



ORGANIC BYTES

Please forward this publication to family and friends, websites, print it, & post it. Knowledge is power!



ALERT

Tell the EPA to Ban the Toxic Pesticide Endosulfan

The EPA has opened a public comment period on whether a toxic pesticide used on food and cotton in the US should be taken off the market. The pesticide, endosulfan, which is banned in much of the world, harms the hormone system, and low levels of exposure in the womb have been linked to autism, male reproductive harm and other birth defects.

The European Union, where it is banned, considers it one of the most toxic pesticides on the global market. The Organic Consumers Association is joining with Pesticide Action Network and other allies in gathering tens of thousands of petition signatures to drive this toxic pesticide off the market now.

Learn more and take action:

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_10124.cfm

New Studies Tie Agro-Fuels to Global Warming

Two new studies published in the journal *Science* will hopefully force Congress and the Bush Administration to think twice about the billions of federal tax dollars used to subsidize corn-based ethanol instead of other tried and tested programs such as energy conservation and solar or wind power.

One study, conducted by Princeton University and Iowa State, concluded that over 30 years, use of traditional corn-based ethanol would produce twice as much greenhouse gas emissions as regular gasoline. A companion study found that the current process of converting rainforests, peatlands, savannas and grasslands in Southeast Asia and Latin America to produce biofuels from soybeans and palm oil will increase global warming pollution for decades, if not centuries. In the last issue of *Organic Bytes*, the OCA called on readers to sign its agro-fuels petition. Learn more and take action here:

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_9980.cfm

Food Labeling Alert: Put the *Natural* Back in Meats Labeled As Naturally Raised

Thanks to a backlash of consumer letters from concerned consumers, the USDA has extended its public comment period on its proposed standard for meats labeled as “naturally raised”.

A 2007 *Consumer Reports* survey found that 83% of consumers assume a “naturally raised label means it came from an animal raised in a natural environment.” Yet the USDA’s proposed standard is so weak, it would apply to a cloned animal raised in the confines of a factory farm, and fed a steady diet of genetically engineered grains. The public comment period on this labeling standard closes March 3. Take action now: www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_9692.cfm

Valentines Day: Eco-Friendly Flowers Budding Across US

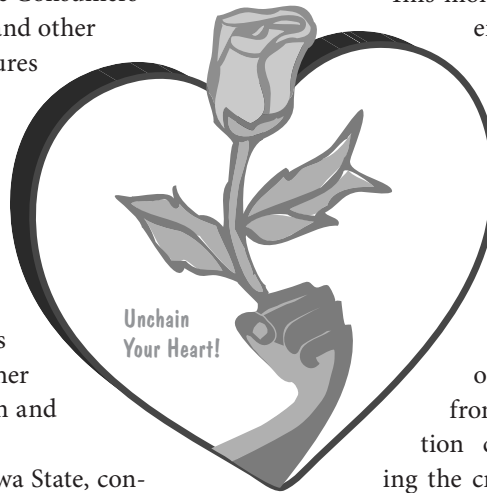
More than three years ago, the OCA and its allies launched alerts against leading flower purveyors, like Dole, highlighting the fact that the majority of the flowers from these companies come from plantations in countries like Colombia, where workers put in as many as 18 hours per day and douse the flowers with toxic pesticides that aren’t legal in the United States.

This month, Dole announced that its entire Colombian crop of cut flowers is now Florverde Certified, which requires better treatment of workers and more sustainable farming practices. Nearly half of Colombia’s acreage is now Florverde Certified, which is positive news, considering 70% of cut flowers in the US are from Colombia. This certification comes nowhere near meeting the criteria met by USDA Organic Certified products, but it is a step in the

right direction, and is now so widespread and affordable, 300 million flowers sold this Valentines will have the certification. In other words, pretty much anyone who sells multiple varieties of flowers will have them. Although Floreverde Certification could stand to elevate its criteria, it has resulted in a 50% reduction of pesticides on conventional cut flowers and is beginning to improve working conditions.

