



# ORGANIC BYTES



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## Alert: USDA Proposes Rule Undermining Organics and Small Farms

The USDA is accepting public comments until December 3 on a new proposed rule that would force small farms growing green leafy vegetables, such as spinach and lettuce, to put into place industrial-style sterilization measures that reduce biodiversity and soil fertility. The proposal follows in the wake of the USDA's recent controversial crackdown on raw almonds, continued interference with raw milk production, and bans on the sale of locally produced organic meat directly to consumers. The proposed rules basically cover up the fact that e-coli 0157H contamination in lettuce and spinach crops comes from feedlot or industrial livestock-contaminated irrigation waters or contamination in large processing plants.

The rule limits hedgerows, and other non-crop vegetation commonly found on and around small organic and sustainable farms. In addition, although every organic farmer knows that healthy soil is literally alive with multiple types of healthy bacteria, the rules also discourage the development of beneficial microbial life in the soil. Send a message to the USDA today: [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_8679.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_8679.cfm)

## GE Sugar in Thousands of Non-Organic Products In 2008

A new article in the *New York Times* calls attention to the pending controversy of unlabeled, under-tested, GE sugar being laced into breakfast cereals, chocolates, and a wide variety of non-organic processed foods and beverages next year. In September, OCA posted an alert to pressure major buyers of sugar beets to boycott Monsanto's latest herbicide-resistant crop.

The American Crystal company, the #1 white sugar provider in the US, along with Kellogg, have brazenly announced they will welcome the biotech sweetener in early 2008. *The New York Times* notes that American Crystal's CEO responded to the deluge of consumer emails stemming from OCA's alert in September by turning off his email. If American Crystal won't listen, perhaps some of its major customers will. Please send a letter to Hershey's, Mars, and Kellogg demanding they keep their sugar additives GE-free. And of course keep in mind that your only real protection against GE sugar or any Genetically Modified Organism is to buy organic. [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_7031.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_7031.cfm)



## Grassroots Pressure Forces Pennsylvania Governor to rethink "rBGH-Free" Dairy Labels

In *Organic Bytes* #121, the OCA reported that the Pennsylvania Agriculture Department (PDA) was moving to ban labeling of dairy products as rBGH-free. Under pressure from Monsanto, the manufacturer of the genetically engineered Bovine Growth Hormone, the PDA listed 16 companies that would be required to remove rBGH-free labels by December 31, 2007. Market analysts surmised that once Pennsylvania successfully banned such labeling, other states would likely follow. Thanks to a massive outcry from the public, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell has intervened on this issue and is delaying probably permanently the implementation of the rule in order to thoroughly review the impact and legality of banning rBGH-free labels. This is great news for dairy farmers and consumers. The OCA applauds all who took action on this issue. According to PDA spokesman Chris Ryder, "There was some level of surprise. We weren't anticipating quite this response." [www.organicconsumers.org/rbghlink.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/rbghlink.cfm)

### Related Quote of the Week

"The alarming prevalence of the virulent E. coli 0157 in our food system is due to an animal industry allowed to raise cattle in stressful environments on unnatural diets. Allowing such practices to continue while burdening produce growers with the impossible task of sterilizing their farms is folly beyond belief."

-Tom Willey, organic vegetable producer, T&D Willey Farms, Madera, CA

## Healthy Cafeterias Save Schools Money

A new study in the December issue of the *Review of Agricultural Economics* puts to rest the myth that serving nutritious meals in schools will turn off kids and break the school budget. School lunch programmers often make the claim that junk foods, like hot dogs, nachos and pizza, must be served in cafeterias, because healthy food is too expensive and kids won't buy it anyway. In contrast, researchers analyzed 330 school districts over a five year period and found that shifting school lunch programs towards healthier foods does not reduce student demand and ultimately saves the school money. While serving better meals requires higher labor costs, those expenses are offset by lower costs for more nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables compared with processed foods.

Learn more about how you can help your child's school integrate healthier foods into the cafeteria by visiting OCA's **Appetite for a Change Campaign**: [www.organicconsumers.org/afc.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/afc.cfm)

## End of the Year Donation Drive

*We Need Your Donations to Continue This Important Work*

It's that time of year again when we start closing up the books on 2007 and setting our strategic sites on 2008. Next week's issue of *Organic Bytes* will be a special issue highlighting all of our success stories in 2007. In the meantime, we need to start getting the donations rolling in. The OCA's work is dependent on your donations. We need to generate \$75,000 before the end of December in order to continue being successful in our campaigns for health, justice and sustainability. Please send your tax deductible donation today! [www.organicconsumers.org/donations.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/donations.cfm)

