



Alert: Safeguard Organic Standards!

The NOSB Votes for Factory-Farmed "Organic" Poultry

As we reported in the last issue of *Organic Bytes*, the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) is only loosely enforcing animal welfare rules that require organic poultry farms to allow their birds to have access to the outdoors and "exhibit their natural behaviors." This has resulted in a wide range of farms being certified organic; everything from lush green pastures where hens roam free, scratching in the compost and nibbling greens, to giant sheds with tens of thousands of grain-fed birds that never see the light of day.

At its April meeting, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) had an opportunity to reform organic chicken and egg production by outlawing a synthetic feed supplement called methionine that confinement poultry producers have used as a crutch to help them scale up and keep costs down.

Despite thousands of letters from organic consumers who understand the nutritional and environmental benefits of pasture-based organic systems and are concerned about animal welfare and synthetics in organic, the NOSB voted to keep methionine on the list of allowed synthetics.

Tell the USDA: Stop factory-farmed "organic" poultry: www.is.gd/cdmab



The NOSB Delays Action on Nanotechnology

For the third meeting in a row, the NOSB postponed a vote on a recommendation to exclude nanotechnology from organic.

Tell the USDA: Keep nanotechnology out of organic: www.is.gd/cdmgt

The NOSB approves List of Non-Organic Ingredients

The NOP keeps a list of a few non-organic ingredients that can be used in foods labeled "USDA Organic" if they aren't "commercially available." Currently, hops and sausage casings are on the list. Why? Well, Peak Organic and Organic Valley apparently don't want to go to the trouble of sourcing these ingredients organically.

Despite pleas from the American Hop Growers Association and organic beef and pork producers who insist that organic hops and organic sausage casings are commercially available, the NOSB voted to keep them on the list of conventional ingredients allowed in organic.

Organic Valley (along with Whole Foods, Earthbound Farms, Campbell Soup and General Mills) has a representative on the NOSB, who voted in favor of keeping non-organic casings on the list.

Tell the USDA: Organic Means Organic! No More Conventional Hops or Sausage Casings: www.is.gd/cdmsl

The NOP Refuses to Curb Organic Fraud

Miles McEvoy, NOP director, announced that the USDA would not act on a November 2009 NOSB recommendation to "Solve the Problem of Mis-labeled Organic Personal Care Products."

Nevertheless, OCA's Coming Clean Campaign is continuing to have an impact. This week, Sapien joined JASON and Kiss My Face in agreeing to remove front-label organic claims from products that aren't certified organic. Tell the USDA to Stop Organic Fraud in the Health & Beauty Aisle: www.is.gd/cdmBd

Quote of the Week

The President's Cancer Panel says that the "risk of environmentally induced cancer has been grossly underestimated," that "nearly 80,000 chemicals [are] on the market in the United States, many of which are... understudied and largely unregulated," and that "the public remains unaware... that children are far more vulnerable to environmental toxins and radiation than adults." The panel says "evidence suggests that some environmental agents may initiate or promote cancer by disrupting normal immune and endocrine system functions. The burgeoning number and complexity of known or suspected environmental carcinogens compel us to act to protect public health, even though we may lack irrefutable proof of harm."

Check out these examples selected from the recommendations:

- ▶ Parents and child care providers should choose foods, house and garden products, play spaces, toys, medicines, and medical tests that will minimize children's exposure to toxins. Ideally, both mothers and fathers should avoid exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals.
- ▶ It is preferable to use filtered tap water instead of commercially bottled water.
- ▶ Exposure to pesticides can be decreased by choosing... food grown without pesticides or chemical fertilizers [translation: organics] and washing conventionally grown produce to remove residues.
- ▶ Exposure to antibiotics, growth hormones, and toxic run-off from livestock feedlots can be minimized by eating free-range meat [translation: don't eat feedlot meat].

-Marion Nestle, professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health at New York University, and the author of *Food Politics*, *Safe Food*, *What to Eat*, reporting in *The Atlantic*, May 12, 2010, on a new report from the President's Cancer Panel.

GMO Vaccines Aren't Allowed in Organic - Yet

In November 2009, over the objection of thousands of organic consumers, the NOSB voted to recommend to the USDA that the NOP allow all genetically modified vaccines to be used in organic without any review. Currently, genetically modified vaccines are the one exception to the exclusion of GMOs from organic, but each GMO vaccine must be petitioned for use individually and be reviewed by the NOSB, which may grant or deny the petition. At the Spring 2009 NOSB meeting, NOP staff admitted that GMO vaccines were being widely used on organic animals, although none had been specifically allowed as required by law, and encouraged the NOSB to change the rule to reflect the status quo. The NOSB did so, but the NOP is hesitant to implement the recommendation. NOP director Miles McEvoy said that he would seek a legal review of the proposal before proceeding. There is still a chance to keep GMO out of organic! Take action now: www.is.gd/cdnGs

Hemp History Week

Between now and the end of May, a group of OCA allies including Vote Hemp and Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps will be celebrating the history of hemp farming at local events across the country in a show of support for American farmers who want the right to grow industrial hemp. Hemp History Week (May 17-23) will feature educational events exposing our rich American history of hemp farming and hemp products. A selection of modern hemp products will be available and supporters can sign and send postcards urging President Obama and Attorney General Holder to change our federal policy to allow American farmers to once again grow industrial hemp. hemphistoryweek.com