



Farmers Know

A Vermont organic dairy farmer recently wrote an op-ed in which he defended conventional (non-organic) dairy farmers. Vermonter Jacques Couture wrote that he was “a little perplexed” by the “current demand by some vocal Vermonter” that all dairy farmers convert to organic. There’s room for both organic and non-organic, he said.

Couture didn’t specifically mention the consumer campaign asking Ben & Jerry’s to source 100% organic dairy. Nor did he name the nonprofits—Regeneration Vermont and the Organic Consumers Association—behind the campaign. Did Ben & Jerry’s put Couture up to writing the op-ed? Is the Unilever-owned ice cream maker paving the way for a future announcement that its conventional dairy suppliers will soon start using better farming practices (but not go organic)? We can only speculate.



But we don’t have to speculate about this: Couture’s opinion piece was missing more than just the details behind the story. It missed the point. Which is this: Conventional dairy, which relies on Monsanto’s Roundup Ready GMO crops, is poisoning Vermont’s water, degrading Vermont’s soil and contributing to global warming. And yes, the glyphosate we found in Ben & Jerry’s ice cream is a health problem. orgcns.org/2hbsoQI

Nix the Neurotoxin!

In November 2015, the EPA finally took steps to ban chlorpyrifos, an agricultural pesticide known to be especially harmful to farmworkers and children. Then along came the Trump Administration. Intent on prioritizing corporate profits over public health, Trump’s EPA reversed the ban on chlorpyrifos—just 20 days after EPA Chief Scott Pruitt met with the CEO of Dow Chemical.

In August 2017, 60 members of Congress, led by Congressman John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) and Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) sent a letter to Pruitt asking how the EPA plans to protect Americans from harmful pesticides. The letter noted how EPA scientists had previously concluded that the agency should ban chlorpyrifos, due to “significant evidence of the harmful effects it has on farmworkers and young children.”

From the letter: “Research shows that prenatal exposures to chlorpyrifos are associated with reduced IQ, loss of working memory, attention disorders and delayed motor development.”

Chlorpyrifos, an organophosphate pesticide, is classified as a neurotoxin. In addition to potentially causing reduced IQ, loss of working memory, attention disorders and delayed motor development, chlorpyrifos has been linked to autism, dyslexia and other brain-related injuries in millions of children.

Take Action: orgcns.org/2ldgglb

Save the Soil!

Next week, the folks who write the rules for organic standards will gather in Jacksonville for the bi-annual National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting. The folks who think food raised without soil shouldn’t be certified organic will be there, too. And they intend to kick up a little dirt. At issue is this: Corporate agribusiness is pushing the NOSB and the USDA National Organic Program to allow hydroponically grown produce, including tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, peppers and berries, to be labeled certified organic. Since July, rallies have been held in 15 cities, from California to Maine, in support of keeping the soil, the foundation of organic, in organic farming. On October 31, supporters will rally one last time, in Jacksonville, during the NOSB meeting. If you can, please join the Jacksonville rally on October 31. If not, please sign our petition to the NOSB. Take Action: orgcns.org/2ldgglb

Yet Again

Earlier this week *New York Times* cited a new report by the notoriously conservative Government Accountability Office (GAO), which said “climate change is costing taxpayers billions.”

CNN also reported on the GAO study, which calls on Trump to “craft appropriate responses.”

The CNN coverage noted several initiatives to combat climate change undertaken under the Obama administration—the Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan, which sought to lower carbon emissions on a state-by-state basis, and the Paris climate agreement, which saw almost every country agree to voluntary limits on future carbon emissions. The current climate-denying Trump administration wants to scrap those and other climate initiatives, in favor of prioritizing corporate profits.

But that’s not why I’m writing today. I’m writing because once again, a major report on the costs—financial, social, environmental, political—of doing nothing to slow runaway global warming focuses exclusively on reducing carbon emissions. The new report fails to mention that even if we achieved zero emissions tomorrow, we’re still in big trouble—unless we draw down and sequester into the soil and forests the 200 billion tons of excess carbon already lodged in the atmosphere. orgcns.org/2y3IAYl

Sticky Situation

Speaking of organic standards... recently, one of our readers wrote to let us know how shocked she was to discover that anyone can buy official looking USDA Certified Organic adhesive labels online, at Amazon.com no less.

We couldn’t believe it. Surely, we’d have to show proof that our product is certified organic before we could buy these stick-on labels?

So we ordered them. And the order was filled—1,000 stickers for \$12.99. No questions asked.

Farms pay anywhere from \$700 - \$1200 to obtain organic certification. The USDA organic seal ought not to be easily purchased online, by anyone looking to pass off their non-organic produce on unsuspecting customers.

The best way for consumers to reduce their exposure to pesticides is to buy from a trusted local producer and/or look for the USDA organic seal. Sure, there are a few bad actors in the organic industry who game the system—but it’s a system, and a set of standards, worth protecting.

The organic labels sold on Amazon are made by LabelValue.com, which also sells them online.

What do you say we give these companies a call, or drop them a note, to ask them to either implement a verification process for buying organic labels—or stop selling them?

Call LabelValue.com: 800 750-7764

Call Amazon customer service: 866-216-1072

Contact Amazon using their guided customer service process:

1. Sign into your Amazon account and click Help on the right menu.
2. Click Contact Us.
3. Enter the details of your problem.
4. Choose from Email, Phone, or Chat.
5. Based on your choice, click Send Email, Call Me Now, or Start Chat to deal with a customer service representative.