Now OCA has shifted its focus to improving the evolving Florverde program, which needs to continue boosting its standards in protecting workers’ rights. Keep the good news rolling by taking part in OCA’s Valentine’s Alert. Check out our buying guide to find ethical goodies for your sweetie, watch our Valentines video and take part in our alert to “Break the Chains of Toxic Pesticides and Farm Worker Exploitation”.

www.organicconsumers.org/valentines/



Written and edited by
Craig Minowa & Ronnie Cummins

Organic Bytes Readers Talk Back: How to Show Your Love Without Breaking the Bank

COMMENT FROM READER (Re: *Organic Bytes* Issue #27): I love OB, but I can't afford to spend \$50 for a dozen organic roses. I'm sure many of your subscribers are, like me, living on a little. Who can afford such things? Maybe you should urge folks to get flowers from their local farmers market or to barter with flower-growing neighbors or to give potted plants instead.

OCA RESPONSE: Thanks for this great input. For those looking for organic flowers, check out californiaorganicflowers.com. They sell only USDA organic certified flowers, guarantee overnight delivery anywhere in the US, and have some options for under \$40. If your budget is limited, another option, in addition to the excellent ideas recommended by our reader, is to ask your local shop for flowers that are Florverde Certified (see below for more information).

We've also put together a buying guide to help you find Fair Trade and organic chocolate and wine. www.organicconsumers.org/valentines/index.cfm#buyguide Of course, the greatest gift you can give your beloved this Valentines is Love, which we can all afford.

FDA Continues Criminalization of Natural Sweetener

The FDA is threatening the Hain Celestial Group for using the natural sweetener stevia in its tea products. According to the FDA, stevia has not been approved as a food and therefore the Celestial products can not be labeled as a "tea". Stevia, a natural sweetener derived from South America, is widely used as a natural zero calorie sweetener in countries around the world, including Brazil, Canada, China and Japan. But the FDA, under pressure from corporate profiteering of synthetic sweeteners like aspartame, has been stalling on approving stevia for over a decade. Hain Celestial Group responded to the FDA threats and said the company would remove the term "iced tea mix" from all labels of the products in question and highlight the words "herbal supplement". Learn more:

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_10064.cfm



Study: Children Fed Non-Organic Food Have Pesticides in Their Urine

A new peer-reviewed study found levels of nerve-gas like pesticides in the bodies of children who eat conventional foods. Researchers found that if a child switched to an organic diet, the pesticide disappeared from the child's urine within 36 hours. Organophosphates were designed during WWII specifically to kill humans and later evolved into commonly used pesticides for food crops. The study has not yet linked the pesticide levels to specific foods, but other studies have shown peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, nectarines, strawberries and cherries are among those that most frequently have detectable levels of pesticides. Learn more:

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_10066.cfm

Mysterious Brain Disease Surfaces at Hormel Slaughterhouse

A new mysterious disease has revealed itself from the belly of one of the nation's largest factory farm slaughterhouses. A dozen employees working to extract brains from pigs on the slaughter line at a Hormel facility in Austin, MN have contracted a neurological disease scientists say they've never seen before. Investigators hypothesize the disease may not be contagious via ingestion of the animal tissue but rather the workers may have contracted it as they breathed in small particles of brain that were airborne via a high-pressure air hose extraction process. The disease, tentatively called "progressive inflammatory neuropathy", have caused workers to complain of burning sensations, numbness, and difficulty walking. Learn more:

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_10192.cfm



A Shocking Video That Will Change Your Diet

If you still need motivation to get factory slaughtered meat out of your diet, please watch this new investigative piece on business as usual in a slaughterhouse. Diseased cattle are being inhumanely fed into the National School Lunch Program. Denial doesn't make it go away. Boycotting factory farm meat can make a difference.

Beef: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhlhSQ5z4V4

Poultry: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Mkgz2iuMpw&NR=1

Newsletter of the Week: *The Weekly Spin*

The Weekly Spin is a free compendium of current news tips about public relations, corporate and government propaganda and media spin, compiled by the staff of the Center for Media and Democracy and emailed to subscribers once a week.

This newsletter helps readers recognize manipulative and misleading PR practices by exposing the activities of secretive, little-known propaganda-for-hire firms that work to control political debates and public opinion.

www.prwatch.org/cmd/subscribe_sotd.html

Organic Bytes is a publication of the Organic Consumers Association
6771 S. Silver Hill Dr. · Finland, MN 55603 · 218-353-7454 · 218-353-7652 fax
Note to co-op & 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 for posting on bulletin boards and staff break tables. You are welcome to use this material for your newsletters. Subscribe to *Organic Bytes*: organicconsumers.org/organicbytes.cfm
For many more daily headlines: organicconsumers.org/archives/log.cfm