



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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Quick Tidbits

In a rather unexpected way, a team of biologists surveying biodiversity in the forests of Khammouan have "discovered" the first new mammalian species in 31 years. The team stopped in an area village food market and noticed the locals eating an unusual ratlike animal they called "kha-nyou." Upon analyzing the DNA, scientists have concluded the animal represents a species of rodent previously unknown to biologists. (Source: *Science News*, Vol.167)

The National Council of Churches USA has launched a new initiative to fight "growing threats to our nation's public lands and associated resources." According to Methodist Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar, "We try always to respond to God's call to be stewards of creation." The initiative will mobilize people of faith around the issue of gas and oil development as it relates to land preservation. www.organicconsumers.org/Politics/churches071405.cfm

Woodbury County, Iowa, has become the first in the nation to offer tax incentives to organic farmers. County Supervisors approved \$50,000 for helping farmers convert from conventional to organic agriculture. "We think domestic (organic) food manufacturers are going to want a reliable domestic supply," said Woodbury rural economic director Rob Marqusee. "We know that people are making money. It might as well be us, too." www.organicconsumers.org/organic/taxbreak071805.cfm

Chemical Exposure In Utero

A new chemical study of umbilical chord samples from the American Red Cross has found that babies have an average of 200 known toxic chemicals in their blood, including mercury, fire retardants, pesticides and a chemical used in the production of Teflon, even before being born. The tests found that hundreds of chemicals, pollutants and pesticides are stored in body fat over a lifetime and then pumped from mother to fetus through umbilical cord blood. Overall, chemical absorption can be reduced by eating organic foods, and by reducing exposure to toxins at home and at work. www.organicconsumers.org/school/newbornso71505.cfm

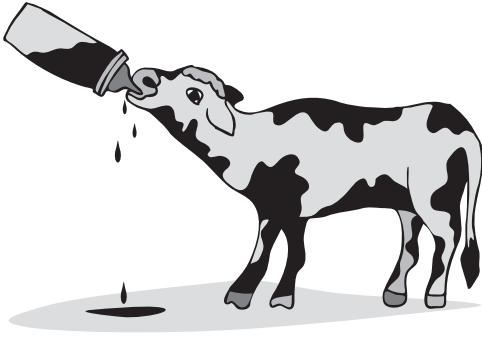


Parenting Advice: Eat Your Pesticides

Parents Magazine, one of the most influential parenting publications in the US, advised parents not to worry about pesticide residues in children's food in its recent August 2005 issue. In an article titled "Food Under Fire," the magazine belittles the benefits of organic foods as a myth, and endorses pesticides in foods as safe, stating: "there's no evidence that these chemicals, used at the low levels found in our food supply, are harmful to children." The author of the piece based his research on the opinion of a single "expert," never mentioning three decades of scientific evidence from academic, government and industry sources that states otherwise. The magazine serves as a "parenting guide" to more than 14 million subscribers. Read some related facts below, and write a quick letter to their editor here: mailbag@parentsmagazine.com

Quick Related US Government Issued Facts:

The US Centers for Disease Control reports that one of the main sources of pesticide exposure for US children comes from the food they eat. According to the Food and Drug Administration, half of produce currently tested in grocery stores contains measurable residues of pesticides. Laboratory tests of eight industry-leader baby foods reveal the presence of 16 pesticides, including three carcinogens. According to EPA's "Guidelines for Carcinogen Risk Assessment," children receive 50% of their lifetime cancer risks in the first two years of life. In blood samples of children aged 2 to 4, concentrations of pesticide residues are six times higher in children eating conventionally farmed fruits and vegetables compared with those eating organic food. Sources and more facts here: www.organicconsumers.org/organic/wic-faq.pdf



Global Mad Cow Bytes

JAPAN:

Japanese food safety regulators were shocked by a new Ministry of Agriculture study revealing that nearly half of Japanese confirmed mad cow cases would not have been discovered if the nation had been using US testing techniques. Although the US already has a shaky reputation internationally for its lax testing procedures for mad cow disease, consumers in Japan, formerly the largest overseas market for US beef, were shocked to learn, that in 9 out of 20 cases, US testing would have mistakenly allowed animals with the fatal brain-wasting disease to go to market.

UNITED STATES:

New evidence, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, reveals yet another mad cow cover-up by the USDA. In this case, back in 2003, a cow with all of the symptoms of the fatal and contagious disease had brain samples tested, which mysteriously turned up negative. Newly uncovered USDA documents reveal that the agency knowingly tested the wrong part of the brain and made no efforts to do further testing.

UNITED KINGDOM:

A select group of blood donors in the UK are being advised to get checked for vCJD, the human form of mad cow disease. Roughly one hundred donors gave blood to three people in 1993 and 1994. Those three people have since died of vCJD, and UK doctors say the chance the disease was transmitted via donated blood is quite high. More Mad Cow Info: www.organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm

Organic & Conventional Farming Face Off in 22 year Study

The July issue of the journal *Bioscience* reviewed a 22-year-long field study by the Rodale Institute which compared organic and conventional farming on similar plots of land with similar crops. The study found that in the initial five years of the study, the conventional crops (i.e. crops grown with pesticides and synthetic fertilizers) had slightly better yields than the organic crops. But during that same initial period, the organic farming practices were building up higher levels of soil mass and biodiversity which then allowed the organic land to generate yields equal to or greater than the conventional crops. The conventional crops collapsed during drought years, while the organic crops fluctuated only slightly, due to greater water holding potential in the organic enriched soil. The conventional crop also had pesticides leaching into the water at levels exceeding the EPA's safety limits. Over the 22 year period, the organic crops used 30% less fossil energy inputs than the conventional crops. www.organicconsumers.org/organic/normo71805.cfm

TV: Shrinking Kids' Brains

Three new studies reviewed in this month's issue of *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* show that the more time children spend watching television, the poorer they perform academically. One study was conducted at John Hopkins University, another in New Zealand, and a third at the University of Washington, wherein, over the course of a decade, 1,800 children participated in the study. Researchers found television leading to poor cognitive development, while access to a computer at home resulted in increased academic performance. www.organicconsumers.org/school/tvstudieso70405.cfm

Tell Congress to Stop Cafta

The Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), the expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to Central America and the Dominican Republic, will drive several million small farmers off the land—just as NAFTA has done in Mexico and Canada—as well as encourage US corporations to outsource more jobs to low-wage sweatshops. We need Fair Trade as the global norm, not so-called Free Trade. Call your Congressional Representative toll free 1-800-718-1008. Ask to speak to the person who handles trade issues. Tell the office you want your Representative to vote NO on CAFTA and ask for a response email stating the Rep's position. For more information on CAFTA, please visit Public Citizen's CAFTA page: www.citizen.org/trade/cafta/

Please note: Despite the efforts of OCA and the public interest community, CAFTA passed the House by one vote on July 28.

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

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