



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!

A Quick Flashback to Some of Our Biggest Success Stories in 2005!

It's that time of year again, when we are calling on you to make an end of the year donation to help fuel the movement towards health, justice, and sustainability. Please send your tax deductible donation to the OCA at: www.organicconsumers.org/donations.htm
Fasten your seatbelts, as we travel back through 2005 to see how your donations and support of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) have fueled the movement towards health, justice, and sustainability.

Protecting Children and Adults from Toxic Pesticides



January: The OCA alerted the readers of *Organic Bytes* about Dow Chemical and the EPA meeting behind closed doors to remove the ban on the toxic termite pesticide Dursban. After Dursban was conclusively linked to brain damage and birth defects in kids and adults, it was banned, but Dow convinced the EPA to reverse the ban. Thanks to your overwhelming response to the OCA alert, which catalyzed public outrage across the country, the backroom deal was nullified and the ban on Dursban was reinstated. www.organicconsumers.org/epa-dow.htm

Creating a Safer Global Environment

February: The OCA informed you of new efforts by the biotech industry to legalize the "Terminator" gene, an experimental genetic engineering (GE) technique that makes plant seeds sterile. The technology would benefit GE seed producers by forcing farmers to purchase new seeds every year, but scientists are deeply concerned about what could happen if this experimental "suicide" trait spread from crops into wild plants via pollen drift. Thanks in part to your deluge of emails to the UN, those efforts by the biotech industry were stopped, and the terminator has been (at least temporarily) terminated.

www.organicconsumers.org/un.htm

Supporting Farmers Against Corporate Intimidation



March: The OCA called on organic consumers to support a national cheese manufacturer that was considering a ban on its dairy farmers using Monsanto's controversial genetically engineered bovine growth hormone (rBGH). Due to health and safety problems from the synthetic drug, bovine growth hormone is banned in Europe and Canada. Tillamook Dairy rightfully wanted to advertise that its cheeses were rBGH-free. But Monsanto, as it has done with other rBGH-free dairies for a decade, threatened Tillamook with a lawsuit. Thanks to calls and emails from the OCA national network and concerned consumers, Tillamook's board of directors stood up against Monsanto and voted to go rBGH-free. Tillamook's move has inspired a number of other dairies to ban rBGH. www.organicconsumers.org/rbgmlink.html

Defending Freedom of Speech in the Academic Arena

April: The OCA rallied its network in a massive letter-writing campaign to the University of California Berkeley. The campaign was launched because Dr. Ignacio Chapela was denied academic tenure for speaking about the current problems Mexico is having with GE corn contamination. Chapela's department was heavily pressured by the biotech industry who wanted the college to carry out industry sponsored research on genetically engineered crops. Thanks in part to everyone who took action, the University reversed its prior decision and granted Dr. Chapela his well-deserved tenure.

www.organicconsumers.org/ge/ignacio052305.cfm

Reforming Government Subsidies

July: OCA has begun mobilizing its forces to reform the forthcoming 2007-2012 Farm Bill. Currently, 80% of the US Taxpayers' \$20 billion annual agriculture subsidies go to large corporate and factory farms. OCA is gathering support from citizens and policy makers on federal, state, and local levels to change the subsidy system to support family farms and transition to organic agriculture. An example of how to do this: in July, Woodbury County, Iowa became the first county in the nation to offer tax incentives to organic farmers. County Supervisors approved up to \$50,000 in tax credits for each farmer converting from conventional to organic agriculture. www.organicconsumers.org/organic/taxbreak071805.cfm

Passing Groundbreaking Anti-Sweatshop Laws

August: OCA worked with the San Francisco Sweatfree Coalition to pass a law making the city government of San Francisco sweatshop-free. In addition to purchasing from certified non-sweatshops, the ordinance also includes special purchasing preferences for organic, local, and fair trade products. The San Francisco model demonstrates the future of diverting millions of dollars of taxpayer money from sweatshops and corporate farms, to local businesses, union shops, and organic family farmers.

