



July 26, 2007 · Issue 114
www.organicconsumers.org

ORGANIC BYTES

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!

Grassroots Victory: Country of Origin Labeling and NAIS

Responding to escalating public concerns over the safety of imported foods, reflected in tens of thousands of constituent calls and emails from the OCA and our allies all over the country, the House Agriculture Committee has finally agreed to require mandatory *Country of Origin* labels on beef and some other foods. Thanks to all of you who participated in this campaign, the committee also agreed to remove the National Animal Identification System from the draft legislation text as the OCA and its allies have been requesting. The final version of the Farm Bill is still up for grabs, moving from committee to the House floor, so please contact your Congressional Representative and let them know you support COOL labels for all foods:

www.organicconsumers.org/rd/cool.htm

Congress Votes on Farm Bill

The US House of Representatives is expected to vote on a new Farm Bill today [July 26], legislation that will determine agriculture policy for the next five years. The current version of the bill is mostly more corporate welfare for polluting industrial agriculture with few incentives to make healthy food more widely available or protect labor rights or the environment. Please contact your Member of Congress to urge them to vote for important amendments for sustainable agriculture, including amendments to protect farmers and consumers from Mad Cow Disease and GMO contamination, and an amendment that would transfer money earmarked for the richest agribusinesses to conservation and nutrition programs.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5813.cfm

Who Owns Your Favorite Organic Brands?

As the \$20 billion organic marketplace continues to expand, major corporations continue to take over many of the most familiar organic brands. Dr. Phil Howard, an Assistant Professor at Michigan State, has provided a new update on his popular chart "Who Owns Organic." Are you supporting corporations like Kraft, M&M, or Pepsi with what you thought was a purchase of your old familiar brand?

View the chart to see acquisitions of the top selling organic brands: www.organicconsumers.org/organic/OrganicTop25Jul07.pdf

View this chart to see the top selling independent organic brands here: www.organicconsumers.org/organic/OrganicIndJul07.pdf

PVC Packaging Violates Consumer Safety Laws in Nineteen States

A new study from a network of nine state environmental agencies reveals that over 60% of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) packaging tested contains toxic heavy metals that violate laws in 19 states. "This new study underscores the need for a global phase out of PVC packaging," said Michael Schade, of the Center for Health, Environment and Justice. Due to compounding evidence of PVC's toxicity, particularly its release of dioxin (the most potent carcinogen on the planet), a growing list of manufacturers and retailers have publicly committed to phase out this toxic plastic in their packaging. Unfortunately, PVC is as equally ubiquitous in the products themselves. Consumers can avoid PVC products by looking for the number "3", "PVC" or the letter "v" inside the recycling symbol. Not all PVC products are labeled as such, but soft flexible PVC products (common in baby toys) often have an odor similar to vinyl shower curtains.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6091.cfm



More Proof that Organics Have Higher Nutritional Value

A new study in *The Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry* found that organic tomatoes are twice as high in flavanoids as conventional tomatoes. Flavanoids protect against heart disease and other chronic ailments. Researchers analyzed and compared organic to conventional tomatoes over a ten year period. The organic tomatoes not only scored better, but their flavanoid levels actually increased over time. Prior similar studies have found organic foods to have higher levels of a variety of vitamins and minerals. Scientists attribute the higher quality of organic foods to the healthier soil on organic farms.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6181.cfm

Another related study, published this month in the *British Journal of Nutrition*, showed that organic dairy and meat products in a mother's diet positively affect the nutritional quality of her breast milk by increasing beneficial fatty acids. "These findings provide scientific support for common sense, by showing that organic foods are healthier," says Dr. Lukas Rist, who is the lead author of the study and the head of research at the Paracelsus Hospital in Switzerland. The study involved 312 breastfeeding women with 1-month old infants from the Netherlands.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6245.cfm

Organic Bytes Readers Talk Back

Question from Organic Bytes Reader: (reference: *Organic Bytes* #113 “How to Have the Best Looking Organic Lawn on the Block”) You make good points about how to have healthy organic grass, but you should provide your readers with more information on how to rid of conventional grass lawns altogether. Are there more options?

