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ORGANIC BYTES

Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association
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Alert: USDA Says Almonds Labeled As 'Raw' or 'Organic' Must Be Pasteurized

Under pressure from industrial agriculture lobbyists, the USDA has quietly approved a new regulation that will effectively end distribution of raw almonds, while putting many smaller almond farmers out of business. The regulation is scheduled to go into effect on September 1, unless thousands of consumers take action now. The rule requires pasteurization of almonds, including organic, yet allows those same almonds to continue to be labeled as "raw". Nutritionists point out that raw, organic almonds are far superior, in terms of nutrition, to pasteurized almonds.

One of the FDA-recommended pasteurization methods involves the use of propylene oxide, which is classified as a carcinogen in California and is banned in Canada, Mexico, and the European Union. 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.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6747.cfm

New York Times Exposes USDA Sabotage of Organics

On August 19, the *New York Times* exposed the USDA for shortchanging organic programs. Journalist Andrew Martin pointed out that the National Organic Program, which regulates the entire organic industry, has just nine staff members and a puny annual budget of \$1.5 million.

In contrast, the *New York Times* went on to describe how chemical-agribusinesses have individually received more than that in subsidies, including \$1.7 million in subsidies given to a single mega-farm in Florida.

The article goes on to point out that the USDA (whose annual budget is \$100 billion) spent \$28 million on organic agriculture programs last year, which may sound like a lot, but, in comparison, the agency spent \$37 million subsidizing farmers who grew dry peas last year. As a note of reference on those numbers, consumers spend only \$83 million a year on dry peas, whereas consumers spent almost \$17 billion last year on organic food.

The *New York Times* noted, "It's not entirely surprising that organics are such a low priority at the department and in Congress. Both the agency and farm-state members of Congress are reliable cheerleaders for industrialized agriculture, and Big Ag has often viewed organics with suspicion, if not outright disdain." Get active: www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6710.cfm



Monsanto's Bovine Growth Hormone Being Driven Off the Market

The Organic Consumers Association has been working to educate and mobilize consumers and retailers (for example Starbucks) to boycott milk and dairy products derived from Monsanto's recombinant (genetically engineered)

Bovine Growth Hormone since our founding in 1998. The synthetic hormone is banned in most of the world, due to its links to prostate and breast cancer. Although it is still being injected into thousands of dairy herds in the US, grassroots pressure from health-minded consumers and public interest groups, like the OCA, have caused Starbucks, Chipotle, and many supermarket chains to put pressure on their dairy suppliers to stop using the drug.

Monsanto is furious that OCA and our allies have educated consumers about the dangers of rBGH, but with recent polls showing 80% of consumers concerned about artificial hormones in their food, there's little that the biotech giant can do to stop rBGH from being driven off the market.

Here are some recent marketplace developments:

- California Dairies, which produces 8% of the milk supply in the US, has banned the use of rBGH.
- Food retail giant Kroger recently announced they will be banning rBGH in all of their stores by February 2008.
- All milk produced in Oregon is now rBST-free.
- In May, Publix Super Markets, with 900 stores in the South, went rBST-free in its branded milk products.

www.organicconsumers.org/rbghlink.cfm

Young Iraq War Veterans Talk About a Growing Soldiers' Rebellion that Could Stop the War

The majority of Americans want to get out of Iraq as soon as possible, and end the bloodshed (over one million Iraqis dead, 3,700 American soldiers killed, 20,000 wounded) and colossal waste of resources (estimated costs of the war so far including medical treatment for the maimed and mentally disabled soldiers is one trillion dollars).

Many voted for the Democrats in the 2006 elections, hoping they would end the war. But with the war still raging, and Democrats and anti-war groups like MoveOn mired in compromised positions, America's most vital anti-war movement, Iraq Veterans Against the War, tells us it's time to take matters into our own hands.

Learn more and watch the short *Coffee with the Troops* video from YouTube: www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6741.cfm

One of World's Biggest Charities Protests US Subsidies

Care, one of the largest global charities, has announced that it will boycott the US policy of selling tons of heavily subsidized US grown food to African countries. Care wants the US government to send money to buy food locally, rather than unwanted US produced food.

The US arm of the charity says America is causing rather than reducing hunger with a decree that US food aid must be sold rather than directly distributed to those facing starvation.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_6709.cfm

Study: Food Giants Brainwashing Kids

A new study in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* indicates that the annual \$10 billion the food and beverage industry is spending on advertising foods to kids is working alarmingly well. The study found that four out of five kids preferred the flavor of foods served in McDonald's packaging as compared to the exact same foods served in packaging without the McDonald's brand. By the time they are two years old, children may already have beliefs about certain brands, and by the age of six they can recognize brands and specific brand products. Not surprisingly, the study found that kids with more televisions in the home had stronger preferences for brands.

The authors suggested this study strengthened the justification for tighter regulation or banning of advertising and marketing of high calorie, low nutrient food and drink, and perhaps a ban on all marketing that is aimed at young children.

Learn more and take action in OCA's Appetite for a Change campaign: www.organicconsumers.org/afc.cfm



Organic Bytes Readers Talk Back Clarification on Corporate Buyouts

OCA Reader Writes: In the last issue of *Organic Bytes*, one of your readers' posted comments was incorrect. On behalf of our Fair Trade friends at Divine chocolate I should mention that Nestle does not in fact own part of them. That was true very briefly when L'Oreal (which is 25% owned by Nestle) bought the Body Shop. But Nestle quickly donated the Body Shop's ownership stake in Divine to the Ghanania cocoa co-op Kuapa Kokoo (who already owned 1/3 of Divine). Besides, Divine's is not an organic brand in the first place. www.divinechocolateusa.com/divinerange.htm

Eating Ethanol Production Waste? Cows aren't Garbage Disposals

OCA Reader Writes: In *Organic Bytes* #115, the first talk back response comes from a reader who uses corn mash leftover from ethanol production as cow feed. This may sound like a logical form of recycling, however, cow's aren't garbage disposals and should be out in pasture eating their ideal diet of grass.

In addition to being more humane, much has been written (www.eatwild.com/basics.html for example) about the health advantages & environmental benefits, of ruminant animals allowed to pasture. In addition, many models have been proposed whereby pasturing allows for optimum soil health, and in the application of permaculture, is a more sustainable long term solution to feeding the world.

Note to readers: If you have questions or comments about issues covered in *Organic Bytes*, please post them in our *Organic Bytes* forum: www.organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php

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