

ORGANIC VIEW

A publication of the Organic Consumers Association

Membership Update • Autumn 2002

The OCA Comes of Age

Time flies when you're part of a movement that's changing the world.

A little over four years ago, the Organic Consumers Association was born, starting off with \$5,000 in the bank, three staff members, a straw bale office in the middle of the woods in northeastern Minnesota (we built it ourselves), a couple of laptops, a website, an electronic newsletter, and, thank goodness, a sizeable data base of natural food stores, coops, and consumer activists—arising out of the 1998 *SOS/Save Organic Standards* campaign, a successful nationwide grassroots effort to stop the USDA from degrading organic standards. At about the same time, the global movement against genetically engineered foods was reaching critical mass. People began questioning the unsustainable and obsessively profit-driven dogma of Free Trade.



Birthplace of the OCA (the strawbale)

They pointed out that the World Trade Organization was writing the constitution for a New World Order in which political and economic sovereignty was to be transferred to giant transnational corporations. In four years we've come a long way. The OCA now has 21 full and part time staff in Minnesota, Michigan, New York, California, Washington, Idaho, and Chiapas, Mexico; two national phone banks, in Nebraska and Virginia; and a

national communications and mobilization network of more than 400,000 organic consumers and green-minded voters, including 90,000 subscribers to our newsletters, *BioDemocracy News* and *Organic View*. The OCA has 80,000 people in its *Participate Locally* volunteer network and a thousand city coordinators, who help the OCA by

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Can Organic Farming Replace Industrial Agriculture?

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- *Is organic agriculture a practical alternative to industrial agriculture?*
- *Can organic food move beyond a niche market to become the dominant form of agriculture?*
- *Will organic and sustainable farms and ranches feed and clothe the world's ever increasing population?*
- *Does ecological farming provide "comparable yields" to the industrial farms of corporate agribusiness?*

With over \$11 billion in projected sales of organic food this year, and with consumer demand essentially doubling every four years (organic has consistently grown between 20-25% each year over the past decade), the majority of food sold at the retail level in the US will likely be organic by the year 2020. Most Americans say they have tried organic food. One-third of US adults, 67 million people, now claim that they are at least occasionally

purchasing organic products, while approximately ten million households (out of a total of 106 million nationwide) are choosing to buy organic foods, dietary supplements, personal care products, clothing, and other items on a regular basis. It is not just affluent consumers that are going organic. The group that marketers call the "true naturals," those buying organic products most frequently, tend to be women and men under

30 years of age, who earn \$30,000 or less per year. Sixty percent of the "true naturals" are women, which is especially important, given the fact that women are the primary food buyers in 2/3 of US households. Surveys indicate increasing concern over personal health, food safety, pesticides, genetic engineering, environmental toxins, junk food, obesity, children's health, and justice issues.

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A Message from the Director

Autumn greetings and thanks for your continuing support of the OCA.

In these conflictive and harrowing times, it is reassuring to see the international organic movement advancing steadily. With over \$11 billion in projected sales of organic food this year, and with organic purchases essentially doubling every four years, most food sold at the retail level in the United States will likely be organic by the year 2020.

In the European Union, the largest agricultural market in the world, the organic revolution is maturing even more rapidly. Recently I was pleasantly surprised to receive a call from the German Embassy.

An Embassy official informed me that the German Minister of Consumer Affairs and Agriculture, Renate Kunast, a member of the Green Party, "basically agreed" with the Organic Consumers

Association's three-point platform for American agriculture, and wished to have a meeting with me. OCA's Food Agenda 2000-2010 platform, as you probably know, calls for a moratorium on genetically engineered foods and crops, a phase-out of industrial agriculture and factory farming, and a conversion of US agriculture to organic practices as soon as possible. The German government, responding to the desires of consumers, family farmers, and environmentalists, has established an official goal of having at least 20% of its farms be organic by the end of this decade. And Minister Kunast's government, in sharp contrast to the Bush administration, is putting its money where its mouth is by allocating hundreds of millions of dollars in tax subsidies to help German farmers make the transition to sustainable and organic agriculture.

