



# ORGANIC BYTES

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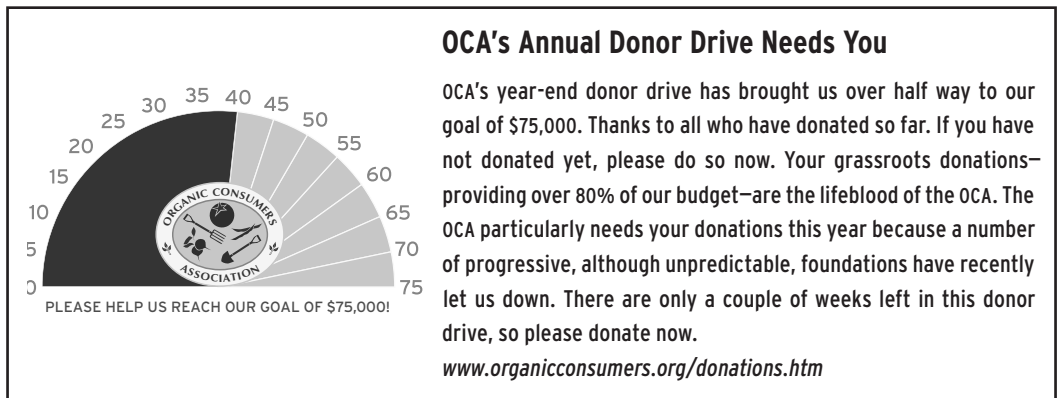
Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association  
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## Alert: National Organic Standards Board Stacked With Industry Reps

The USDA, behind closed doors, recently announced several highly questionable appointees to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). Despite calls from the organic community to let the public know ahead of time who the nominees were, the USDA kept the names of the nominees secret. The NOSB advises the USDA on how to interpret and implement national organic standards. Despite federal law that mandates that the 15-member NOSB must be broadly representative of the organic community, the USDA's recent appointees are all notable for their past or present ties to corporate agribusiness. For example the appointee for the seat reserved for a "Consumer and Public Interest Group Representative" was given to Tracy Miedema, who works for Stahlbush Island Farms, a split-farm operation with 3/4 of its acreage non-organic. Miedema, who previously worked for a subsidiary of General Mills (Small Planet) freely admits that Stahlbush utilizes Monsanto's herbicide Roundup, as well as other chemical pesticides and fungicides. The USDA's appointee for the seat reserved for a scientist is Katrina Heinze, who works for Small Planet/General Mills, a company with a hardball reputation for selling sugar-laden cereals to kids, supporting GMOS, and industrial agriculture. Heinze was forced to resign from the NOSB last year, under pressure from the OCA and the Consumer's Union, after being appointed "consumer representative" to the NOSB. Another one of the "organic experts" appointed to this powerful government board is a representative of Campbell's Soup. Please tell the USDA that organic consumers want all nominees and future appointments to be made in a fair and transparent manner and that we believe the current crop of pro-industry appointees are completely unacceptable. Learn more and take action:  
[www.organicconsumers.org/rd/nosb.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/rd/nosb.cfm)

## Good News: Dozens of "Certified Organic" Candidates Won Their Elections

As noted in a previous issue of *Organic Bytes*, dozens of the candidates who took part in our *Organic Candidate Survey* won their campaigns. The *Organic Consumers Survey* ranked candidates based on how they answered questions related to organics, health, justice, and sustainability. We'd like to thank the tens of thousands of you who visited the Organic Consumers Fund website during the week of the election and voted to help change the course of the nation. We have put together a post-election summary of the candidates who won, how they ranked on our organic scale, and the comments they made in taking our survey.  
[www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article\\_3555.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_3555.cfm)



## More Good News: Public Pressure on Starbucks is Working

Starbucks has announced its desire to eliminate Bovine Growth Hormone from its coffee shops and will reduce its use of rBGH/rBST dairy products immediately. After years of pressure from the Organic Consumers Association and our allies, the coffee chain recently stated it will be 37% rBGH-free in its company-owned cafes by January. Monsanto's rBGH, injected into dairy cows to force them to give more milk, is a genetically engineered synthetic hormone that is banned in most of the world, due to its health risks.  
[www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article\\_3545.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_3545.cfm)

Written and edited by  
Craig Minowa & Ronnie Cummins

## How To Have a Truly Green Christmas Tree

Swedish researchers have done an energy comparison between real and artificial Christmas trees. Comparing a locally grown live cut-tree to a full size plastic tree, they found that the real tree used about a fifth of the energy (assuming that the plastic tree would be used for ten years). The problem is compounded when considering that most artificial trees are made from environmentally toxic PVC. Christmas tree farmers tout the fact that their trees can grow very well on soils that are inhospitable to other crops. A single acre of Christmas trees produces enough oxygen to support 18 people, while absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>. Obviously buying a potted tree and planting it outdoors is the most environmentally friendly taunenbaum, but every year, an estimated 35 million Christmas trees are cut down and sold. For those who are buying cut-trees this year, here are some tips:

1. Try to find trees grown by farms that are organic or use low levels of pesticides. Most tree farms use a gamut of pesticides that can cause everything from skin reactions for the consumer to cancer for a farm worker.
2. Buy a locally grown tree. Oregon and North Carolina grow nearly half of the nation's Christmas trees. Many trees shipped from state to state must be sprayed with additional pesticides.
3. If possible, look to buy a species of tree that is native to your area. Tree farms typically don't need to apply as many pesticides to a tree that is native.

[www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article\\_3548.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_3548.cfm)

## Kraft Guacamole

Kraft Foods Inc. is being sued for misleading consumers about a chemical concoction questionably labeled as "guacamole" dip. Although guacamole has been made for hundreds of years out of avocado, Kraft's chemical dip features yummy stuff like hydrogenated oils, starch, food coloring, and other synthetics—with less than 2% of the dip composed of avocado. According to Claire Regan, vice president of Kraft Foods corporate affairs, "We think consumers understand that [the guacamole] isn't made from avocado."

[www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article\\_3503.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_3503.cfm)



## UN Says Livestock Adding to Climate Change

A new report from the United Nations says that the world's rapidly expanding livestock herds are responsible for 18% of all greenhouse gases. This alarming figure takes into account the clearing of rainforest and vegetation for grazing, the petroleum needed to produce fertilizers for animal feed, the fuel needed to produce and transport meat, and the gases created by manure and flatulence.

[www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article\\_3540.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_3540.cfm)

## 75% of Americans Don't Know They're Eating Genetically Engineered Foods

The fifth annual survey on US consumers' opinions of genetically engineered (GE) foods was released last week by the Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology. In accordance with past years, the survey results indicated that most Americans have very little knowledge about how widespread (GE) are in foods. Surprisingly, the survey found that the average person's knowledge of these issues has actually declined in the last five years. Although 89% of soybeans and 61% of corn acreage in the US is currently genetically engineered (and soy lecithin and corn syrup are found in a myriad of mainstream food products), 75% of people don't think they've ever eaten a food with (GE) ingredients. The survey also found that 51% of those polled are opposed to animal cloning. Only 29% said they trust the FDA, which is a strong drop from 41% in 2001. [www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article\\_3554.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_3554.cfm)

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Organic Consumers Association

6771 South Silver Hill Drive

Finland, MN 55603

Or by phone: 888-403-1007 (toll free).

For many more food issue daily headlines:

[www.organicconsumers.org/log.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/log.html)

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