



The Year in Review & the Organic Revolution Ahead

THANKS TO YOU AND THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN OUR NATIONWIDE NETWORK, 2009 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 2009.

JANUARY: THE INAUGURATION OF HOPE & CHANGE

• In his inauguration speech, Obama promised us change, but warned that powerful grassroots pressure would be required to alter business as usual in Washington. On Inauguration Day, The Organic Consumers Association (OCA) turned up the heat in our Stop Vilsack campaign, collecting letters to the President-Elect in opposition to the appointment of former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack as USDA Secretary. The campaign generated major media coverage and more than 100,000 letters, winning Vilsack the distinction of being Obama's most controversial and unpopular cabinet appointment. This wasn't enough to derail Vilsack's confirmation, but the impact of the campaign should not be underestimated. www.is.gd/5h1C4

• The Stop Vilsack campaign put the Obama administration on notice that millions of organic and green-minded Americans want real change, not small change. Industrial agriculture and GMOs represent a threat to public health, climate stability, and family farms. Without an organic future, we must tell Obama and the Congress, there is no future. Grassroots pressure from the OCA and our allies were the decisive factor prodding Obama to appoint organic advocate Kathleen Merrigan as Deputy Secretary or second in command at the USDA. Our network's efforts also provided the grassroots impetus for unprecedented pro-organic programs such as the USDA People's Garden, the White House Garden and Farmers' Market, and the USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food program. www.is.gd/5h1DR

FEBRUARY: YOPLAIT & DANNON GO RBGH-FREE

In February, Yoplait and Dannon announced they would no longer purchase milk from dairies injecting their cows with Monsanto's controversial genetically engineered synthetic hormone, recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH).

In April, there was another rBGH victory protecting consumers' rights to know if their food is genetically engineered or not. In her last days as Kansas Governor, Kathleen Sebelius (President Obama's Health and Human Services Secretary), bombarded by letters and calls from the OCA and our allies, vetoed a bill that would have prevented dairy farmers from labeling their products as rBGH-free. While OCA and our allies have been fairly successful in fending off rBGH owner Eli Lilly's state legislative campaigns to remove "rBGH-free" labels from dairy products, agribusiness came up with a new strategy this fall that could make it harder for us to fight rBGH and other factory farming practices.

In November, Ohio's voters passed Issue 2, a Farm Bureau-driven ballot initiative that changed Ohio's constitution to give industrial agriculture control over livestock issues. It creates a Livestock Care Standards Board, 13 political appointees with broad and unchecked power to decide rules on animal welfare—without any public input! www.is.gd/5h1F1

MARCH: STOP NAIS! OCA ACTIVISTS TAKE ACTION

This year, opposition to the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) spread. OCA activists submitted over 10,000 comments against it in March alone. NAIS would require farmers to attach electronic tags to their animals so that their movements could be tracked, supposedly to safeguard public health. While giant factory farms would be allowed to use a single identification number for groups of animals kept together in intensive confinement, smaller farmers would be burdened with tagging and tracking each one of their animals individually.

While national implementation of NAIS has been stalled by public opposition and Congressional funding cuts (OCA activists helped convince Congress to slash NAIS funding to \$5.3 million, 1/3 of USDA's request), some states have begun enforcing laws that require farmers to register their farms with the government. Wisconsin was the first state in the nation to require mandatory NAIS registration and, in October, it became the first state to convict a farmer for not registering. Patrick Monchilovich, a sustainable farmer with a small grazing herd, was fined and ordered to comply with the law. www.is.gd/5h1FX

APRIL: ORGANIC GARDEN AT THE WHITE HOUSE

OCA's Appetite for a Change (APC) campaign works to reduce children's exposure to pesticides, toxins, and junk foods. One goal is to teach kids about healthy food choices and organic agriculture through school garden projects and curriculum materials. APC got a boost this spring when First Lady Michelle Obama started her White House Kitchen Garden, an educational project involving DC public school children. Mrs. Obama has showcased the garden and its produce at state dinners, shared the harvest with local food pantries, and has used the project to raise awareness of issues related to nutrition and obesity. www.is.gd/5h1GS