Our organic revolution still faces major obstacles. The agbiotech industry claims they are conquering the planet, and promise they'll soon move beyond food and drugs to genetically engineered trees, lawn grass, animals, and even embryos and human body parts. True believers in corporate globalization tell us that American-style, chemical intensive industrial agriculture is the only way to feed the world. Major clothing companies tell us it is too expensive to produce non-sweatshop, Union-made clothes, much less organic cotton or hemp clothes, in the USA. Doom sayers tell us nothing can be done: you can't fight City Hall. You can't stop genetic engineering or food irradiation.

You can't control the behavior and greed of multi-billion dollar corporations like Monsanto, Dupont, Wal-Mart, Kraft, McDonald's, Nike, and Starbucks. The OCA knows better. We are building a new world with millions of allies across the country and several billion allies across the globe. In this issue of Organic View you can read about some of our current campaigns and concerns. You can stay informed with our electronic newsletter, BioDemocracy News, or log on to www.organicconsumers.org, our popular and comprehensive website, which is updated daily.

But beyond just reading about OCA's work, we ask you to stay concerned and involved. Besides voting with your consumer dollars for a healthier, sustainable, and equitable world, please vote with your time and your pocket book for the OCA. We need your volunteer energy in your community and Congressional District—and your financial contributions—more than ever. Please support us!

Ronnie Cummins

OCA Comes of Age

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circulating petitions and literature, leafleting Starbucks cafes and supermarket chains, organizing for school lunch and curriculum reform, and pressuring major food and clothing corporations, government regulatory agencies, and elected public officials. Eight thousand concerned and activist-minded consumers and journalists visit our comprehensive website www.organicconsumers.org each day, downloading, on average, 10 pages of materials. Every day, OCA staff is interviewed by news organizations, from small community radio stations to media giants like the *BBC* and the *New York Times*. Through our website, publications, media work, and leaflet distribution, OCA's message of food safety, organic agriculture, sustainability, and Fair Trade is resonating with millions of Americans and organic activists across the world.

The OCA's nationwide network building and public education effort, which we call Food Agenda 2000-2010, has expanded to include four major marketplace pressure campaigns: **Starbucks/Frankenbucks**; **Kraft and the Frankenfoods 15**; **GE Free Supermarkets**; and **Clothes for a Change**. We are lobbying and supporting local, state, and federal legislation calling for mandatory labeling and safety testing of GE foods, as well as initiatives for Fair Trade and organic purchasing in city governments and school districts. The OCA is actively participating in a coalition called **Organic and Beyond**, spearheaded by the Washington, DC based **Center for Food Safety**, to monitor and pressure the USDA on organic standards. Together we are urging organic consumers to move beyond lowest common denominator USDA Organic and big business controlled organic (what we call "grade B organic") by buying locally, regionally, and responsibly.

While the OCA has grown and matured, so has the constituency that it represents. The number of organic consumers across the country and the world has doubled in the last four years, as has the number of active campaigners against genetic engineering and industrial agriculture. Biotech companies like Monsanto and Syngenta, which seemed all but invincible four years ago, are on the defensive, and on the way down. Although Washington and the transnationals are trying to maintain business as usual, organic consumers, anti-globalization activists, and civil society have put the corporate elite on notice that an alternative community of peace, justice, and sustainability—along with a relocalization of the global economy—lies on the horizon.

An enormous task lies ahead. Even if GE foods and crops are slowly being driven from the marketplace, the fatal harvest of industrial agriculture is still poisoning our bodies, destroying our immune systems, killing the earth, and driving two billion family farmers and rural villagers further into poverty. Even if the demand for organic food and products is growing rapidly, non-sustainable practices still dominate the marketplace and undermine the planet's carrying capacity—clean water, clean air, healthy forests, and biodiversity. While military madness, economic inequality, and a steady suppression of civil liberties threaten to become the norm in the US and the rest of the world, most people desire peace and justice. So read and enjoy this issue of *Organic View*. But most importantly, join us, support us, and keep up the good work you are doing, as a responsible consumer, student, parent, neighbor, worker, activist, and global citizen.



