the weekend the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* (as well as a number of other major news outlets) ran feature stories on the debacle.

The *New York Times* noted that the mega-brewer Anheuser-Busch pressured the USDA into allowing them to use hops grown with pesticides and chemical fertilizers in their "Organic Wild Hop Lager" beer.

In the *Los Angeles Times*, Ronnie Cummins, OCA's National Director, was quoted as saying, "This proposal is blatant catering to powerful industry players who want the benefits of labeling their products 'USDA organic' without doing the work to source organic materials."

Although industry was given the better part of two years to work with the USDA in developing this proposal, the agency only gave the public a brief 7-day comment period. During that short time, the OCA generated over 8,000 petition signatures telling the USDA to back off on allowing non-organic hops, factory-farmed animal intestines, tainted fish oil, and other problematic ingredients in organic products.

On Friday June 8, the USDA took its third swing at organic standards and struck out, violating federal law by refusing to respond to a federal court order to stop allowing companies to use the 38 non-organic ingredients proposed for inclusion in products labeled "USDA Organic".

Unprepared for the firestorm of protest against their latest Sneak Attack, the USDA has been refusing to talk to the press.

Recent History of USDA Organic Lawbreaking

Strike One · January 2005: Federal court rules that the USDA has violated federal regulations in allowing conventional and synthetic ingredients in products labeled as "organic".

Strike Two · May 2007: After heavy lobbying from industry, USDA proposed to allow 38 conventionally grown ingredients in foods labeled as organic. One of those ingredients, fish oil, has never undergone review, which is a violation of federal law.

Strike Three · June 2007: A federal judge had given the USDA until midnight Friday (6/8) to post its final ruling, which the agency failed to do.

OCA Farm Bill Alert Update: Congress Considering Nearly \$200 Million Funding for Organics

In the past few issues of *Organic Bytes*, the OCA has been alerting its readers to contact various congressional subcommittees who are in the process of allocating funding for the 2007 Farm Bill. This massive piece of legislation provides funding until 2012 and includes a variety of programs that would benefit organic farmers, sustainable agriculture and the environment. Thanks to your efforts and the concerted work of OCA's allies, many of these target programs have been allocated funding.

Specifically, the following funding has been approved in subcommittees for organic and sustainable agriculture related programs over the course of the next five years:

- \$150 million to examine optimal conservation and environmental outcomes for organically produced agricultural products, and to develop new and improved seed varieties that are particularly suited for organic agriculture.
- \$22 million to help farmers pay for organic certification
- \$5 million for outreach to organic and specialty crop producers.
- \$3 million to collect market and production data about organic farming.

OCA will continue to alert you to new issues arising in this arena, as the 2007 Farm Bill continues to be developed by Congress. www.organicconsumers.org/farm.cfm



Your Help is Still Needed to Safeguard Organic Standards

We need to put a lot more pressure on the USDA, demanding they re-open the public comment period on this issue. Industry was given two years, and the public was only given 7 days. Through that process, it appears the organic standards will be significantly weakened unless we can generate enough comments to force the USDA to reconsider its proposal to weaken organic standards.

Please urge all interested friends and colleagues to send a letter to the USDA: www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5225.cfm

Horizon Announces Further Losses as OCA Boycott Continues

This week, Horizon, the largest organic dairy company in the US, announced, for the second time this year that its profits are decreasing. Horizon dairy is one of several brands being boycotted by the OCA and thousands of organic consumers due to the company's practice of sourcing milk from giant dairy feedlots where the animals have little or no access to pasture. Gregg Engles, the CEO of Dean Foods (Horizon's parent company) blamed recent profit losses on "considerable disruption" in the organic dairy marketplace. When OCA launched its boycott in 2006, Engles claimed factory farmed organics were necessary in order to produce enough organic milk to meet growing consumer demands. Ironically, this week Engles said part of the blame for the company's profit losses is due to an oversupply of organic dairy in the marketplace. www.organicconsumers.org/rd/boycott.cfm

Success! Factory Farm Dairy Supplying Horizon Loses Organic Certification

After more than a year of efforts to raise public awareness, the OCA and the Cornucopia Institute celebrated a major victory last week when, for the first time, a massive 10,000 head intensive confinement California feedlot dairy had its organic certification suspended. Prior to OCA's boycott, this factory farm supplied Horizon Organic. "This is a big victory for the farm families around the country who work so hard to create milk and dairy products that meet a high ethical standard," said Mark Kastel, Cornucopia's senior farm policy analyst.

The Cornucopia Institute says that the good news about organic dairy products is that the vast majority are produced with high integrity and meet the spirit and letter of the organic law.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5565.cfm



Targets of OCA's Ongoing "Organic" Factory Farm Dairy Boycott

- ◆ Horizon
- ◆ Costco's Kirkland Signature
- ◆ Safeway's O Brand
- ◆ Publix's High Meadows
- ◆ Giant's Natures Promise
- ◆ Woodstock Farms
- ◆ Wild Oats' Organic Milk

OCA Launches New Web Forum

Your Online Organic Community Has Arrived

This week, OCA announces the birth of our new online web forum. This interactive web portal provides tens of thousands of green-minded folk, like you, with a place to post questions, comments and critiques about any OCA related issue. Whether its organics, food safety, sustainability, social justice issues, politics, or any other related topic, we welcome you to login for a free registration today and start posting your ideas and questions for discussion. Since we're just getting this started, we need a few of our readers to get the forum buzz rolling by posting some of your OCA related thoughts/questions now: www.organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php



Questions?

Do you have comments, questions or critiques about present or past issues of *Organic Bytes*? Please post them in the *Organic Bytes* section of our web forum, and we will post a response. Thanks. www.organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php

Please Donate to the OCA

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Organic Consumers Association

6771 South Silver Hill Drive · Finland, MN 55603

Or by phone: 888-403-1007 (toll free).

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