



ORGANIC BYTES

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www.organicconsumers.org

Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association
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Mad Cow Cover-up

The USDA has been covering up cases of Mad Cow Disease, according to a USDA veterinarian in charge of monitoring cattle for the fatal disease. On the eve of retirement, Dr. Masua Doi confessed to sketchy testing since 1997. "I don't want to carry on off to my retirement," said Doi. "I want to hand it over to someone to continue, to find out. I think it's very, very important. How many did we miss?" Doi's concerns are shared by other USDA contracted scientists, like Dr. Karl Langheindrich who runs a test lab in Georgia and says the appropriate animal parts are not sent to him for accurate testing. In addition, two weeks ago, us agriculture inspector Lester Friedlander offered testimony to a Canadian House of Commons committee revealing the us has been covering up Mad Cow cases. The USDA has refused to respond to any of these allegations. Learn more and sign the Mad Cow petition to the USDA: www.organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm

Nike Takes One Step Forward and Two Steps Back

Genetically engineered cotton is on the run in India. After years of poor crop yields, hundreds of villages across India have pledged to go GE-free. Under increasing pressure in India and across the world, the Nike corporation has announced it will no longer use genetically engineered cotton in its products. In other Nike news, the corporation has acknowledged massive labor exploitation in its Asian factories. In that region, 25%-50% of the factories were found to restrict employee access to toilets and drinking water. This same percentage of factories denies workers at least one day off in seven. www.organicconsumers.org/clothes/nikeo41505.cfm



USDA Will Allow Misleading Organic Label Claims to Continue

In a controversial move, the USDA has announced that it will not monitor or police "organic" label claims on body care products nor allow companies that use certified organic ingredients to display the USDA ORGANIC label. This complete turnabout in policy essentially gives the green light to unscrupulous companies to label non-organic body care products as organic, whether they are or not, while penalizing companies that have gone to the trouble and expense to source certified organic ingredients. This USDA ruling contradicts a previous 2002 directive that stated that if a body care product

contains certified organic ingredients, it could be labeled as such. The new directive will likely reduce the demand for organic ingredients and feed stocks from organic farmers by hundreds of millions of dollars. Sign petition to the USDA at:

www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/action.cfm

Making Dogs and Cats Immortal

Pet owners across the us are discovering a new way to help alleviate the pain of the loss of their beloved animals... clone them. For \$50,000, a company called Genetic Savings in Clone will take DNA from your deceased furry friend and make you an exact replica. The Humane Society is opposed to the practice, saying the success rate of the cloning is very low. As a result, many clones have to be made before one actually lives. California Assemblyman Lloyd Levine has proposed a bill that would ban such clones in the state. "The problem is, they go through lots of surrogate parents and a lot of the animals are born deformed," says Levine. The cost of pet cloning is currently prohibitive to most incomes, so an increasing number of pet owners are paying monthly fees to have their pet's DNA saved until prices drop. www.organicconsumers.org/patlink.html

Fired Biotech Critic Professor Files Lawsuit

A well-respected professor at the University of California in Berkeley has been fired after publishing a scientific paper exposing the reckless contamination of irreplaceable native Mexican corn varieties by genetically engineered corn exported from the us. Dr. Ignacio Chapela, whose corn contamination article was published in the science journal *Nature*, was mysteriously denied his tenure, despite the fact the UC Berkeley tenure review panel had actually voted almost unanimously to approve his tenure. In response, Chapela filed a lawsuit last week against the college. The former professor says the University removed him under pressure from Novartis, a multinational biotechnology corporation who had offered the school millions of dollars in funding. Sign a petition to demand a review of Dr. Chapela's tenure denial at: www.organicconsumers.org/uc.htm

Teeny Tiny News Tidbits

Farmers in India have discovered that common colas, like Coke and Pepsi, can be sprayed on crops and function as an effective and affordable pesticide. Although the Coca-Cola corporation says this is impossible, literally hundreds of farmers now claim the soft drinks kill the bugs on their cotton plants as well as any other pesticide. www.organicconsumers.org/toxic/pop.cfm