Organic Communities Exchange

The OCA Organic Communities Exchange announces its Fall 2002 and Winter 2003 eco-tours to San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, October 29-November 5 and February 6-14, 2003. These guided tours, part of the OCA's **Sustainable Chiapas Project**, will give delegates the opportunity to visit and experience the reality and the culture of traditional indigenous communities struggling for autonomy and self-sufficiency in the beautiful highlands and forests of Southern Mexico.

The delegations, each limited to 15 people, will meet with organic farmers, women's community organic garden projects, Fair Trade coffee co-ops, traditional healers, biodiversity activists, and autonomous indigenous communities.



OCA's Chiapas tours are designed to teach North Americans about the role that community-based organic farming has in creating a world free of poverty and malnutrition. Besides getting an intimate look at the politics of food and biodiversity in the highlands of Chiapas, delegates will visit community based eco-tourism projects and learn about economic alternatives created to promote indigenous autonomy.

Cost of the nine-day trip is \$800, (airfare not included). To reserve your spot, send a \$400 deposit check to the national OCA office or E-mail mexicotrip@organicconsumers.org for further information. For a full description of OCA's eco-tours and the Sustainable Chiapas Project see www.organicconsumers.org/ecotour1.cfm





Organic Consumers Activities

The OCA has begun working with a group of food and farm activists who want to start an OCA network in Canada. The OCA has 1500 organic consumer contacts in Canada, a number of whom have leafleted Starbucks cafes and supermarkets.

In Mexico, the OCA has opened an office in Chiapas, working with women's groups in autonomous indigenous communities to develop organic community gardens as well as with small farmer coffee coops to get organic and Fair Trade certification.

The OCA is also sponsoring regular delegations (as described on page 3) to Chiapas, bringing together organic consumers from the North and indigenous farmers from the South. Our next project in Mexico will be serving as a connection for people who are willing to do volunteer work on organic farms or eco-tourism projects in Mexico, as part of the worldwide network, Willing Workers on Organic Farms.

Organic Markets—Canada and Mexico

Organics are booming, North and South. Canada's organic market is approaching one billion dollars in sales, while Mexican farmers, according to industry statistics, will export 100 million dollars worth of organic products this year. There are already 30,000 small farmers in Mexico growing organic crops, with coffee leading the way. Besides supplying Mexico's own internal market for pesticide-free and non-genetically engineered foods, small farmers in Mexico can potentially export billions of dollars of organic warm-weather crops such as bananas, cacao, mangos, papayas, pineapples, vanilla, and traditional medicinal plants.

O r g a n i c v s .

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Despite the rising chorus of “organic bashing” carried out by well-paid PR flacks and lobbyists for biotech and corporate agribusiness, it is unlikely that the mounting green wave of organics can be stopped.

In Europe, demand for organic food is growing even faster than in the USA. Countries like Denmark, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland are rapidly moving toward ecological farming systems.

In Asia and the Pacific region, more and more health conscious consumers are buying organic food, prompting farmers in agricultural nations like China and New Zealand to avoid GE and take the organic route.



Minnesota organic farmer Atina Difley with her children Eliza and Maize at their roadside stand.

There are now 130 nations across the world producing organic crops, making organic farming the fastest growing segment of global agriculture. In comparison, only four nations—the US, Canada, Argentina, and China—are growing GE crops on any scale, and global resistance to “Frankenfoods” is steadily rising.

There is no doubt that powerful market demand on the part of consumers in the industrialized nations is driving the organic revolution. But how far can this go? Are sustainable farming practices suitable for the Global South, where the majority of people live? The biotech industry and the industrial agriculture

lobby are planting increasingly more articles in the press, saying that organic food is just a health fad for the rich, that organic farms will never be able to produce enough food for the mass market, much less feed the world's 800 million hungry people.