## OCA Holiday Movie Recommendations

### King Corn

*King Corn* is a feature documentary about two friends, one acre of corn, and the subsidized crop that drives our fast-food nation. In *King Corn*, Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis, best friends from college on the east coast, move to the heartland to learn where their food comes from. With the help of friendly neighbors, genetically modified seeds, and powerful herbicides, they plant and grow a bumper crop of America's most-productive, most-subsidized grain on one acre of Iowa soil. But when they try to follow their pile of corn into the food system, what they find raises troubling questions about how we eat-and how we farm. The movie is in select theaters across the us. View the trailer, get the DVD, or find a showing near you at this link: [www.kingcorn.net](http://www.kingcorn.net)

### What Would Jesus Buy?

From producer Morgan Spurlock (*Super Size Me*) and director Rob Van Alkemade comes a serious docu-comedy about the commercialization of Christmas. The movie follows Reverend Billy and the "Church of Stop Shopping Gospel Choir" as they go on a cross-country mission to save Christmas from the Shopocalypse: the end of mankind from consumerism, over-consumption and the fires of eternal debt! Reverend Billy, as you may recall, was a grassroots leader in OCA's "Frankenbucks" campaign against Starbucks. View the trailer, get the DVD, or find a showing near you at this link: [www.jbmovie.com](http://www.jbmovie.com)

Make a tax deductible donation to the Organic Consumers Association as a gift for yourself or a loved one this holiday season: [www.organicconsumers.org/donations.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/donations.htm)

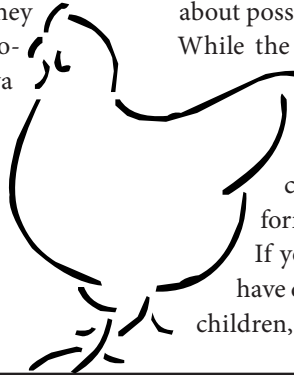
### The Friendly Face of Iran

OCA's **Planting Peace** campaign is building up a national network of concerned Americans who wish to protect the environment, put an end to war and military madness, and green and re-localize the global ecology. As media reports of a likely attack on Iran increase in frequency, we thought it would be helpful to share this link to a quick slideshow that can hopefully help Americans see the human face of Iran. Fifty percent of our tax dollars are tragically wasted on bullets and bombs. A million Iraqis are dead because of our two trillion-dollar war. Before Cheney and Bush attack Iran, please take a look at the faces of the next innocent civilians on the Empire's hit list. The next issue of *Organic Bytes* will announce our new campaign to stop the War in Iran, before it starts. Watch the five minute video at [www.lucasgray.com/video/peacetrain.html](http://www.lucasgray.com/video/peacetrain.html) Learn more about OCA's **Planting Peace** campaign: [www.organicconsumers.org/plantingpeace.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/plantingpeace.cfm)

## Get Kids Vaccinated or Go to Jail?

*Fox News*, *USA Today*, and a number of other major media outlets reported this week on news from Maryland where dozens of parents were notified by a district court that either they vaccinate their children or go to jail. The media reports have caused a lot of confusion around the us among parents who have chosen not to vaccinate their children for certain illnesses based on concerns about possible negative impacts from the vaccines themselves.

While the mainstream medical community claims vaccines are safe and effective, some people blame immunizations for a rise in autism and other medical problems. In actuality, there are no federal laws requiring vaccinations. Providing schools with vaccine exemption forms for your child is all that is required by federal law. If you have thoroughly researched the vaccine issue and have decided one or more vaccines may not be right for your children, follow this link to a website where you can download exemption forms for your state or country: [www.vaclib.org/exemption.htm](http://www.vaclib.org/exemption.htm)



### IS IT OK TO EAT MEAT?

We wanted to find out what portion of our readers are vegetarian, vegan, and meat eaters. OCA's last web forum poll asked, "Is It OK To Eat Meat?"

Here are the results:

- ▶ **57.98%:** Yes, if done in moderation and humanely raised.
- ▶ **21.01%:** No. Humans were meant to be vegans.
- ▶ **14.40%:** Humans were meant to be vegetarians.
- ▶ **6.61%:** Yes, eat as much lean meat as you want.

There were many thought provoking comments to this debate. Read them and take part in the poll : [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_8663.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_8663.cfm)

### To Vaccinate or Not to Vaccinate?

Every time the OCA posts information on vaccinations, we get a deluge of emails from people on both sides of the debate. With this week's news of parents in Maryland possibly going to jail for not vaccinating their kids, it seems like a good time to open up this debate to our readers. We're taking a quick online poll to find out what our readers think about vaccines. Please take the poll, read what others think about this topic and share your thoughts in OCA's web forum (if you haven't already done so, you will need to register in the forum in order to vote).

[www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_8662.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_8662.cfm)

### What's the Story in Your State?

Do you know what's going on in your state? Find news, action alerts, and local food on OCA's State Pages. Know of an event, news item, campaign, or green business that you'd like to share with other organic consumers? Please take a moment to add

an event, news story or green business by going to any OCA webpage, choosing your state in the drop-down menu in the left-hand navigation bar and clicking on the "Become a news scout" link on your state page.

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