



ORGANIC BYTES

June 28, 2005 · Issue 60
www.organicconsumers.org

Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association
Please forward this publication to family and friends, websites, print it, & post it. Knowledge is power!

Tobacco Industry Let Off Hook

The tobacco industry was given a major break last week by the US Justice Department. During the closing statements of a six-year-old lawsuit that was on the verge of fining the tobacco industry \$130 billion, Justice Department lawyer Stephen D. Brody unexpectedly announced the US Government wanted to reduce the fines by 90%. Sources close to the case, including government officials, say trial lawyers reduced their demands due to pressure from the Bush Administration's Attorney General's office, which has recently held several closed door meetings with the tobacco industry. www.organicconsumers.org/Politics/tobacco060905.cfm

Organic Farming is the Solution to Africa's Famine

Despite intense pressure from the biotech industry, African nations are increasingly turning to organic farming practices rather than genetically engineered crops. Tewelde Berhan, head of the Environmental Protection Authority of Ethiopia, believes that organic farming is the solution to Africa's famine. "Organic farming disturbs nature as little as possible and reduces risks. Intensive farming has led to the exacerbation of pests and diseases," says Berhan. While the biotech industry pushes expensive synthetic fertilizers on impoverished Third World farmers with claims of high yields, those farmers implementing simple organic soil amending techniques are witnessing higher yields without the chemicals or the cost. According to Berhan, "When well managed, and as fertility builds over years, organic agriculture isn't inferior in yield. Now, farmers don't want chemical fertilisers. They say, 'Why should we pay for something we can get for free?'" www.organicconsumers.org/ge/famine062705.cfm

USDA Attempt to Bury Mad Cow Fails

Another case of Mad Cow disease (BSE) in the United States has been confirmed. The cow, apparently from Texas, was originally slaughtered and pronounced free of BSE by the USDA in November, 2004, under rather suspicious circumstances. Facing mounting criticism by public interest groups, including the OCA, Consumers Union, and the Center for Media and Democracy, the USDA finally allowed a UK lab to retest the brain, revealing that the animal did, indeed, have the fatal brain wasting disease. Despite warnings by scientists and bans on US beef exports, the USDA still refuses to test more than a tiny fraction of US cattle, and continues to allow the routine feeding of blood, manure, and slaughterhouse waste to farm animals. Consumers, responding to the fact that these risky practices are prohibited on organic farms, are turning in droves to organic and grass-fed beef. In 2004 organic beef sales increased by over 120% in the US.

www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/coverup062705.cfm



Market in Mali

-Tom Adair

Sneak Attack: California Legislature May Pass "Monsanto Law"

Just as we are going to press, OCA has been informed that California state legislators may try to pass a law shortly that would take away counties' rights to ban genetically engineered crops. So far three of California's 59 counties have passed GE crop bans, with Sonoma County slated to vote on a ban in November. Across the US, eleven states have already passed these "Monsanto Laws." Stay tuned to OCA's website and the next issue of *Organic Bytes* for further information. The apparent ringleader of this nefarious scheme to suppress Biodemocracy and spread Frankencrops across California is State Assemblyman Simon Salinas of District 29 (representing Santa Clara, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties).

You may want to call or fax Salinas' office and tell him to back off. Simon Salinas' office can be reached at 916-319-2028 or Fax: 916-319-2128.

Quick News Tidbits

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) investigators have obtained video footage of inhumane treatment of chickens in a Tyson Foods plant in Alabama, which supplies Kentucky Fried Chicken. The footage shows chickens' heads being routinely ripped off by hand, and large numbers of birds being scalded alive. Tyson has responded by accusing the undercover PETA investigator of violating the company's privacy policies.

www.organicconsumers.org/OFGU/tyson060605.cfm

New studies in Richland, Washington have revealed that the local Hanford Nuclear site has contaminated the area far more than previously thought. For the first time, plutonium has been found in clams and fish in the Columbia River. In addition, radiation levels of area mulberries are so high, eating less than a teaspoon full of the berries would cause a person to exceed EPA maximum allowable risk levels for an entire year.

www.organicconsumers.org/Politics/nuclear061605.cfm

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has announced that farmed salmon contains roughly 6-7 times as many PCBs as wild salmon. A total of 29 tests were conducted on salmon in the British Columbia area, and the results support previous studies revealing higher levels of toxins in farmed salmon, due to the compact manner in which they are raised.

www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/pcb060805.cfm

Wal-Mart recently held its annual meeting, during which CEO F. Lee Scott announced that the mega-retail chain will take a leading role in the exploding organic market by sharply increasing the selection of organic foods at its supercenters. At present, Wal-Mart operates 1,700 supercenters across the US with short term plans to more than double that number.

www.organicconsumers.org/organic/walmart.cfm



Help Wanted: Human Lab Animals

The EPA is now allowing chemical companies to conduct toxic chemical studies on low-income Americans. An analysis of 24 such studies found that 22 involved ethically questionable practices. A new related congressional report states that "nearly one-third of the studies reviewed were specifically designed to cause harm to the human test subjects or to put them at risk of harm." The report said scientists conducting the experiments "failed to obtain informed consent (and) dismissed adverse outcomes," adding that the tests "lacked scientific validity." One study involved paying college students \$15 an hour to sit in enclosed chambers while having insecticide vapors sprayed at them. The Bush Administration recently announced the EPA's new policy, which allows these types of human studies for the first time in decades. Chemical

companies have welcomed this announcement with the goal of generating studies that would allow their products to be considered "safer" than originally thought. Congress is currently discussing whether or not this process should be allowed to continue. Take Action: www.organicconsumers.org/epa5.htm

While Millions Starve, US Wastes Billions of Dollars in Food

New statistics show that \$100 billion of food in the US is wasted annually. As a result, the USDA is being asked to consider a proposal from the University of Arizona to create a "Food Loss Center" that would analyze methods of reducing food waste in the shipping, retail and home sectors. At present, the USDA is claiming it does not have the budget to create such a program. According to Dr. Timothy Jones, an anthropologist at the University of Arizona's Bureau for Applied Research in Anthropology, "Huge amounts of food are being wasted throughout the industry. A proportion of this waste is inevitable, but a large part of it can be eliminated and lead to increased profit, not only through cutting losses but also through increasing efficiency." www.organicconsumers.org/OFGU/waste062105.cfm

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

Organic Bytes is a publication of the Organic Consumers Association

6771 South Silver Hill Drive · Finland, MN 55603 · 218-353-7454 · fax: 218-353-7652

Subscribe to *Organic Bytes*: www.organicconsumers.org/organicbytes.htm

DONATE TO THE OCA: www.organicconsumers.org/donations.htm

Note to co-op and natural food store subscribers: *Organic Bytes* is a great tool for keeping your staff and customers up to date on the latest issues.

Feel free to print *Organic Bytes* for posting on bulletin boards and staff break tables.

You are welcome to use this material for your newsletters.