Let's look more closely at the hunger and farm productivity issue. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has pointed out repeatedly that there is one and a half times as much food produced in the world today as would be required to feed everyone on the planet 2,500 calories per day. This means that in 50 years, when world population likely will reach nine billion, there will still be enough food for everyone. Even if climate disruption

slightly decreases yields, there will be enough food to go around, given the likelihood that many of the hundreds of millions of seriously overweight consumers in the industrialized North will become more health-conscious and stop over-consuming meat and animal products. Proportionately more grain products could then be fed to humans, rather than to animals. (It requires 7 pounds of grain and 2400 gallons of water to produce just one pound of beef on a US feedlot.) The fundamental reason 800 million chronically undernourished people go to bed hungry every night, while a billion more are in danger of becoming

I n d u s t r i a l

malnourished, and 35,000 children starve to death every day, is poverty, not a limited supply of food in the world. As Frances Moore Lappe puts it, hunger is caused by the “lack of democracy in the world, rather than the lack of food”. The UN emphasizes that world hunger could be wiped out immediately if each of the world’s 800 million hungry people simply had \$500 each year to purchase their own food. This adds up to 400 billion dollars a year to feed everyone on the planet, which is roughly equivalent to the military budget of the United States. Many of the world’s hungry live in rural areas or in cities where urban gardens could be cultivated. They are capable of growing their own

sustainable practices are not only viable, but absolutely necessary. While decades-long studies of organic farms in the US and Europe show comparable yields (80-93%) for individual organic and conventional crops (corn compared to corn, rice compared to rice), most studies reveal much higher yields per acre on small organic farms which grow a variety of crops (i.e. corn, beans, and squash on a single plot of land rather than just corn). In the developing world, where most farmers work small plots of land of 10 acres or less, bio-intensive sustainable farming practices (crop rotation, composting, crop diversity, cover crops, promotion of beneficial insects and soil microorganisms) have



photo by Ken Hammond, USDA

Cover photo from *Fatal Harvest—The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture* · www.fatalharvest.org

food and fiber, but they lack land, seeds, and credit. Forty percent of the world’s population are farmers, or rural villagers. The majority of these two billion people are facing economic difficulties. The landless are desperate and hungry, while small farmers and indigenous people that do have land are slipping further into poverty. The high cost of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation, and other industrial agriculture inputs—coupled with the ever decreasing price paid to farmers for their crops in an increasingly globalized market economy—means that lower-input, less energy-intensive organic and

been found to simultaneously increase yields by up to 50% while decreasing production costs (energy, chemicals, fertilizers) by 50%. The health and environmental benefits of organic agriculture are undeniable: healthier food, cleaner water and soil, fewer carbon emissions into the atmosphere, increased biodiversity, healthier farm animals.

Organic and sustainable farming is not only the key to the future of agriculture, but a key to our future survival. We are what we eat. Fortunately the world is going organic. But there is no time to lose.



Q Why Does Organic Food Cost So Much?

A The short answer is that it doesn't. Fast food and grocery brands are actually very expensive once their hidden costs are tallied up. Some of the hidden costs to taxpayers of cheap industrial food include environmental damage (polluted water, soil, and air, greenhouse gas emissions, genetic pollution, species extinction) as well as damage to public health (heart disease, immune system damage, hormone disruption, behavior and learning disorders, food poisoning, allergies, cancer). Conventional foods are particularly expensive when we consider the damage being done by junk food to school children as well as the impact of the low-budget industrial chow served in hospitals and nursing homes.

As more people start buying organic, an economy of scale will kick in, and organic won't be quite as expensive. But organic food and clothing should never be so cheap as to deny a living wage to the hard-working farmers and farm workers who grow our food and fiber the natural way. Organic products need to be fairly traded, besides being pure.

But even at current prices, organic can be cheaper than conventional food. Buying whole foods and grains and “cooking from scratch” or buying directly from local farmers and farmers markets can reduce your organic food costs. Joining a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture group), where you pay in advance for the season’s harvest, or forming a buying club to buy in bulk can reduce your costs by 40-50%.

