



Alert Update: Stop Vilsack

Over the past month, OCA has been alerting our nationwide network about Obama's proposed appointment of Monsanto ally and former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack to the position of Secretary of Agriculture. Far from representing the "Change" which Obama has promised, Vilsack has a disappointing record of promoting controversial GE foods, biopharm crops, and animal cloning, as well as cheer-leading for unsustainable biofuels derived from corn and soybeans. Vilsack has come under fire for aiding and abetting chemical and energy-intensive industrial agriculture, including Iowa's infamous Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

Thanks to all of you who have taken part in OCA's "Stop Vilsack" campaign. We have collected over 60,000 online petition signatures, generating coverage from major media outlets and websites including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *National Public Radio*, *Pacific Radio*, *Air America*, *Democracy Now*, *Common Dreams*, *Counterpunch*, *The Nation*, and *Huffington Post*, and a number of others. Similar petitions circulated on the internet by OCA's allies, including *fooddemocracynow.org*, *Pesticide Action Network*, and the *Center for Food Safety* have generated an additional 60,000+ supporters, making Vilsack perhaps the most controversial and unpopular Obama cabinet appointment. OCA's petition is being delivered to Obama's Transition Team, as well as Congress.

If you haven't yet signed the petition, please do so now at stopvilsack.org. Also, the Obama Transition Team has set up a website soliciting input from citizens about various hot-button issues. One area of the website invites people to post questions and concerns and vote on them. Supposedly, those questions with the most votes will be directly responded to by President-Elect Obama.

Please visit the site at www.change.gov and vote for questions asking Obama to support policies promoting health, justice, peace, and sustainability.

How to Avoid GM Ingredients

In the US, food products that contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs) do not have to be labeled as such. This is a big problem, considering more than 90% of surveyed consumers say they would avoid products with these ingredients and since most packaged foods on grocery store shelves already contain hidden GMOs. Although Barack Obama stated publicly in his campaign that he supports mandatory labeling for GE foods, OCA believes we will have to keep the pressure on if he is to fulfill this promise. In the meantime, here are some quick tips to help you avoid GMO ingredients and "Frankenfoods."

- ✂ Look for products that voluntarily label themselves as GMO-free or GE-free.
- ✂ Buy Organic: Products certified as *Organic* are not allowed to contain genetically modified ingredients.
- ✂ Avoid non-organic products that contain the most common GE ingredients: corn (corn syrup, corn meal, corn oil, etc.), fructose, dextrose, glucose, modified food starch, ingredients including the word "soy" (soy flour, soy lecithin, etc.), vegetable oil, vegetable protein, canola oil (also called rapeseed oil), cottonseed oil, and sugar from sugar beets.

Learn more at organicconsumers.org/gelink.cfm

Organic Newsflash

Support the OCA in its efforts to put Jim Riddle—a longtime champion of organic/sustainable farmers and strong standards—in the USDA seat overseeing the National Organic Program. Sign a petition to Support Jim Riddle for Agricultural Marketing Services Division of the USDA at organicconsumers.org/articles/article_16342.cfm

Studies Confirm GM Crops Danger

Although GM corn is banned in most of the world, it has been approved as "safe" for human consumption in the US for 12 years and is likely unknowingly consumed, in one form or another, by more than 90% of Americans on a regular basis. A series of peer-reviewed studies published in 2008 confirmed previous studies indicating potentially severe health and environmental problems associated with the biotech crops.

RECENT ALARMING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH INCLUDES:

► A study by the Austrian government confirms that consumption of GM corn, for as little as 20 weeks, can damage the reproductive system, lower fertility rates and increase illness and death rates in offspring.

► Researchers in Mexico reported that some popular varieties of GM corn negatively affect the learning response of bees. Scientists say this may be an indicator of the cause of Colony Collapse Disorder, a recent catastrophic and mysterious die-off of as much as 30% of the world's honey bee population in the past couple of years.

► In Italy, scientists published a study that put the biotech industry in a public relations tailspin. The study, shows a direct connection between consumption of GM corn and a damaged immune system.

Top Web Videos of 2008

Favorite web videos we posted in 2008:

The World According to Monsanto: How the one of the largest corporations in the world has made a fortune bringing us Agent Orange, PCBs, DDT, RBGH, and a GE food supply. organicconsumers.org/monlink.cfm

Zeitgeist: The Federal Reserve: It will make you think differently about everything you are hearing in the news on the struggling economy. organicconsumers.org/articles/article_14910.cfm

The End of Suburbia: A fascinating documentary on the rise and fall of suburbia, and how the new suburbia must reinvent the "mom and pop" localized economy. organicconsumers.org/articles/article_13347.cfm



TOP OCA WEB FORUM TOPIC OF 2008

Is It Okay To Be An Omnivore?

With nearly a quarter million readers of *Organic Bytes*, we were excited to roll out some great features on our new web forum in 2008. We enter 2009 with nearly 4,000 green-minded folks, like yourself, already sharing thoughts, questions, and common stories in the OCA forum. Each week, in *Organic Bytes*, we highlight an area of the forum that has high amounts of traffic or particularly insightful discussion. If you have something to say, knowledge to share, or even if you just like to read conversations other people are having about health, justice, sustainability, peace and democracy, the OCA web forum is your place to do it. The forum discussion about the ethics behind meat-eating was the hottest topic of 2008, with nearly 350,000 views. Read people's thoughts and/or join the discussion at: organicconsumers.org/forum/

Thanks!

Special thanks to all of you who took part in OCA's end-of-year donation drive. We still need to raise \$50,000 in January to guarantee our financial stability for the coming year. We look forward to continuing to fight for health, justice and sustainability in 2009!

Donate Here

Let OCA sift through the media smog and bring you the top new and analysis of the day. The OCA website has 10 or more news articles posted each day, and a library of over 40,000 articles covering issues including health, justice, food and farming, politics, and the environment. Please Bookmark OrganicConsumers.org