MAY: USDA GIVES FARMERS \$50 MILLION TO GO ORGANIC

In May, the USDA made it easier for farmers to access Environmental Quality Incentives Program payments for their organic practices. In the wake of thousands of letters from the OCA and our allies, the USDA set aside \$50 million out of the \$1 billion EQIP program for farms converting to organic production, farms expanding their organic production, and existing organic farms. www.is.gd/5h1Hy

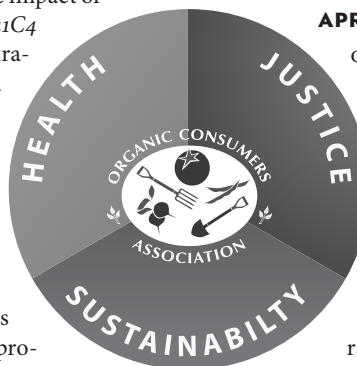
JUNE: VIA ORGANICA TOURS LAUNCHED IN MEXICO

In June, OCA formally launched a new national organic consumer and farmers movement in Mexico, called *Vía Orgánica*, or the organic way. *Vía Orgánica* will strengthen OCA's ability to carry out cross-border campaigns against GMOs and industrial agriculture and to increase Latino participation in the North American organic movement.

Vía Orgánica includes an organic farm and farm school in the Central Highlands of Guanajuato, a Spanish language website and news service www.viaorganica.org, agri-ecotourism tours, and a retail and wholesale organic food store and distribution business in San Miguel de Allende. Over 500 small farmers have already enrolled in *Vía Orgánica's* transition to organic, community controlled certification program. www.is.gd/5h1Jl

JULY: ORGANIC CONCERNS SHAPE FOOD SAFETY DEBATE

This year, OCA was part of a successful effort to defend the interests of organic farmers in the food safety debate. Industrial food produced on chemical and energy intensive in the US today is not only unhealthy, but unsafe. For this reason, OCA supports FDA regulatory authority to stop sales of tainted food, and mandate recalls of toxic products, but we oppose one-size-fits all measures that unfairly penalize small producers or fail to take into account the superior food safety track record of organic farms. The House bill makes all processors, regardless of size or certification, pay the same inspection fee.



The House's flawed food safety bill passed in July, but the thousands of letters OCA activists sent to Congress on this issue succeeded in blocking a preliminary vote and forcing the House floor leader, Rep. Dingell, to address our concerns for the record.

The House bill and the Senate bill, which passed committee but is unlikely to go to the floor before the end of the year, both contain provisions requiring the government to take into account organic agricultural standards, among other factors, when writing food safety rules. www.is.gd/5h1KI

AUGUST: WHOLE FOODS PROMISES TO SELL MORE ORGANICS

Concerned that big organic brands like Silk, Peace Cereal, and Horizon were reducing organic's market share by going "natural," OCA launched a campaign to alert consumers that "natural" foods are just green-washed conventional foods sold at a premium price. Our targets were Whole Foods and UNFI, the nation's largest retailer and distributor of certified organic and so-called "natural" products. Little more than a month and over 8,000 letters later, Whole Foods CEO John Mackey admitted Whole Foods sells a "bunch of junk" and announced that the company would expand its offerings of organic food. www.is.gd/5h2FL

◆ Whole Foods Survey

As OCA has pointed out, approximately 2/3 of the products sold by Whole Foods Market and their main distributor, United Natural Foods (UNFI) are not certified organic, but rather conventional (chemical and GMO-tainted) foods and products disguised as "natural." One of the reasons, WFM and UNFI apologists will tell you, for selling low-cost conventional or so-called "natural" foods is that it enables WFM and UNFI to sell genuine certified organic products at a reasonable price. OCA finds this hard to believe. Help us do a price survey of WFM in your local community, by comparing "Whole Paycheck's" prices on organic products with other outlets, including coops, independent natural food stores, farmers markets, CSAs, and other chains. Download the "Whole Paycheck" Organic Price Survey which you can use to compare WFM's organic prices in your local community: www.is.gd/5h1LA

SEPTEMBER: USDA DISOWNS ORGANIC-BIOTECH REPORT

In May, the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service's Global Agriculture Information Network published a report titled, *The Unexplored Potential of Organic Biotech Production*. The report argued, "the divide between organics and biotechnology is an artificial construction maintained by ideology rather than science. A governmental decision to change organic regulations to permit... organic certification for biotech crops could encourage the development of a new type of environmentally sustainable agricultural production with greater benefits for the consumer."