For a list of CSA's or coop wholesale distributors see OCA's website at www.organicconsumers.org



🌿 *Anti-GE Foods Update* 🌿

The OCA continues to go all-out on the Frankenfoods front. Since spring, OCA volunteers have distributed over 400,000 leaflets near supermarkets and coffee shops in over 500 different cities, pressuring international companies like Starbucks and Kraft, and large supermarket chains like Safeway and Shaw's, to remove GE ingredients from their company brands. Similar pressure campaigns in the EU and Japan have all but driven GE foods from the market. Over the past two years, three major US supermarket chains with over five billion dollars in combined sales have responded to consumer concerns and removed GE foods and ingredients from their store brands. These chains are Whole Foods, Wild Oats, and Trader Joe's. The OCA is now working closely with **Greenpeace** and the **GE-Free Markets Coalition** to target the nation's largest regional supermarket chains such as Safeway, Shaw's, A&P, Publix, and Food Lion. On April 17-22, and again on October 5-12, the OCA joined members of our national coalition, the **Genetically Engineered Food Alert (GEFA)** www.gefoodalert.org and leafleted supermarkets in over 150 cities, putting special pressure on Kraft, the largest food company in the US, to remove all GE ingredients from its product line. The OCA and GEFA are continuing an ongoing letter and fax campaign against Kraft. To get involved leafleting supermarkets in your area, please email simon@organicconsumers.org.

On the media front, the OCA has been interviewed by more than 300 media organizations in the past six months on the GE foods issue. Details on anti-GE developments in the marketplace, in the media, in politics, and in science can be found on our website and in the OCA's free electronic newsletter *BioDemocracy News*. A recent issue, *The Death of Frankenfoods*, (#40), included a growing list of "obituaries" for GE foods, a summary of a British study on the effects of Roundup Ready soy in the human digestive system, and a report on problems with containment of biopharmed corn planted in the open environment in US test plots. See www.organicconsumers.org for back issues and a free subscription.

On the lobbying front, the OCA is putting significant effort and resources into a November 5 Oregon ballot initiative that will require mandatory labeling of all GE foods. Monsanto and America's largest food corporations are spending six million dollars to defeat the measure, whereas pro-labeling advocates have less than \$150,000—\$30,000 of which has been donated by the OCA. If the Oregon initiative passes, the OCA and its lobbying partner, the **Organic Consumers Fund (OCF)**, plan to help groups all over the country pass similar initiatives. See the information on page 8 to encourage your Representatives to support similar bills in Congress.



USDA ORGANIC Labels & Beyond

Beginning October 21, 2002, Certified Organic products in the US will bear the label "USDA Organic."
There are four labels you will see when shopping for organic products:

100% ORGANIC
All of a product's content is certified organic. These products may display the "USDA Organic" seal.



ORGANIC
At least 95% of a product's content is certified organic. These products may also display the "USDA Organic" seal.

MADE WITH ORGANIC INGREDIENTS
At least 70% of a product's content is organic. Up to three ingredients can be listed with the phrase "made with organic."

LESS THAN 70% ORGANIC CONTENT
May identify organic content only on the product label's ingredients list.

In all these labeling categories, any ingredient identified as organic cannot be from both organic and non-organic sources. For example, if the label says, "made with organic apples," all the apples used in the product are certified organic.

The certification process verifies that organic products meet stringent requirements in each step from the farm to the store.

As we pointed out in the last issue of *Organic View*, the minimum USDA standards and the "USDA Organic" label are just the beginning.

We should also give preference to products from farms which are local, small-scale and family operated, biologically diverse, humane, and socially just.

OCA CAMPAIGNS

Clothes for a Change

OCA has launched a public education and marketplace pressure campaign to raise awareness among organic consumers about the social and environmental effects of cotton and clothing production. The **Clothes for a Change** campaign will be demanding that major clothing retailers and manufacturers:

Stop buying and selling clothes that contain genetically engineered cotton.

Start blending organic and other sustainable fibers such as hemp in clothing.

Stop using sweatshop labor. Guarantee independently verified Fair Labor standards.

