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January 9, 2003 · Volume 1, Issue 4

Quote of the Week

The outrage of hunger amidst plenty will never be solved by 'experts' somewhere. It will only be solved when people like you and me decide to act." -Frances Moore Lappe

Warning: This Food Product May Contain Experimental Drugs

"Pollen and seeds care not where the wind carries them. Herein rests their mythical ability to cover every crevice of the planet." -Kendall Hammoth 1892

So what happens when the wind carries the pollen and seeds from plants that are genetically engineered to create drugs and chemicals not intended for your consumption? This very concern is being addressed by a coalition of health, consumer and environmental groups, including the Organic Consumers Association—by filing a legal petition against the USDA. The petition demands a moratorium on the planting of biopharm crops (experimental plants genetically engineered to create pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals). The legal action follows on the heels of a USDA mandated fine of several million dollars against the Prodigene Corporation, for allowing its "frankencorn," genetically engineered to create a pig vaccine and a controversial AIDS drug, to contaminate over 500,000 bushels of soybeans and several fields of corn that were grown for human consumption. Despite the dire implications of random drugs being mixed into the human food supply, the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has granted more than 300 permits for dangerously experimental biopharm crops to be grown openly in the agricultural fields of 14 states since 2001. Experimental drugs---coming to a dinner table near you? (**USA Today 12/18/2002**)

Read All About It:

www.organicconsumers.org/gel/122402_biopharm_crops.cfm

To learn more, visit OCA's online library of GE Food articles:

organicconsumers.org/gelink.html

ORGANIC BYTES

Organic News with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association

This Is Why They're Starving

Nestle Corporation is insisting on the full payment of \$6 million it says it is owed by Ethiopia, the world's poorest country. This money is compensation for the 1975 nationalization of a company, which was bought by Nestle in 1986. Despite the fact that six million Ethiopians currently need emergency food aid, the Ethiopian government has been forced to turn its back on the starving, and has offered to pay \$1.6 million to Nestle—an amount of money that could be used to feed a million starving people for a month (Nestle is a \$55 billion corporation). Nestle says that's not enough and continues to demand payment in full. Spokespeople for Nestle say demanding the full amount, based on 1975 exchange rates, is "a matter of principle." A spokesman FOR Nestle, the world's largest food corporation said, "It is highly desirable that conflicts are resolved according to international law and in a spirit of fairness." Ethiopia's poverty is partly due to companies like Nestle. One in four Ethiopians depend on coffee growing. Nestle, the world's number one coffee producer, has refused to pay these farmers fair trade prices, thereby exacerbating the devastation of three years of drought in Ethiopia.

Read all about it: Charlotte Denny 12/19/2002 www.organicconsumers.org/Starbucks/122402_fair_trade.cfm To learn more, visit OCA's online library of Fair Trade articles: www.organicconsumers.org/starbucks

Chicken Little Ain't Feelin' So Good

An alarming new study conducted by ABC Research Corporation has found that the vast majority of name brand poultry products on grocery store shelves are contaminated with Campylobacter and Salmonella bacteria-- and many are immune to common human antibiotics. These bacteria are responsible for more than 3.3 million food illnesses in the US each year. The fact that they're so quickly becoming immune to antibiotics worries researchers. What happens if you get sick, and there is no longer an effective antibiotic with which to treat it?

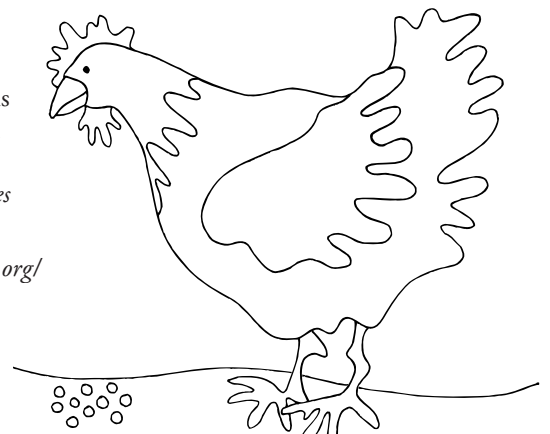
The study found that over half of 200 chickens purchased at supermarkets in Des Moines and Minneapolis were infested with bacteria that were resistant to one or more antibiotics. Among the ground turkey tested, 45% contained Salmonella bacteria, and more than half of those bacteria were resistant to one or more antibiotics. Scientists say bacteria are quickly evolving resistance to antibiotics because of the excessive use of these pharmaceuticals on livestock. A full 70% of all antibiotics in the US are fed to pigs, poultry and cattle for reasons other than treating disease.

Kendra Kimbirauskas, the Sierra Club's Antibiotics in Agriculture Organizer, offered a ray of hope to the consumer. "Shoppers can look for meat from animals raised without antibiotics," she said, "and can urge their grocery stores and favorite restaurants to offer the same." (*Des Moines Register 12-10-2002*)

Read all about it: www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/poultryfeces121102.cfm

To learn more, visit OCA's online library of Food Safety articles:

www.organicconsumers.org/toxiclink.html



Family Farmer Tidbits

- In the last three decades, the number of small family farmers has dropped over 90%.
- Almost 30% of agricultural subsidies go to the top 2% of farms.
- The smallest US farms, those of 27 acres or less, have more than ten times greater dollar output per acre than larger farms.
- In the United States, small farmers devote 17% of their area to woodlands, compared to only 5% on large farms.

