



# Flashback: OCA Success Stories of 2008

THANKS TO YOU AND THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN OUR NATIONWIDE NETWORK, 2008 WAS A FRUITFUL AND PRODUCTIVE YEAR IN OUR ONGOING CAMPAIGN FOR HEALTH, JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY. BELOW, YOU'LL FIND A QUICK RECAP OF SOME OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT COMMON VICTORIES AND CHALLENGES IN 2008.

## JANUARY: STARBUCKS CAMPAIGN VICTORY

### • Starbucks Goes rBGH-free and Doubles Fair Trade Purchases

Over the past eight years, the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) has organized hundreds of picket lines and leafleting events and deluged Starbucks with thousands of letters and petitions, pressuring the coffee giant to remove Monsanto's recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH/rBST) from its products and significantly increase sales of organic and Fair Trade coffee. In January, Starbucks finally capitulated and banned rBGH in all of its company-owned coffee shops.

The coffee chain's decision came in the wake of an announcement from food retail giant, Kroger's, who agreed to ban rBGH in all of their supermarkets by February 2008. Not to be outdone by its competitor, Caribou Coffee, the second largest coffeehouse operator in the US, announced it would also begin to phase out rBGH from its products. In addition, Starbucks also agreed to meet the long-standing fair trade demands of the OCA and its allies when the company announced in October of 2008 that it would double its purchase of certified fair trade coffee in 2009, significantly improving the livelihoods of thousands of small coffee farmers around the world.

## FEBRUARY: VALENTINE'S DAY CAMPAIGN

### • Mars, Nestle to Source Ethical Chocolate

### • Commercial Flowers Go Green

Each February, the OCA puts educates consumers about the serious labor and environmental issues surrounding the production of chocolate and commercial flowers. Organic consumers have sent over a hundred thousand emails to corporations like Nestle, M&M-Mars and Hershey's, all of whom have been accused of sourcing their chocolate from exploitative, at times child slave labor, plantations on Africa's Ivory Coast. On February 8, Nestle and Mars finally responded to consumer pressure and announced they would subject themselves to an international monitoring and traceability system with required standards and practices for environmental sustainability and worker justice on cocoa farms.

Another component of OCA's annual Valentine's Campaign is focused on commercial, cut flowers, the majority of which are produced in countries such as Colombia, where flowers and farm workers are sprayed and exposed to more toxic pesticides than any other crop on earth. Thanks, in part, to your participation and donations to OCA's pressure campaign focused on corporations such as Dole and Wal-Mart, more than half of Colombia's flower acreage has now become Florverde Certified, which requires better treatment of workers and more sustainable farming practices. In addition your purchases of certified organic flowers have helped a budding new sector of organic farming begin to spread and flourish.

## MARCH: COMING CLEAN CAMPAIGN

### • OCA Study: Cancer-Causing Ingredient Found in Falsely Labeled "Organic" and "Natural" Personal Care Products

A March 2008 study commissioned by the OCA revealed the presence of the undisclosed carcinogenic contaminant 1,4-Dioxane in leading shampoos, body washes, lotions and other personal care and household cleaning products claiming to be "natural" or "organic". Although this toxic ingredient had previously been found in conventional synthetic personal care products, OCA's was the first laboratory study to find the synthetic toxin hidden in products consumers expect to be safe and natural.

Laboratory tests showed that products certified under the USDA National Organic Program did not contain this toxin, but most of the best selling personal care products falsely claiming to be "organic" (but not USDA certified) did contain the cancer-causing ingredient.

Reacting in part to the OCA study, California's Attorney General filed a major lawsuit against these same body care and household-cleaning product companies. As a direct result of OCA's expose, a number of well known personal care and household cleaning product companies have begun to reformulate and detoxify their products, while other leading companies, such as Dr. Bronner's and Intelligent Nutrients, have released a full line of USDA certified organic body care and cosmetic products.

