



# ORGANIC BYTES

September 11, 2005 · Issue 65  
[www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org)

Environmental, Consumer, and Health 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!

## Update on Past Action Alert: Another Major Success Story!

Organic Consumers Association supporters sent over ten thousand emails to legislators in the last two weeks, urging California policymakers to resist a "Monsanto Law" which was aimed at overturning local rights to democratically create zones free of genetically engineered (GE) crops. Thanks to all of you, legislators responded to the deluge of emails, faxes, and calls, and held the current GE bans in place, which were originally created by the majority votes of citizens, like you. But the biotech corporations are vowing the battle is not over. We need your participation and donations to get ready for the next round of Monsanto Laws in California and dozens of other states across the country in 2006. To get involved or keep up to date, stay tuned to the OCA's BioDemocracy Alliance web page: [www.organicconsumers.org/ge-free.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/ge-free.htm)

## A Cup of Coffee a Day Keeps the Doctor Away?

A new study from the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania indicates coffee is one of the leading dietary sources of antioxidants for Americans. Researchers analyzed 100 of the most common food items in the American diet and found coffee led the pack, contributing 1,299 milligrams of antioxidants to the average American each day. Tea was a distant second (294 mg.) and bananas fell into third place (72mg.). The results were based on average daily consumption of these food products, and researchers were quick to note that coffee, which can also increase cholesterol levels, should not be substituted for a healthy intake of fruits and vegetables and should only be consumed in moderation. The study also cautions that high antioxidant levels in foods and beverages don't necessarily translate into levels found in the body. The potential health benefits of these antioxidants ultimately depends on how they are absorbed and utilized in the body, a process that is still poorly understood. [www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/coffee090305.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/coffee090305.cfm)



## Organics in the Frightening Wake of Katrina

The unfolding human and ecological catastrophe in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast has literally blown the lid off "business and politics as usual" in the United States. Katrina has forcefully reminded us here at the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), as it has millions of Americans, that out-of-control government and corporate greed, global warming, the Iraq war, racism, poverty, oil dependency, and wetlands destruction are literally matters of life and death, which we, as socially responsible consumers and citizens, can no longer ignore or downplay. If you haven't yet made a donation to relief efforts in New Orleans, you can click on the hurricane icon on the home page of our website. In the *Daily News* section of our website you will also find a number of excellent in-depth articles on Katrina and global warming, which elucidate not only what happened, and what is happening, but point to solutions as well.

## Government Study: High Levels of Pesticides in Kids' Diets

US government scientists from the Centers for Disease Control have released a new study revealing that switching to organic foods provides children with "dramatic and immediate" protection from toxic pesticides. The scientists tested the urine of elementary school children for 15 days. Children ate conventional foods for ten days and ate organic foods for five. During those five days, researchers saw the toxins malathion and chlorpyrifos in the children's urine completely disappear. These chemicals are two of the most commonly found pesticides on non-organic foods, and are associated with nerve damage in children. Pesticide levels increased five-fold in the children's urine as soon as conventional foods were reintroduced to their diet. The study concludes, "An organic diet provides a dramatic and immediate protective effect against exposure to organophosphorus pesticides that are commonly used in agricultural production." [www.organicconsumers.org/school/organicstudy090405.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/school/organicstudy090405.cfm)

## Action Alert: Critical Budget Cuts Debated This Week

The US Congress has been ordered to cut \$3 billion from farm and nutritional programs by the Bush Administration. This week (9/12-9/16), the final decision will be made by Congress regarding what specific programs will be cut. At the moment, powerful members of Congress are leaning towards cutting farm conservation programs as well as food stamps for hundreds of thousands of poor people. But a broad coalition of nonprofit public interest organizations, including the OCA, Oxfam, Community Food Security Coalition, and the Land Stewardship Project, adamantly disagrees with placing the burden of budget cuts on the backs of the needy and the environment. Instead, we **strongly** feel the cuts should be taken out of the \$20 billion annual pork-barrel subsidies that are currently being given to the wealthiest factory farms, commodity exporters, and industrial agriculture corporations. Iowa Senator Grassley has proposed an amendment to USDA appropriations that would cap taxpayer subsidies to corporate farms at \$250,000 a year. It's no surprise that even this modest attempt at reducing corporate welfare is being attacked by corporate agribusiness. The nation's food stamp recipients, as well as the environment, need your support now, as this decision will be made in the next few days. Take action and support the "Rural America Preservation Act" (S. 385, a Senate bill which would set a cap on subsidies). Send a letter to your US Senator at: [www.organicconsumers.org/rd-subsidy.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/rd-subsidy.htm)

## Quick Tidbits

The *New York Times* calls it “the biggest surge in campus activism in nearly two decades,” but students say it’s simply the right thing to do. As the fall 2006 semester kicks off, over 100 colleges in the US have committed to producing their logo-bearing clothing items from organic and fair trade cotton. Learn how to get your school involved here: [www.organicconsumers.org/clothes/backtoschool083105.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/clothes/backtoschool083105.cfm)

