



ORGANIC BYTES

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www.organicconsumers.org

Health, Environment & 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!

Over the past month, Organic Consumers Association (OCA) network members have deluged Congress with over 170,000 letters, asking policy makers to reject an industry sponsored stealth "rider" to the 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Bill. The rider would weaken organic standards and allow hundreds of synthetic substances in organic production without prior review or public participation. Feeling the heat from their constituents, the us Senate stalled the rider vote and forwarded it on for discussion in the House/Senate Conference Committee. Thanks to all of you for contacting your representatives! Unfortunately we are up against powerful lobbyists from giant food processors such as Kraft as well as supermarket chains.



If you have not taken action, please send an email to Congress. If you have already emailed or called your Senators and

Representatives, thank you.

Please consider forwarding this action alert on to your friends and colleagues. We hope to generate more than 250,000 letters to stop this rider from being passed by Congress. **Take Action:**

www.organicconsumers.org/sos.cfm

Senate Debates Cutting Food Aid to 150,000 Impoverished US Children

The Senate is currently debating cutting \$3 billion from farm conservation and food stamp programs. Spearheaded by Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) and GOP supporters, the proposal would eliminate food stamps for more than 300,000 impoverished people. Currently, more than half of all food stamp recipients are children, and a quarter are senior citizens. While millions of Americans are looking for ways to cope with the aftermath of hurricanes and drought, powerful members of the Senate are being swayed by agriculture industry lobbyists, who are pushing for food stamps cuts while supporting massive tax payer subsidies to the nation's wealthiest industrial agriculture operations. "Right now the difference between life and death for many Americans is the food stamp program," said Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont. "We should not, we cannot, cut the very nutritional programs that are literally saving lives." Send a letter to your us Senator at:

www.organicconsumers.org/rd-subsidy.htm

Low Income Kids Create Healthy Food Ad Campaign

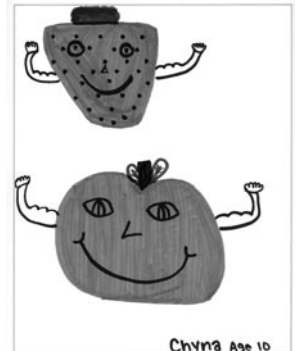
Bus riders in Seattle are seeing many of the traditional junk food advertisements on buses converted into pieces of art made by children. According to students in the area, they had never seen an advertisement for fresh fruits and vegetables, but could list countless junk food ads they see daily. Thanks to several local grants and a wealth of creative thinking, a small group of local organizers created an innovative program to improve the nutrition of low-income inner city kids by teaching them gardening, cooking and food self reliance skills. The program has helped nearly a thousand minority and low income kids create their own advertisements for healthy foods which are posted on city buses. The same program is offering opportunities for low income inner-city students to tour local farms and to learn about gardening.

www.organicconsumers.org/school/kidads101305.cfm

Art from Seattle Students:



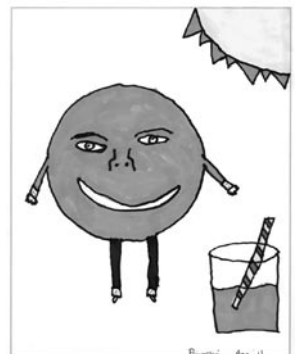
Tessa, age 10



Chyna, age 10



Augustino, age 8



Priyashni, age 11

Quick Tidbits

Fish really is brain food. A new study of elderly men and women found that eating fish at least once per week actually slows down the development of dementia. Although past studies have found the omega-3 fatty acids in fish reduce Alzheimer's disease risk, the current study authors say they are not related to the decline in dementia. The authors are calling for further studies to isolate the specific nutrient in fish related to the dementia decline.

www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/dementia.cfm

In the next couple of weeks, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is expected to announce a new policy that would legalize the sale of milk and beef from cloned cows. Hundreds of cloned pigs and cows are already living all across the US but can not yet be sold for human consumption. A sixty day public comment period will follow the FDA proposal. OCA will keep you posted on this issue.

www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/clone.cfm

Tip of the Week: Polls show that around 90% of Americans want genetically engineered foods to be labeled as such. Although 70% of processed foods contain genetically engineered ingredients, there are no laws requiring the labeling of these products in the US. But smart consumers are able to tell how their produce was created, just by looking at the PLU code on the sticker of the fruit or vegetable. The PLU code for conventional produce (grown with synthetic pesticides and fertilizers) consists of four numbers. Organically grown produce has a five digit PLU prefaced by the number 9. Genetically engineered produce has a five digit PLU prefaced by the number 8. Now if we could just get processed food to carry such labels...



Food Prices Escalate on the Heels of Rising Oil Prices

Rising oil prices aren't just raising prices at the gas pump, they're also expected to dramatically increase the cost of conventional foods. According to the Earth Policy Institute, 80% of the energy currently used in the US food system is consumed *after* the food leaves the farm (transporting, processing and packaging the food). With the average food item traveling a full 2,000 miles from farm to fork, high oil prices will translate into higher food prices. Non-organic crops may also become prohibitively expensive. In the US, roughly three quadrillion BTU of energy annually goes into making conventional fertilizers, which are made from natural gas. That's equivalent to a third of France's total annual energy consumption. As a result of escalating food costs, some market economists are predicting a renaissance of traditional American food production practices, such as sourcing organic foods from local farms and gardening at home. www.organicconsumers.org/Politics/security101105.cfm



Take the Starbucks Challenge

In 2000, the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) waged a massive leafleting campaign at hundreds of Starbucks stores around the world, urging the company to support family farmers by purchasing fair trade coffee. Starbucks eventually responded to OCA protests and officially announced it would make fair trade coffee available "upon request" in all of its Starbucks stores. Now, five years have gone by and a group of bloggers from L.A. and London have decided to check in with other bloggers around

the world to find out if Starbucks is really living up to its claim. Thousands of people are now "Taking the Starbucks Challenge," by visiting their local Starbucks location, asking for Fair Trade coffee, documenting the response, and posting the results online. So far, it's not looking very good for Starbucks. The OCA is joining the challenge on its own web forum. If you have a Starbucks fair trade experience please take a second to share it with others and post it at www.organicconsumers.org/chat/index.php

GE Crops Contaminate Land for More than Fifteen Years

A new study, funded by the biotech industry and the British government, has found that growing genetically engineered (GE) crops contaminates the land for at least 15 years. Scientists examined various test plots of GE oilseed rape and found that even if a farmer were to grow the GE plant for only one season, the plants would continue to grow year after year, contaminating future harvests. The study reveals that nine years after growing the GE rape plants, two plants were found to be growing on every square meter. After 15 years, there was still one GE plant growing per square meter. The British government is using this data to fortify its decision to uphold a ban on growing GE crops. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/ruin101105.cfm

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

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

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