



# ORGANIC BYTES

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## Alert: End Modern-Day Slavery in US Fields

The Organic Consumers Association (OCA), representing over 850,000 consumers across the US, has joined a growing alli-

ance in support of the Florida-based Coalition for Immokalee Workers' campaign to *End Slavery and Sweatshops in the Fields.*

While the organic and sustainable agricultural movement has traditionally focused primarily on health and environmental issues, the time is long overdue to integrate Fair Trade and worker justice issues into our alternative food and farming system. Consumers need to understand that much of the so-called "natural" food and produce, such as tomatoes, sold in natural food stores like Whole Foods, are coming from chemical-intensive farms where low wages and labor exploitation are the norm.

Please join this growing campaign and sign the petition at: [organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_11123.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11123.cfm)



### Wal-Mart Goes rBGH-Free

Last week, Wal-Mart announced its so-called "Great Value" store brand of milk will no longer come from cows injected with Monsanto's controversial genetically engineered hormone, rBGH/rBST. As OCA's Director Ronnie Cummins stated in an interview with the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Wal-Mart's announcement will likely serve as a tipping point for driving Monsanto's controversial bovine drug off the market. Since its inception, the OCA has campaigned aggressively against rBGH, which is banned in Europe, Canada, and most of the industrialized world. Wal-Mart's move, according to industry experts, will likely dramatically expand market demand for rBGH-free and organic dairy products. According to Cummins, "After 14 years of bullying consumers and buying off FDA and USDA bureaucrats, this is the beginning of the end for this cruel and dangerous drug."

[www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_11050.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11050.cfm)

### Update: OCA Threatens to Sue Body Care Companies Falsely Labeling Their Products As Organic

As reported in the last issue of *Organic Bytes*, OCA's new expose on carcinogens found in various products misleadingly labeled as "organic" and "natural" is sending shockwaves through the personal care industry. The OCA and Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap Company have now filed Cease and Desist letters with the various companies who are labeling their products as "organic," despite the fact that a number of their products tested positive for the cancer-causing synthetic ingredient 1,4-Dioxane, including Jason's, Nature's Gate, and Kiss My Face, among others. The OCA is demanding that these companies reformulate their products to remove petrochemicals and 1,4-Dioxane or else remove "organic" label claims from their packaging. Offending companies who do not contractually agree by Earth Day 2008 to clean up their act will be sued by the OCA. To avoid tainted products, OCA recommends that consumers look for the "USDA Organic" seal on body care products and cosmetics. If you don't see the seal, it may not be truly organic. To see a list of body care and home cleaning products tainted with 1,4-Dioxane, as well as a consumer guide for finding safe personal care products, visit [organicconsumers.org/bodycare/](http://organicconsumers.org/bodycare/)



### Take Action on Pesticides and Farm Bill

Farm Bill conferees will be considering an amendment that would prohibit the USDA from exercising its authority to restrict specific pesticides in its conservation programs. For example, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program could not be used for organic transition, and USDA would not be allowed to prohibit the use of a specific pesticide, like methyl bromide, in a conservation program.

Send a letter to your members of Congress to ask them to convince the Farm Bill conference committee to reject the pesticide amendment and allow USDA to advance conservation practices as needed at: [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_11197.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11197.cfm)

### Quote of the Week:

"We've never seen anything like this before with our bats, much less any other mammals, with a very large regional die-off... It's very scary and a little overwhelming from a biologist's perspective. If we can't contain it, we're going to see extinctions of listed species, and some of species that are not even listed."