## MAY: SAFEGUARD ORGANIC STANDARDS CAMPAIGN

### • OCA Pressures USDA to Stop Massive Feedlots from Labeling Products as "Organic"

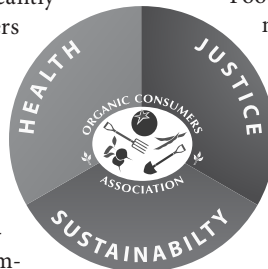
Since 2006, the OCA has called for a boycott of Aurora and Horizon's (Dean Foods) dairy products, due to these corporations' practices of cramming thousands of dairy cows onto feedlots, with little or no access to pasture, and then misleadingly labeling their milk and dairy products as "organic". The OCA has filed a series of petitions, with thousands of your signatures, calling for an end to this label fraud and rampant violation of organic standards. OCA has also supported its farmer-based ally, the Cornucopia Institute, in filing a number of legal complaints with the USDA, asking them to decertify factory farm-style feedlots.

Many of our network members have also joined in a nationwide class-action lawsuit, directed against Aurora and Horizon, as well as giant chains such as Wal-Mart, to force them to stop selling bogus organic dairy products. Serving as a guardian and standard-bearer for our 850,000 members, volunteers and subscribers, the OCA has pledged to continue to put the heat on the USDA and organic companies to behave ethically and maintain strict organic standards. In October the USDA finally responded to OCA and organic community pressure and issued new proposed federal regulations that would tighten up pasture and organic forage requirements for organic dairy farms, hopefully putting an end to intensive confinement dairy feedlots calling themselves "organic."

## JUNE: GRASSROOTS NETROOTS ALLIANCE LAUNCHED

The Organic Consumers Fund (OCF), the legally separate but allied legislative, advocacy, and lobbying group of the OCA, based in Washington, DC, focuses on promoting organic food and farming as a positive solution to the nation's evermore serious public health, climate, energy, and economic development crisis. In an effort to create greater synergy and cooperation among the rainbow of hard-working but somewhat fragmented movements for health, justice, sustainability, peace, and democracy, the OCF launched the Grassroots Netroots Alliance (GNA).

The first GNA project involved a massive nationwide survey of politicians to help voters determine which candidates truly support a wide variety of progressive issues, including organic and transition to organic food and farming. Thousands of *Organic Bytes* readers used this online lobbying and political issues tool prior to voting in November. GNA will now continue its research and lobbying for positive, progressive change, with a special emphasis on "organic solutions and transitions" that can address and solve our societal crisis.



## **JULY: AERIAL SPRAYING SUSPENDED IN CALIFORNIA**

In early 2008, the OCA and a number of allied groups sounded the alarm over aerial spraying of a hazardous moth pesticide over densely populated areas of California. In July, officials announced that due to public uproar about the issue, the program had been suspended. Responding to the flood of phone calls and emails from organic consumers and concerned citizens, A.G. Kawamura, the California state secretary of food and agriculture stated, "I know there's concern out there, and we want to be able to address that." Thanks to your efforts, safe and sustainable methods of integrated pest management were utilized to control the moth problem instead of potentially harmful pesticides.

## **AUGUST: MILLIONS AGAINST MONSANTO CAMPAIGN**

### **• Monsanto Finally Forced to Dump rBGH**

Over the past decade, OCA's Millions Against Monsanto campaign has generated over a quarter million emails and petition signatures on the topic of rBGH and genetically engineered foods, helping turn rBGH and genetically modified organisms into a hot topic of controversy across the world. In August, Monsanto finally caved to consumer pressure and announced it will "divest" or sell off its controversial genetically engineered animal drug, recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH). Monsanto's divestment of rBGH is a direct result of 14 years of determined opposition by organic consumer, public interest, and family farmer groups. Since our founding, the OCA has campaigned against this cruel and dangerous drug, pointing out to organic and health-minded consumers that rBGH-tainted dairy products pose unacceptable dangers to humans from increased antibiotic residues and elevated levels of a potent cancer tumor promoter called IGF-1.

## **SEPTEMBER: PLANTING PEACE CAMPAIGN**

### **• OCA Plants Peace at the Republican National Convention**

Over Labor Day weekend, OCA's Planting Peace brigade actively joined in on a series of rallies, street protests, and concert/teach-ins at the Republican National Convention, along with tens of thousands of other participants. OCA's Planting Peace contingent supplied organic food and literature to musicians, volunteers, and protesters at the "Ripple Effect" concert and march on September 2, which culminated in a massive and dramatic street march on the RNC. Throughout the week, despite tear-gas, police dragnets, and intimidation (heavily-armed police at one point pointed their guns and threatened OCA's lawyer and Political Director, Alexis Baden-Meyer), OCA staff and volunteers spread the positive message that a local, energy-efficient, and Fair Trade system of organic food and farming represents a lifesaving cure for America's current "quadruple crisis" of food, health, climate, and energy.