Buy Union and Buy USA whenever possible.



Fifteen years ago organic food in the USA was a tiny niche market. Now it's an \$11 billion a year market, the fastest growing segment of the American food system. Today, organic and Union or Fair Made clothing constitutes a niche market, but with your support we can meet our long term goal of having at least 30% of all clothing in the USA be Organic & Fair Made by the year 2010. The OCA intends to meet this goal by: **Generating** thousands of faxes, emails and phone calls to clothing companies; **Organizing** hundreds of leafleting events and protests near stores selling products from market leaders such as Nike, The Gap, Ralph Lauren, and Levi's; **Distributing** thousands of fact sheets and leaflets to educate consumers about these issues; **Petitioning** school districts, city councils, and universities to begin purchasing only organic and Fair Made clothing and fibers; and **Enlisting** the public interest community (environmental groups, labor unions, churches) to "walk our talk" and stop selling their T-shirts and other clothing unless they are Union Made, or at least certified non-sweatshop and organic.

OCA'S Starbucks Campaign



Starbucks keeps spreading across the globe, and so does OCA's **Frankenbucks** campaign. On Sept. 21-28, OCA volunteers leafleted and protested at over 300 Starbucks cafes in the US. Volunteers also leafleted Starbucks in Mexico, Canada, Austria, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Israel. Despite 18 months of pressure by the OCA, Starbucks has gone only halfway in terms of meeting our demands to remove recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) and other GE ingredients from their food

and beverages and to brew and seriously promote Fair Trade and Organic coffee. Starbucks admits that only 1% of its current coffee purchases are Fair Trade or Organic, and has stubbornly resisted our demand to show good faith by serving Fair Trade or organic coffee as its coffee of the day at least one day a week. For more information on the **Starbucks Campaign**, Fair trade and the world coffee crisis see www.organicconsumers.org/starbucks/

BIODEMOCRACY NEWS

Free Electronic Newsletter!

BioDemocracy News is a free electronic newsletter which contains comprehensive news and analysis on Organics, Genetic Engineering, Fair Trade, globalization and factory farming.

To subscribe or request back issues, go to the OCA website: www.organicconsumers.org or send your email address to: info@organicconsumers.org

The OCA's electronic newsletter lessens the load on your mailbox and the environment by keeping our mailings to a minimum, and helps the OCA save money on printing and postage.

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Call or Fax the Frankenfoods 15!

Tell these companies to remove GE ingredients, including recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH), from their brand name products.

THE FRANKENFOODS 15	PHONE	FAX
Starbucks	800-235-2883	206-447-3432
Kraft / Nabisco	800-543-5335	847-646-2922
Shaws	888-431-7429	508-313-3111
Kellogg's	800-962-1413	616-961-2871
Frito-Lay	800-352-4477	972-334-5071
Campbell Soup	800-257-8443	856-342-3878
Quaker Oats	800-367-6287	
Nestle	800-225-2270	818-549-6952
Safeway	877-723-3929	925-467-2005
Heinz Foods	888-472-8437	412-456-6128
Procter & Gamble	800-331-3774	
McDonald's	630-623-6198	630-623-6942
Coca-Cola	800-438-2653	770-989-3640
General Mills	800-328-1144	612-764-8330
Hershey's	800-468-1714	888-431-7429

Support the Kucinich Labeling Bills!

The OCA and the OCF have begun a nationwide petition drive and lobbying campaign to get 2.5 million organic consumers (5,000 in each Congressional District) to support Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich's federal bills for mandatory labeling and safety testing of GE foods, introduced into the US Congress in May. California OCA members have also been lobbying Senator Barbara Boxer to introduce similar bills in the US Senate. Last year a Kucinich labeling bill gained over 50 co-sponsors, but failed to reach the floor of the House for a vote.

See www.organicconsumers.org/gefood/kucinich052302.cfm

Contact Congress!

To find your representative call the congressional switchboard at 202-225-3121 and they will connect you.

Tell them to co-sponsor the GE labeling bill: H. R. 4814



Complementary Copy

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