



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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USDA Cover-Up of Mad Cow Cases

The USDA has refused to respond to allegations that it has been covering up cases of Mad Cow disease in the US for well over a decade. Lester Friedlander, a former USDA veterinarian, says he was told by USDA officials as far back as 1991 that if his testing laboratory ever found evidence of Mad Cow disease, he was to tell no one. He and other scientists say they know of cases where cows tested positive for the disease in laboratories but were ruled negative by the USDA. Mad cow is a concern to public health because humans can contract a fatal brain illness known as variant Creutzfeldt Jakob disease from eating beef products contaminated with the mad cow pathogen.

Take Action! Sign the Mad Cow petition:
www.organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm

Creating Human-Animal Hybrids

New guidelines set by the National Academies of Sciences would permit the development of human-animal hybrids. The creation of these new species would be allowed for the sake of research. According to the standards, this would be permitted “under circumstances where no other experiment can provide the information needed.” The standards also recommend “strong scientific justification” for experiments where human cells are used to develop major aspects of the brain of the new animal. In addition, newly developed human-animal species are not allowed to breed with each other. These standards are voluntary, and human-animal hybrids are already under production. Learn more and speak your mind:

www.organicconsumers.org/chimera.htm

I Think, Therefore I Am... A Lab Mouse

An ethics committee at Stanford University has approved a proposal to create mice with brains made almost completely of human brain cells. Stanford law professor Hank Greely, who chaired the ethics committee, said the board endorsed this procedure based on the assumption that the animal would probably not experience higher levels of human thought, given the size and shape of the mouse brain. The committee recommended closely monitoring the mice’s behavior and immediately killing any that display “human-like behavior,” although, admittedly, no one quite knows how an observer would be able to truly distinguish whether or not a lab mouse is thinking and feeling like a human. Learn more and speak your mind:

www.organicconsumers.org/chimera.htm

Human Genes are What’s for Dinner

Japanese scientists are splicing human genes into rice that will ultimately be grown for human consumption. While some opponents say the concept borders on cannibalism, genetic engineers claim the new rice has environmental benefits. Researchers spliced a gene from a human liver into rice to help the plant “digest” pesticides, thereby allowing the crop to be sprayed with up to 13 different pesticides without damaging the rice. The developers of the new human-rice admit that if this gene were to escape into the wild, a new generation of “superweeds” could be inadvertently created. No testing of the product’s impact on human health has yet been conducted.

www.organicconsumers.org/ge/humangene042505.cfm

Breaking the Chains: Fun Facts About Wal-Mart

- In a recent press briefing in Bentonville, Arkansas, Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott Jr. announced the corporation could not afford to pay living family wages to its workers in a manner similar to what its competitors Costco, Safeway, Giant and Kroger currently do.
- Wal-Mart does more business than Target, Sears, K-Mart, JC Penney, Safeway and Kroger combined.
- Wal-Mart is one of the largest profit-making corporations in the world, with 1.4 million employees, 5,000 stores, & annual sales of a quarter of a trillion dollars.
- Wal-Mart's profits, after all expenses, have nearly doubled in the last four years, from six billion dollars in 2001 to ten billion dollars in 2004.

Learn more and join the OCA's
Breaking the Chains campaign:
www.organicconsumers.org/btc.htm

Teeny Tiny News Tidbits

The American Heart Association has released a study indicating that the rate of obesity among Americans earning more than \$60,000 a year is growing three times faster than the rate among the poor. "Sedentary lifestyles and restaurants are the two big things that affect that group the most," said Marc O'Meara, a dietitian at Brigham and Women's Hospital. "The portion sizes just keep growing." www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/rich-obesity.cfm

The OCA has announced the launch of its new international Science Oversight Board (iSOB), that will expand OCA's outreach into the biomedical and public health arena. The iSOB oversight board will investigate and publicize conflicts of interest at academic medical centers and in governmental agencies worldwide. It will focus on the corporatization of medicine and the commodification of human life. www.organicconsumers.org/Politics/isob050505.cfm



Break the Chains on World Fair Trade Day With a House Party!

Just in time for World Fair Trade Day, the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) is pleased to announce our next House Party film and action pack, featuring the new documentary, *Coffee with the Taste of the Moon*. Starting May 14th, the OCA and allies around the world will promote Fair Trade and organic goods, like coffee, chocolate and tea. Certified Fair Trade goods provide a fair price for farmers, create sustainable economic opportunities for global communities, and offer an alternative to so-called "Free Trade." Make everyday Fair Trade Day! www.organicconsumers.org/fair-trade/house-party.cfm

My Bologna Has a First Name: Cancer

The University of Hawaii has released a new study that shows people who consume processed meats have a 67% increased risk of pancreatic cancer over those who consume little or no meat products. The study was done over a period of seven years on nearly 200,000 people. Researchers pin the blame on sodium nitrite, a chemical used in nearly all processed meats, including sausage, hot dogs, jerkies, bacon, lunch meat, and even meats in canned soup products. Although these same meats can be purchased without sodium nitrite, consumers must seek the few products that are labeled as such. The USDA attempted to ban sodium nitrite in the 1970s, but was blocked by the meat industry, which relies heavily on the chemical to add color to processed meats, making them look more appealing. Author and nutritionist Mike Adams said of this and other similar study results, "Sodium nitrite is a dangerous, cancer-causing ingredient that has no place in the human food supply." www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/processedmeat050305.cfm

World Leaders Meet to Ban 12 Persistent Toxic Chemicals

Government officials from 130 nations are currently meeting in Uruguay to discuss methods of eliminating twelve of the world's most toxic pesticides and chemicals. Specifically, these toxins, such as DDT and PCBs, are referred to as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). They are known to kill people, damage the nervous and immune systems, cause cancer and reproductive disorders, and interfere with normal infant and child development. According to Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, eliminating POPs will be expensive but "will save lives and protect the natural environment - particularly in the poorest communities and countries."

www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/pesticides050405.cfm

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

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