Source: "The Multiple Functions and Benefits of Small Farm Agriculture" Dr. Peter Rosset

Globalization is Bad for Your Health

The evidence is getting stronger and stronger that the policies of globalization have the effect of making the rich richer and the poor poorer. But a new study out of the University of Washington's School of Medicine is also drawing a connection between a nation's life expectancy and its levels of economic equality. Americans pay more for health care than any other people in the world, yet have a lower life expectancy than most other industrialized countries. The highest life expectancy is in Japan, despite the fact that the Japanese spend less on health care, yet smoke tobacco at four times the rate Americans do! What gives? According to Dr. Stephen Bezruchka, one of the heads of this research team, the fact that Japan has the world's lowest ratio of inequality in income explains the difference. Some of this is a matter of access to medicine for the poorer members of a society, but there is also evidence that the social environment of a society that believes in equality is simply healthier, while the feelings engendered by a society in which a few are prospering and most are struggling are a health burden. (**Chiapas Today 11-02**)

Read all about it:

www.organicconsumers.org/corp/122702_globalization.cfm

To learn more, visit OCA's online library of Globalization articles:

www.organicconsumers.org/corplink.html

Fun Factory Farm Facts for the Dinner Table

Five to six laying hens are kept in a 14-inch-square mesh cage, and cages are often stacked in many tiers. Because the hens are severely crowded, they are kept in semi-darkness and their beaks are cut off with hot irons (without anesthetics) to keep them from pecking each other to death. In Maryland, chickens outnumber people 59 to 1. (**Animal Factories** by Jim Mason and Peter Singer)

What's Wrong With Salmon Factory Farms?

With most of the world's fisheries becoming depleted, are the ever-increasing fish farms along the Pacific Coast the answer? Proponents of salmon farms boast that a single 100 x 100 foot pen can grow 40,000 to 90,000 fish. Great! So what are the drawbacks? The L.A. Times recently released a thorough article that explains why consumers are boycotting salmon factory farms. Here are some of the highlights:

Just like factory farms on land, these huge salmon feedlots generate intense pollution that contaminates the ocean. This practice is actually hastening the depletion of fish stocks rather than helping, because it takes 2.4 pounds of fish meal to grow each pound of salmon. Native populations of salmon are threatened by the faster-growing species of salmon favored by fish farmers, and a million have already escaped. New genetically engineered salmon escaping into the wild will only worsen the problem, if they are ever approved. Health advocates are concerned about the safety of the drug used to create that lovely pink color in factory farmed salmon (wild fish get it from eating krill). Studies show farm-raised salmon accumulate more carcinogenic PCB's and dioxins than wild ones—they're also higher in fat, though lower in the health-enhancing Omega-3 fatty acids. Wild stocks have plummeted near the farms, and divers have found fatal loads of salmon lice on the few survivors. Fish farmers say their captive fish are unlikely hosts, though, because at the first sign of an outbreak they dose the fish with emamectin. Along with the vaccines and antibiotics they use to cope with the diseases that inevitably run rampant in every monoculture, be it cattle, chickens, or fish. (*Los Angeles Times 12-9-02*)

Read all about it:

www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/fish_farm_salmon.cfm

The Yin & Yang of the Organic Boom

The Good News: The organic food market has grown thicker than a plump pumpkin in late October. In fact, organic sales are growing at a rate five times faster than overall food sales—20 to 24 percent each year. In 1990 organic foods boasted sales of over \$1 billion. In 2002 sales have grown to an astounding \$11 billion. Now the USDA is projecting \$20 billion in organic food sales by 2005. The Bad News: Organic crops have traditionally fallen into the realm of the small family farmer. But due to the increasing popularity of these chemical-free munchies, huge transnational corporations, like General Mills and Heinz, are providing these foods to consumers at a cheaper price via industrial agriculture. "We agree that it's a celebration, but we have concerns," said Marty Mesh, executive director of Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers Inc. "Our concern is how the smaller and family farms will continue to survive as you see industrialized organic products on the market shelf". Although products like Organic Valley (dairy and eggs) advertise that their foods are produced strictly by a co-op of small family farmers, the average consumer may not know to seek out such information on food labels. (*Knight Ridder News 12/27/2002*)

Read all about it: www.organicconsumers.org/organic/122702_organic.cfm

To learn more, visit OCA's online library of Organic Food articles:

www.organicconsumers.org/organlink.htm

Organic Bytes is a publication of: Organic Consumers Association

6101 Cliff Estate Road Little Marais, MN 55614 · 218-226-4164 · Fax: 218-226-4157

Notes to co-ops and natural food store subscribers: Educate your staff quickly and easily by printing each issue of Organic Bytes and placing on break tables and bulletin boards! Also, please be sure to keep mailing in your Food Agenda 2010 petitions to the address noted above