www.organicconsumers.org/fair-trade/reform091605.cfm



Protecting Consumers by Watchdogging Industry



August: Due to a lack of federal oversight, some body care companies made millions of dollars in profits by falsely labeling their conventional products as “organic.” OCA’s consumer pressure campaign, OCA’s body care alliance of over 400 businesses, and a lawsuit filed by OCA and Dr. Bronner’s Soaps finally shook the foundation of the USDA, and on August 23, the agency yielded to OCA’s demands and opened the National Organic Program to body care and all other nonfood products. Now consumers know they are buying federally regulated, truly organic products when they see the “USDA Certified Organic” symbol on the label. www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/

Preserving Citizens Rights for Local Policy Control



September: OCA supporters sent over 10,000 emails to legislators in two weeks, urging California legislators to resist a “Monsanto Law” which was aimed at preventing local cities and counties from banning GE crops. Thanks to your response, legislators held the current three county GE bans in place (Mendocino, Marin, and Trinity counties), which were originally enacted by ballot initiatives and legislative action in these counties. But the biotech corporations have counter-attacked, passing “Monsanto Laws” in a dozen states. We need your continued vigilance and support to stop the next round of Monsanto Laws in California and other states across the country in 2006.

www.organicconsumers.org/ge-free.htm

Fighting the Sneak Attack on Organic Standards



September & October: OCA and our allies generated 320,000 emails and calls to Congress asking lawmakers to reject a last-minute rider to the 2006 Agricultural Appropriations bill designed to weaken the control and review of the organic community’s traditional watchdog, the National Organic Standards Board, over what synthetic substances and non-organic ingredients can be used in organic processed foods. Unfortunately, the House/Senate Conference committee ignored our letters and calls and rammed through the Sneak Attack rider in late October. The battle for organic integrity is not over, however. OCA will be back in 2006 to reverse this rider and restore organic community control over strict organic standards.

www.organicconsumers.org/sos.cfm

Defending Low Income Families from Food Stamp Cuts

October: A big thanks to all of you who responded to the OCA’s alert regarding impending agriculture appropriations cuts in Congress. The original proposed Budget Reconciliation bill would have cut \$3 billion in conservation programs and food stamps to low-income Americans. Your letters helped stop Congress from cutting food stamps (at least temporarily). Unfortunately, corporate agribusiness lobbyists got most of what they wanted, slashing funds for sustainable agriculture and farm conservation

programs, while maintaining \$20 billion in annual taxpayer subsidies to the nation’s largest chemical-intensive and genetically engineered farms. The new Farm Bill comes up for Congressional debate next year. The Farm Bill is a major piece of legislation that stipulates how \$175 billion of our tax dollars will be spent on food, farm, and nutrition programs over the next five years. The OCA will be a major player on this front, fighting for family farmers, low-income Americans, and transition to organic agriculture programs. www.organicconsumers.org/corp/agbill102105.cfm

Stopping Factory Farm Feedlots from Posing as Organic

November: We’d like to thank all of you who responded to our action alert exposing corporate feedlots who are defrauding consumers by falsely labeling their factory farmed dairy products as organic. OCA supporters generated over 30,000 letters to the USDA and National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) in less than a month. The NOSB met in November and, reeling from the public backlash, the USDA decided to begin the rulemaking process that could close these loopholes in the organic standards. The process will begin in early 2006. The OCA will play an integral role in that process, keeping organic dairy standards strict and enforceable.

www.organicconsumers.org/organic/

Breaking the Chains: Buy Local, Organic, & Fair Made

December: OCA members in over 100 cities have come together with labor, environment, consumer, and independent business groups to put our consumer dollars where our values lie, and to support healthy and sustainable local businesses and producers. As part of a growing international movement for Fair Trade, health, justice, and sustainability, organic consumers are saying “No” to Wal-Mart and the other Big Box chains, while supporting locally or regionally-based green and organic alternatives. As part of December’s “Buy Local Month,” thousands of OCA network members are working to “Break the Chains” by organizing rallies, house parties, educational events, and film showings. www.organicconsumers.org/btc.htm

None of these success stories would have been possible if it had not been for your donations and support. One year from now, the OCA will be sending out a “2006 Success Stories” email just like this. We hope that it’s even better news than this year’s, but that all depends on you. Given the political challenges that lie ahead, we need your help now! We are a member supported organization, so our work depends on donations from people like you.

Please send your tax deductible donation to the OCA now:

Organic Consumers Association

6771 South Silver Hill Drive

Finland, MN 55603

By phone: 888-403-1007 (toll free).

Or online at: www.organicconsumers.org/donations.htm