Eating a healthy sized breakfast actually decreases obesity trends, reports a new study. “We think it actually kick starts metabolism,” said one of the study’s authors, Bruce Barton. Skipping breakfast actually leads to higher levels of unhealthy and ongoing snacking later in the day and into the evening, due to the body’s resulting compensatory hunger for high sugar, fat and carbohydrate foods. In addition, eating a high sugar breakfast actually shocks the body into unbalanced increases in hunger levels throughout the day. Nutritionists claim part of the obesity epidemic is due to the fact that the vast majority of Americans eat small or high sugar breakfasts, part of which is programmed in youth. Over 90% of the cereals directly marketed to children are sugar coated. [www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/breakfast.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/breakfast.cfm)



## Thousands of EPA Scientists Issue Warning on Fluoride

Over 7,000 EPA employees have called on Congress to pass a moratorium on the use of fluoride in drinking water, citing a series of new studies directly connecting the chemical to cancer. The group, made up predominantly of EPA scientists, has sent letters to key Congressional committees and the EPA Secretary, calling for the EPA to classify fluoride as a human carcinogen. At this point, it appears the National Academy of Sciences is being instructed to review relevant studies and report to Congress and the EPA on the topic in early 2006. The OCA will be calling on its supporters to take action when that report is released. [www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/fluoride090105.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/fluoride090105.cfm)

## The Ethics of Fish

The ethics of fish-eating is becoming murkier. Species depletion, mercury and other toxic contamination, and yet recommendations from nutritionists that fish is good for you. Take the case of salmon: There are those that say it’s best to purchase wild salmon, which spends its life in the ocean, feeding naturally, and thereby has less toxic residues in its body. It’s like “free-range” fish, they say. And then there are the aquaculture proponents who note we’re over-harvesting the ocean’s fish to the point of extinction. On this side of the issue, they’ll tell you it’s best to raise salmon on coastal fish farms. They’ll tell you it’s the only way to produce enough fish to feed hungry North American consumers. But the coastal farms have their problems, as well. Concentrated production of fish creates aquatic clouds of feces that literally kills the coastal waters, while diseases and parasites run rampant and spread to wild fish. Feeding captive fish antibiotics, concentrated fish meal, and slaughterhouse waste also increases toxins in their bodies. Now a new breed of fish producers claims to have the “ultimate” environmentally conscious method. By raising fish in massive closed tanks, large numbers of fish can be produced without the spread of disease into the wild and the feces is collected and used as compost. But what about the well-being of the fish? Is it possible to assess whether or not our finned friends are content with swimming in such close quarters? Or is it simply time to dramatically cut back on these types of fish in our diets? Download a pocket seafood guide at [www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/seafood-guide.pdf](http://www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/seafood-guide.pdf), and share your thoughts on this topic in OCA’s web forum: [www.organicconsumers.org/chat/index.php](http://www.organicconsumers.org/chat/index.php)

## Organics & Excessive Packaging

Eco-conscious consumers are increasingly suffering ethical short-circuits while shopping. Yes, those organic crackers were made from organic wheat that was not doused with synthetic pesticides or fertilizers. Good for the environment and worth the extra cost? Yes... but what about the packaging? Neatly lined up in a plastic tray that’s shrink-wrapped in more plastic and then swaddled up in a sealed plastic bag, these “organic” crackers suddenly lose their environmental edge. So what’s a consumer to do? Well, if you’re from the UK, things are looking up. This week, the British Government announced a new funding program that will reduce waste from packaging of organic products and create new guidelines wherein producers seeking organic certification must also meet stringent packaging waste standards. For organic consumers outside of the UK, the OCA recommends choosing organic products with minimal and/or recycled packaging. [www.organicconsumers.org/organic/packaging090205.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/organic/packaging090205.cfm)

For many more food issue daily headlines: [www.organicconsumers.org/log.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/log.html)

*Organic Bytes* is a publication of the Organic Consumers Association

6101 Cliff Estate Road · Little Marais, MN 55614 · 218-226-4164 · fax: 218-353-7652

Subscribe to *Organic Bytes*: [www.organicconsumers.org/organicbytes.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/organicbytes.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.

A coalition of over a thousand Canadian farmers has taken the Monsanto and Bayer corporations to court. The group is demanding compensation for financial losses due to contamination of organic fields by genetically engineered pollen drift. According to one plaintiff farmer, Dale Beaudoin, “This is no minor issue. It is a matter of independence and survival for all farmers world-wide.” [www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto/lawsuit090805.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto/lawsuit090805.cfm)

Harvest time has arrived. One way of *Breaking the Chains* is to buy locally grown food and/or grow your own. But with the demise of the family farm over the last few decades, so too has the art of home food preservation faded. Fret not: the National Center for Home Food Preservation, a research-based nonprofit, provides all the info you need to safely and tastily can, dry, freeze, smoke, ferment, pickle and jam this year’s harvest. It’s really not as hard as you might think!

[www.uga.edu/nchfp/](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/)