



ORGANIC BYTES

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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!

Update: Stop the Sneak Attack on Organic Standards!

Last week, the Organic Consumers Association alerted you and all of our supporters about a "Sneak Attack" on organic standards in the US Congress. As a result, network members deluged the US Congress with over 60,000 emails and 10,000 telephone calls. Thank you for your support. This nearly unprecedented grassroots upsurge has temporarily rattled Congress and the industry, delaying the initial Sneak Attack in the Senate on organic standards, resulting in a temporary compromise amendment (H.R. 2744), which calls for "further study of the issue." Unfortunately we are on the threshold of another, possibly even more serious, follow-up attack on organic standards in the House/Senate Conference Committee over the next week as Congress members put the final wording together for the 2006 Congressional Agriculture Appropriations Bill. The OCA is calling on consumers and the organic community to apply pressure

Weighing the Importance of Ethics vs. Affordability

Is it really just too hard and expensive to produce organic food? A group of market analysts and public officials in California say it is. In response, the state and federal government have approved a half million dollar grant to begin certifying food products to a lesser standard with a new "Sustainable" label. Although organic farmers say this will weaken demand in the organic market and confuse consumers, proponents of the new label say it provides consumers with an affordable alternative to pricey organic products. The new certification system has requirements for wildlife protection and soil/water management but allows the use of pesticides and a wide gamut of synthetic processing agents. As always, the OCA recommends consumers look for the "USDA Organic" label on their products or, better yet, buy local and regionally produced organic products from farmers you can meet in person at farmers markets or through direct buying in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects. www.organicconsumers.org/organic/sustainablelabel091105.cfm

to their House of Representatives members as well as their Senators to stop the Conference Committee from degrading the standards. If you haven't already done so, please send a letter to congress at www.organicconsumers.org/rd-ofpa.htm

Genetically Engineered Pigs for Dinner

The FDA has officially closed its investigation on a 2003 food safety mishap, wherein nearly 400 bioengineered pigs, developed for research, mistakenly ended up in the US food supply. The University of Illinois says it accidentally sold the pigs to a livestock dealer, instead of incinerating them, as is required by law. The FDA claims it cannot make a statement regarding potential risk to human health, given the fact that the researchers kept insufficient records. The mishap follows on the heels of a similar situation occurring in 2001, when genetically engineered pigs were stolen from the University of Florida, and later turned up in the sausage served at a funeral in High Springs, Florida. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/pigs.cfm

Your Favorite Drug Dealers Share Their Secrets

Over the last decade, the doctor-patient relationship roles have changed dramatically in the US. Traditionally, a patient would visit a doctor with an ailment, the doctor would diagnose the ailment, and the best known remedy would be prescribed. But now, pharmaceutical companies have discovered how to bypass this system by convincing patients to demand specific brand name drugs that they've seen advertised over and over again on TV and in magazines and newspapers. Recent studies show drug companies now spend a record \$3 billion on direct advertising to consumers. A 60 second commercial slot on TV can tell a viewer what's wrong with them and what drug will fix them. And it works... the advertising, that is. Recently released marketing statistics show that each year, prescriptions for the 50 most heavily advertised drugs rise six times faster than prescriptions for all other drugs. Unfortunately, the side effects of these same prescription drugs kill over 100,000 Americans every year. www.organicconsumers.org/Politics/drugcon091605.cfm



Alert : Kids at Risk from Pesticides in Schools

A summer 2005 study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reports “significant increases” in pesticide poisonings of children in schools since 1998. Nearly a third of the cases were attributable to drifting pesticides from applications taking place off-site, while the majority were due to the use of insecticides inside schools. Study authors also addressed chronic exposure to herbicides due to repeated applications on school yards, saying “the potential for chronic health effects from

pesticide exposures at schools should not be dismissed.” A piece of legislation that would reduce these chemical risk factors in schools is currently stalled in the House of Representatives. Learn more and sign on to support the School Environmental Protection Act here: www.organicconsumers.org/sepa-petition.htm

Update: Parenting Magazine Advises Kids Eat Their Pesticides

In July, *Organic Bytes* reported that *Parents Magazine*, one of the most influential parenting publications in the US, printed an article belittling the benefits of organic foods as a myth. Likely under the financial sway of the magazine’s conventional food advertisers, the magazine endorsed 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.” Thanks to you, thousands of letters and emails were generated to the magazine’s editorial staff. As an update on this issue, despite this landfall of input, *Parents Magazine* has refused to respond to any of these letters, including OCA’s formal letter of inquiry. Learn more: *US Govt. Facts—Children’s Chemical & Pesticide Exposure via Foods*: www.organicconsumers.org/organic/wic-faq.pdf

Quick Tidbits

In the last three years, 287 bills related to kicking junk food out of schools have been proposed in some 45 states. The junk food industry has lobbied hard against these laws and has successfully defeated over 85% of them. As the exception, New Jersey and Maine recently passed “junk food laws” that will remove soda, candy and other junk foods from schools (pre-kindergarten through high school) by the end of 2007. The OCA’s “Appetite for a Change” campaign is closely monitoring similar proposed legislation in your state. Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/sos.htm



Check out *Appetite for Change*, OCA's Children's Health Campaign: www.organicconsumers.org/sos.htm

After one year of being used as a key tool in the nationwide anti-GMO grassroots activist circuit, *The Future of Food* made its national theatrical premiere at Film Forum in New York on September 14. *The New York Times* described the film as a “sober, far-reaching polemic against genetically modified foods.” The landmark film opens in Minneapolis on Sunday, October 2. A special panel will follow the 7:15 PM show at the Bell Auditorium on the University of Minnesota campus. Panelists include filmmaker Deborah Koons Garcia; Ronnie Cummins, author of *Genetically Engineered Food: A Self-Defense Guide for Consumers* and Director of the Organic Consumers Association; and Mark Ritchie, President of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. For more info and the show schedule: www.mnfilmarts.org/bell/

San Francisco passed a law last week requiring city contractors to provide documentation that guarantees all new municipal purchases, from uniforms to computers, are not made from sweatshop labor. The city joins other municipalities who have passed similar “sweatshop-free” ordinances, including Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Newark, and Albuquerque. At the same time, after extensive lobbying by the OCA, San Francisco officials passed a resolution calling for giving preference to “local and organic” food suppliers for city contracts. www.organicconsumers.org/clothes/index.cfm

The US poultry giant, Tyson Foods, is being sued for violating Civil Rights laws. The company’s plant in Ashland, Alabama is accused of segregating and mistreating its African American workers. The plant’s bathrooms displayed signs saying “Whites Only,” doors were padlocked, and only white workers were given keys. Meanwhile Tyson’s meats are some of the most popular in the US, with over 150 million pounds of the company’s products sold every week. www.organicconsumers.org/Politics/TysonScandal091805.cfm

McDonald’s subsidiary restaurant chain, Chipotle, is beginning to resist the ways of its parent corporation. Although most of the restaurant’s patrons don’t realize it, the chain now quietly refuses to use factory farmed meats, sourcing its pork and chicken from free range and family farmed operations. “A majority of customers don’t even know we do this. We think this is a better way to go, and as people become more aware of where their food comes from they will care,” says Chipotle president, Steve Eells. Hopefully, Steve can clue in his parent CEO at McDonald’s on some of the finer points of animal welfare.

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

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