-Susi von Oettingen of the US Fish and Wildlife Service speaking to the *New York Times* this week about as many as a half million bats mysteriously dying in the US Northeast. Experts have no idea what the cause is. [organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_11135.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11135.cfm)

## Slaughter of Wild Bison Beats 20th Century Records

Over 1,000 wild buffalo have been slaughtered in the Yellowstone National Park area since November of 2007, representing the largest kill since the 1800s. "It would seem as though history was not learned the first time, for here we are today, watching these same government entities enacting the same policy," said Nez Perce tribal member James Holt. According to those monitoring the situation, namely the Buffalo Field Campaign, the total kill-off number will likely exceed 2,000 for the year. While the government's official reason for the slaughter is to prevent the spread of brucellosis from wild bison to cattle, no such transmission has ever been documented, and the bison being sent to slaughter are not being tested for the disease. Learn more and get involved at: [organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_11120.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11120.cfm)

## The Canadian Family Farmer Who Defeated Monsanto

Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser has spent the last decade bogged down in court battles with the Monsanto Corporation. Monsanto originally sued Schmeiser for unintentionally growing the company's patented canola seeds, even though the biotech plants that were growing in Schmeiser's field were there due to drift and contamination. The courts originally ruled in favor of Monsanto, saying that regardless of contamination, a farmer cannot grow patented seeds. But Schmeiser recently counter-sued Monsanto, claiming the company should be liable for the damages that their property causes others. Last week, Monsanto settled out of court and paid Schmeiser what it cost to have the invading biotech plants removed. A radio interview with Schmeiser can be heard at: [www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/032008.htm](http://www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/032008.htm)



## Book of the Week: *Farewell, My Subaru*

What happens when a Domino's pizza loving suburbanite from New Jersey decides it's time to leave behind the urban world to start his own off-the-grid sustainable farm in New Mexico? Find out in *Farewell, My Subaru*, a new nonfiction book chronicling the carbon-neutral misadventures of Doug Fine. Whether its nearly getting electrocuted setting up his own solar panels, buying goats and hens for the first time, or getting the munchies from the smell of his newly converted veggie-oil truck, Doug comically shows that even through the struggles and lack of know-how, with the right mindset an everyday American can take massive successful steps towards sustainability. Watch a short video about Doug's journey and order the book at: [www.dougfine.com/](http://www.dougfine.com/)

## A Nation Built on Unsustainability

With trucking diesel fuel prices now over \$4 per gallon in many locations, food prices are reaching an all time high, since the average grocery store item has traveled 1500-3500 miles. Over the past year, alone, consumers have been forced to pay significantly more for staples like eggs (25%), milk (17%), cheese (15%), bread (12%), and rice (13%). This is partially due to increased costs of transportation and partially due to massive amounts of cropland being converted to biofuel production. As a result, consumers are paying more for their food and paying \$15 billion in increased taxes per year for biofuel subsidies.

Fuel prices have nearly doubled the expenses of commuters over the last year. Recent polls show a strong majority of US citizens are in favor of allocating a larger portion of the federal budget for mass transportation. In contrast, the amount of federal money earmarked for mass transit projects (example: rail and bus) has been reduced by nearly 70% since the Bush Administration took over in 2001. A record number of consumers are using credit cards to pay for increased fuel costs.

Although the recession has negatively impacted employment, the *New York Times* reports one of the few booming occupations in the current job market is as a Debt Collector. Since 2001, the top five oil companies have increased their annual profits by an average of 500%. [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_11013.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_11013.cfm)

## On the Eve of Peak Oil – How to Cut Fuel Costs

Obviously, driving less, using mass transit, biking, walking or purchasing a fuel efficient vehicle are the best ways to cut your fuel consumption. But for those times where driving a car is a necessity, here are some tips:

- ▶ Don't be a jerky driver: Jumpy starts and fast getaways can burn over 50% more gasoline than normal acceleration. Use cruise control once accelerated.
- ▶ Drive slower: According to the US Department of Energy, most automobiles get about 20% more miles per gallon on the highway at 55 miles per hour than they do at 70 miles per hour.
- ▶ A well maintained car (oil change, fuel filters, tire pressure, alignment) gets an average of 10% better fuel efficiency.
- ▶ Turn off your engine if you stop for more than one minute. (Does not apply if you are in traffic.) Restarting the automobile will use less gasoline than idling for more than one minute.
- ▶ Decrease the number of short trips you make. Short trips drastically reduce gas mileage. If an automobile gets 20 miles per gallon in general, it may get only 4 miles per gallon on a short trip of 5 miles or less.

*Organic Bytes* is a publication of the Organic Consumers Association  
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