In fact, biotech crops have proven to be environmentally damaging and unsafe, not only for animals, but for human consumption as well. Biotech crops use tremendous amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and do not, contrary to industry claims, improve yields. While Monsanto claims to be genetically modifying crops for stress-resistance and improved nutrition, these goals have never been achieved. The only genetically engineered traits they have commercialized are resistance to herbicides and the production of insecticides, traits that create captive markets for Monsanto's agricultural chemicals. Genetically engineered crops threaten to contaminate and destroy the unique characteristics of the thousands of crop varieties farmers have bred over the centuries for every climate on earth. No amount of genetic engineering could ever compete with the vast treasure of biodiversity that is maintained by the world's small farmers. After thousands of letters from OCA activists, the USDA removed the report from its Web site, as it "should have been accompanied by a clear statement that the report does not represent the policy of the United States Government." www.is.gd/5h1Nm

OCTOBER: GMO SUGAR BEET APPROVAL ILLEGAL

OCA's close ally, the Center for Food Safety, scored a significant victory with a court ruling declaring the USDA's approval of Monsanto's sugar beets illegal. This victory followed a similar declaration on GE alfalfa. OCA members had previously sent thousands of letters to the USDA opposing GE alfalfa and sugar beets. The courts based their rulings on the fact that the USDA failed to produce an environmental impact statement. This isn't necessarily the end of GE sugar or alfalfa. The court has yet to decide whether to block the 2010 planting of GE sugar beets and Monsanto has appealed the alfalfa ruling to the US Supreme Court. www.is.gd/5h1P4

NOVEMBER: NOSB TELLS USDA TO STOP ORGANIC FRAUD

OCA won a preliminary victory for its Coming Clean campaign to rid store shelves of products that are falsely advertised as "organic."

The National Organic Standards Board directed the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) to make sure that any use of the word "organic" on a personal care product is backed up by third-party certification to USDA organic standards. Up until now, the USDA has allowed non-organic cosmetics and body care products containing petrochemicals and problematic synthetic chemicals to be mislabeled as "organic." To press the USDA to act quickly on the recommendation, OCA has launched a boycott of mislabeled "organic" products and is urging consumers to buy only certified organic brands. Products to buy and boycott: www.is.gd/5h1PH

DECEMBER: STOP SIDDIQUI!

President Obama has again broken his campaign promise to keep corporate lobbyists out of his administration by appointing yet another Monsanto cheerleader and pesticide lobbyist to a prominent position, naming Islam Siddiqui to represent us agricultural trade interests. Siddiqui is the current Vice-President for Science and Regulatory Affairs with CropLife America, a pesticide and biotechnology trade group known for aggressively pushing the agenda of agribusinesses, including Monsanto, Syngenta, Cargill and Dow. During Siddiqui's term alone, CropLife has been a driving force undermining us compliance with international agreements ranging from the Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting chemicals to the Stockholm Convention, an effort to regulate the use of toxins, including DDT, PCBs and dioxins. Siddiqui's group also publicly criticized and ridiculed Michele Obama for planting a pesticide-free organic garden at the White House.

Siddiqui first caught OCA's attention during the Clinton administration when he worked at USDA on the implementation of national organic standards. He was vocal in calling for nuclear irradiation, sewage sludge, and GMOs to be allowed in organic production. After a long campaign led by the OCA and our allies, Siddiqui and the USDA backed down.

Why would President Obama betray his ideals and organic consumers? Could the fact that Siddiqui and much of the entire chemical-biotech lobby gave Obama major campaign contributions during the 2008 campaign have anything to do with it?

Siddiqui's appointment was due for a confirmation vote in the Finance Committee on November 20. The hearing was postponed and has not yet been rescheduled. Could OCA, the 80 groups in opposition, and the 77,000 people who have signed the Stop Siddiqui petition have anything to do with it? www.is.gd/5h1DR

VOTE WITH YOUR DOLLARS ON OCA'S 2010 PRIORITIES

What would you like to see OCA devote our energies to next year? Make a contribution to your favorite OCA campaign, or send us an idea for a new campaign along with your donation. In January, we'll let you know which campaigns generated the most support.

Thank you in advance for your generosity, creativity and commitment!