Response from the OCA: This is definitely true. As noted in our article, more than a third of urban water use is soaked up by grass lawns, and 67 million pounds of pesticides are used each year on these lawns. While converting your conventional lawn to an organic lawn is a huge positive step in reducing chemical and water use, even greater conservation can be achieved by transitioning your grass lawn into a low maintenance and diverse landscape of native plants - called “naturescaping. For those interested in taking their lawn beyond organic grass, www.plantnative.org is an excellent website about naturescaping, including an excellent how-to section and directory of native plant nurseries.

Note to readers: You can post questions or comments about issues covered in *Organic Bytes*, in the *Organic Bytes* forum: www.organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php

Scotts Miracle-Gro Sues Small Organic Business

Terracycle, an eco-friendly business established by college students to sell worm poop (a highly effective organic fertilizer) has been sued by the Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, a \$2.2 billion assets giant. Scotts claims Terracycle’s product labeling looks too much like Miracle Gro. Scotts is also suing Terracycle for claiming its plant food is as good or better than “a leading synthetic plant food”. TerraCycle manufactures all-natural garden products by feeding organic waste to worms and bottling the resulting worm compost tea as ready-to use plant food in soda bottles collected by schools and other charities across North America.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6207.cfm

Chemical Companies Sued by Sterile Farmworkers

Over 5,000 Latin American banana plantation workers are suing US companies for poisoning them with pesticides that caused them to go sterile. The complainants, all of whom worked on banana farms, accuse Dole, Dow and Amvac of negligence and fraudulent concealment while forcing workers to use the pesticide DBCP. According to the lawsuit, the transnational companies “actively suppressed information about DBCP’s reproductive toxicity.” This is the first time a case for a banana worker has come before a US court. www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6012.cfm

Barbara Kingsolver on *The Ethics of Eating Online*

Barbara Kingsolver describes her family’s adventure to spend one year eating primarily what they could grow or purchase from local farmers. As a food consumer and a mother as well as a keen critic of modern culture, Kingsolver and her family have produced a remarkable and uplifting narrative. Food, according to Kingsolver, is a “rare moral arena” in which the ethical choice is often the pleasurable choice. Listen (Real Audio: 53 min.) at:

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6208.cfm

Finding a Sunscreen That is Safe and Effective

After reviewing over 400 peer-reviewed studies and analyzing over 700 products, the Environmental Working Group has released a tool for consumers to help find sunscreen that is safe and effective. The analysis resulted in some disturbing results:

- ☀ 83% of 785 sunscreen products offer inadequate protection from the sun, or contain ingredients with significant safety concerns.
- ☀ More than half of all sunscreen products have misleading labeling claims.
- ☀ Fully 12% of high SPF sunscreens (SPF of at least 30) protect only from sunburn (UVB radiation), and do not contain ingredients known to protect from UVA radiation, the sun rays linked to skin damage and aging, immune system problems, and potentially skin cancer. FDA does not require that sunscreens guard against UVA radiation.



www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6195.cfm

Your Online Organic Community Is Here

In a matter of just two minutes from now, you could be posting your thoughts on OCA’s website for thousands of people to read. OCA’s new interactive web Forum is now buzzing with green-minded folk, like you, from all over the world. Even if you are unfamiliar with web forums, this easy-to-use tool provides you with a place to post questions and comments about any OCA related issue—all the while building community and solidarity—Whether your passion is organics, food safety, sustainability, social justice issues, politics, or any other related topic, we welcome you to login today and start posting your ideas and questions for discussion. www.organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php

Please Donate to the OCA

As a nonprofit, we need your donations so we can continue to move forward. You can donate online at:

www.organicconsumers.org/donations.htm

Or mail your tax deductible donation to the OCA:

Organic Consumers Association

6771 South Silver Hill Drive · Finland, MN 55603

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

Organic Bytes is a publication of the Organic Consumers Association · 6771 S. Silver Hill Drive · Finland, MN 55603
Phone: 218-353-7454 · Fax: 218-353-7652

Note to co-op and natural food store subscribers: *Organic Bytes* is a great tool for keeping your staff and customers up to date on the latest issues. Feel free to print *Organic Bytes* for posting on bulletin boards and staff break tables. You are welcome to use this material for your newsletters.

Subscribe to *Organic Bytes*:

www.organicconsumers.org/organicbytes.htm

For many more food issue daily headlines:

www.organicconsumers.org/log.html