A class action lawsuit is being filed in New York and New Jersey against producers of the popular synthetic sweetener aspartame (NutraSweet/Equal/Spoonful, etc.). More than 70% of US adults and 40% of children are now regular consumers of products containing the ingredient, which the FDA reports is tied to everything from headaches to neurological problems to brain tumors. www.organicconsumers.org/toxic/aspartame.cfm

The state of California is considering a ban on children's products containing an ingredient used to make clear plastics (bisphenol A - BPA). BPA is used to make clear plastic that is commonly used for food and beverage containers, baby bottles and toys. Ninety percent of non-industry funded studies identify the chemical as an endocrine disruptor, as it mimics sex hormones. www.organicconsumers.org/school/bpa041505.cfm

Monsanto has responded to a ground-breaking study showing the company's popular Roundup pesticide to be fatally toxic to frogs. Monsanto claims the study is irrelevant, because "there are no Roundup brand formulations approved in the US or Canada for application over water." The company fails to mention their widely-used pesticide has been detected in nearly every waterway in the US, due to runoff and leaching. www.organicconsumers.org/monlink.html

Senator Ted Kennedy has reintroduced a bill that would ban junk food from vending machines in schools. It would also provide grants to schools that prohibit advertising of junk foods to students and require daily physical activity classes. Learn more and support this legislation: www.organicconsumers.org/school/junk041905.cfm



How To Buy Organic Foods More Cheaply

- Research the products and companies you are interested in.
- Shop at farmers' markets. It's local, fresh, and inexpensive.
- Buy a share in a CSA (community supported agriculture program).
- Join a co-op. Most of them have discounts for members.
- Join or start a buying club. It's a great excuse to hang out with your friends:)
- Buy in bulk.
- Buy big in-season.
- In the off-season, buy dried and canned foods.
- Canning, freezing and drying your own food can be a fun social event.
- Spend time with family and friends by starting your own garden.

Spelunking For Synthetic Food

"We've shown you can successfully grow crops underground," says Cary Mitchell, a Purdue professor of horticulture, speaking of the University's fully contained underground agriculture project. The researchers are raising experimental GE crops in a 60 acre former limestone mine, in order to prevent pollen contamination. By controlling every aspect of the plant's environment, including light, temperature, CO₂ and humidity, researchers claim the yields are twice as much as what a similar crop is able to grow with natural air and sunlight. Mitchell believes that with affordable artificial lighting technologies, this subterranean model could revolutionize modern agriculture practices. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/caves042505.cfm

Quick Facts On Lawn And Garden Chemicals

- ◆ An analysis of the most popular lawn and garden pesticides shows more than half of the products include ingredients classified by the EPA or the World Health Organization as possible carcinogens, one-third contain known or suspected endocrine disruptors, and more than a quarter contain reproductive toxins.
- ◆ Over 40% of the most commonly used lawn and garden pesticides are banned in other countries, yet US homeowners annually apply 90 million pounds of these types of pesticides to gardens and lawns where children frequently play.
- ◆ Homeowners apply three times more pesticides per acre to their lawns than farmers apply to agricultural crops. An EPA study found that lawn pesticides are easily tracked indoors and exist in the carpet and flooring for years.

www.organicconsumers.org/school/lawns041905.cfm

Genetically Engineered Beer

Two weeks ago, Anheuser-Busch, "The King of Beers," announced it would not source rice from Missouri if the state allowed the farming of genetically engineered "biopharmed" rice. The experimental rice contains manipulated genes to cause it to produce cheap pharmaceutical drugs. Opponents of the rice say it's too easy for such plants

to contaminate neighboring crops and spread into the food supply. Last week, Busch made a compromise with Ventria, the biotech company responsible for the GE rice, saying it would drop its demands as long as the pharmaceutical rice isn't planted too close to traditional food rice. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/buscho41805.cfm

Europe Bans Animal Feed Tainted by US Frankencorn

Due to contamination by an illegal variety of GE corn, Europe has banned all imports of US corn gluten animal feed. Up until now US Farmers have been exporting \$450 million in corn gluten every year to the EU. Several varieties of GE corn are illegal in the EU, and almost no GE corn is grown by EU farmers, due to European consumer concerns about its impact on human health and the environment.

www.organicconsumers.org/Corn/index.cfm

For many more food issue daily headlines: www.organicconsumers.org/log.html

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