On September 1, at the Tumbleweed Cabaret in St. Paul (an educational event) OCA Director Ronnie Cummins emphasized, "To head off crisis and catastrophe, we must make the nation's green and organic economy the dominant economy." OCA's Plant-Peace website and campaign is designed to bring about cooperation and synergy between the peace movement, the climate crisis movement, and the organic community.

## **OCTOBER: LABOR RIGHTS VICTORY**

### **• Fair Food and Justice for Farm Workers**

In October and November, OCA and our network helped bring about an important victory for farm workers in Oregon and Washington, part of OCA's ongoing campaign to eliminate labor exploitation and support workers' rights in the \$60 billion organic and natural foods sector. After months of intense organizing, including picket lines and leafleting in 35 states by OCA, UFW, and Teamsters outside Whole Foods Markets, the United Farm Workers (UFW) and Beef Northwest reached a precedent-setting agreement to recognize the UFW as the collective bargaining agent for feedlot workers at three BNW facilities.

OCA, in conjunction with UFW and the Teamsters Union, have pledged to engage in an ongoing nationwide campaign to "green" the nation's economy and to improve the wages, health, safety, and working conditions for the nation's two million, mainly immigrant farmworkers, as well as several million more workers in the food, food transport, and food processing sectors.

## **NOVEMBER: ORGANIC TRANSITIONS CAMPAIGN**

### **• The Next Green Revolution**

OCA is proud to announce the launch of our new long-term North American campaign: **Organic Transitions**. As the planet descends into a global economic crisis, battered by global warming, resource wars, and Peak Oil, we need to prepare ourselves and our communities for survival and revival in hard times.

**Organic Transitions** is designed to mobilize organic consumers and local communities to plan and implement food, housing, transportation, energy, and education strategies that will enable us to survive and hopefully thrive in the turbulent times ahead.

Organic food and farming, super-insulated, deep-retrofitted homes and buildings, online-powered collective ride-sharing, and a new ethic of sharing and responsibility, will provide the healthy cornerstone for a new, more localized, green economy. Check out our new Organic Transitions website and contact the OCA about organizing an Organic Transition committee in your local community here.

## **DECEMBER: APPETITE FOR A CHANGE CAMPAIGN**

### **• FDA Admits Mercury Fillings May Be Dangerous**

OCA's **Appetite for a Change** Campaign is focused on reducing children's exposure to pesticides, toxins, junk foods and other health hazards. In 2008, OCA launched a petition to US Congress to urge them to remove products and chemicals from the market that may be dangerous to children. In addition, over the years, OCA has launched over a dozen alerts and posted nearly 200 articles on its website regarding the dangers of mercury in dental fillings and vaccines.

Although the US government has previously adamantly denied mounting scientific evidence pointing to health hazards from mercury fillings, the FDA caved to the pressure this month and admitted, for the first time, that mercury fillings may be dangerous to children and pregnant women. The FDA's website now reads: "Dental amalgams contain mercury, which may have neurotoxic effects on the nervous systems of developing children and fetuses..." This is a huge step towards OCA's goal of banning mercury amalgam fillings and protecting children's health in the US.

## **THANKS TO ALL OF YOU FOR OUR COMMON VICTORIES!**

We stand at a critical time in human history when major actions must be undertaken to shift the direction of the planet. The only way we can safeguard sustainability for future generations is for each and every one of us to focus our attention and our resources on positive fundamental change. Obviously, we need your help and your donations if we are to carry out OCA's strategic mission and our obligations in this Great Transformation. So please help us make this great change happen tomorrow, by donating today and helping us reach our \$75,000 goal by the end of the year.

You can donate online at: [organicconsumers.org/donations.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/donations.cfm).

If you prefer to make a donation over the phone, please call OCA's toll-free number: 888-403-1007 Thanks!

## **VISIT THE OCA WEBSITE**

OCA's website, [www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org) is updated daily and contains tens of thousands of articles and action alerts about health, justice, and sustainability. You can find links to learn more about the issues in this newsletter by visiting the online edition at [organicconsumers.org/bytes/ob156.htm](http://organicconsumers.org/bytes/ob156.htm)