



ORGANIC BYTES

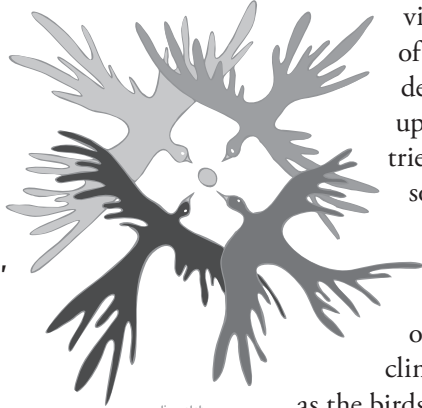
Organic News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association

www.organicconsumers.org

November 24, 2003 · Volume 1, Issue 23

Quote of the Week

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs - ask yourself what makes you come alive, and then go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."
-Harold Thurman Whitman



liz welch

What Bush Wants, Bush Gets

The Bush Administration and biotech industry won a significant GE battle this week. After a five year moratorium on genetically engineered (GE) foods, the European Union has caved in to pressure from the US and has now conceded that it will lift the ban and approve GE sweetcorn. This resignation of food safety standards falls on the heels of New Zealand's cancellation of a two year moratorium on GE crop trials, which happened just two weeks ago. www.organicconsumers.org/corp/corn111803.cfm

Bronner's Donating 10% of Web Sales to OCA

Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps has committed to donating 10% of all web sales in November and December to the Organic Consumers Association.

Bronner's recently won Co-op America's prestigious 2003 Green Business Award for leadership in advancing the Green business movement.

The 50 year old natural soap and body care product company was selected from 2,200 Green businesses for its dedication to the environment, social rights, and the community. The web store can be found at www.drbronner.com/main.html



Flying Scarecrows

It's becoming increasingly common in California for vineyards to practice innovative and ecological methods of controlling pests. One such problem is that of birds who descend on the crops when the grapes are fully ripe, gobbling up as much as 10% of the profits. In the past, vineyards have tried everything from poison to shotguns, but an age-old solution has been rediscovered: falcons. Dan Connors, the manager of Robert Mondavi's Cuesta Ridge vineyards, says the object isn't to kill the invading birds, but just to scare them off. Trained falconers bring the birds out in the morning and set the falcons free. "The falcon climbs to about 1,500 feet. The falcon then dives. As soon as the birds see the falcon, they're out of there", said Connors. A single falcon can cover 500 acres and scare off thousands of birds. -

www.organicconsumers.org/organic/falcons110203.cfm

You're Being Watched

According to a recent *Chicago Sun Times* investigative feature, Wal-Mart and Procter and Gamble (P&G) have been found to be concealing high tech tracking devices in their consumer products and hiding cameras in store displays. The tracking devices, known as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), can be as small as a grain of sand, and, so far, they have been detected in P&G's Lipfinity products at Wal-Mart, as well as in Gillette razors and Benetton clothes. The electromagnetic tracking devices can be read through clothes and walls. P&G admits this was just a trial-run of tracking devices it would ultimately like to use in all products—serving as "the barcode of the future," and "strictly for marketing research." Katherine Albrecht, the Director of Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering, said, "This trial is a perfect illustration of how easy it is to set up a secret RFID infrastructure and use it to spy on people." In addition to the "spy chips", hidden cameras were also discovered in store displays, allowing P&G to watch shoppers from hundreds of miles away. Wal-Mart does not deny having prior knowledge of the hidden cameras and tracking devices, given the fact that their employees set up those very same displays. -www.organicconsumers.org/corp/rfid111303.cfm

The Destructive Power of Just One Mad Cow

A single case of Mad Cow Disease, which surfaced only six months ago, has cost Canada's meat industry over \$2.5 billion (US). Mad Cow Disease has been linked to the potentially fatal Creutzfeldt-Jakob brain wasting disease (CJD) in humans, and only seems to surface in densely overpopulated cattle feedlots. During a Mad Cow Disease epidemic in the UK, over 100 people contracted and died from CJD, which nearly brought the British beef industry to its knees. As a result, discoveries of new cases of the disease now mandate the implementation of highly expensive quarantine procedures, including limiting exports, in order to halt the spread. Canada's multi-billion dollar losses include downsizing of herds, quarantine costs, relocation of farms neighboring the sector of the Mad Cow case, and export impacts. -www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/canada111603.cfm

3 Sentences About the Organic Beef Moo-vement

The organic beef market is exploding. Ignited by consumer concerns over Mad Cow Disease, meat irradiation, antibiotics and synthetic hormones, the beef industry is currently witnessing a massive market shift towards organic meat. Texas ranchers are responding to the nationwide increased demand for organic beef, converting vast acreages of conventional ranches into organic production. This has launched the state from #12 most organic acreage in the US to #2 (Colorado is #1, with nearly 600,000 organic acres in production).

organicconsumers.org/organic/texas111603.cfm

More Good News

Wisconsin is also currently demonstrating how to raise cattle sustainably, healthily and profitably. Recent statistics show the state now produces 22% of the nation's organic milk and ranks second in the US for acres of organic hay and silage. While conventional dairy farmers have been struggling with heavily fluctuating dairy prices, organic dairy farmers have been enjoying the quick growth of the organic dairy market. As an example of this blossoming sect of the economy, Organic Valley, a Wisconsin based co-op of organic farmers, watched their sales grow by more than 1,200 percent between 1995 and 2002.

organicconsumers.org/rbgh/wisc111603.cfm

Quick Related Resources

- Search OCA's online database of RBGH-free dairy, Farmers Markets, CSAs and organic food.

organicconsumers.org/purelink.html

- For an entertaining and educational Flash video about factory farming, check out:

www.thematrix.com

Take Action

If any of the issues above spark your desire to take action, please visit OCA's Action Center for instant faxes, petitions, volunteering and donation opportunities.

organicconsumers.org/action.htm

Can GE Foods Ease World Hunger?

In the *New York Times*, Dr. Charles Benbrook says, "The first generation of genetically modified food crops—corn and soybean seeds—were created to make pest management simpler on America's large, mechanized farms. The technologies would be far less effective on African farms, which are small and diversified and rely largely on human labor." Adding to that sentiment, a recent Reuters article points out that GE crops need nearly ideal growing conditions, something the arid and drought-ridden climes of Africa simply cannot provide—not to mention the fact that impoverished African farmers can't even afford GE seeds, which typically cost 35% more than traditional seeds.

www.organicconsumers.org/ge/africa111103.cfm

www.organicconsumers.org/ge/071403_ge_africa.cfm

Vatican to Take Stance on GE Foods

The Vatican has invited 67 scientists and plant experts to Rome to speak about the benefits and drawbacks of genetically engineered food crops. Upon closure

of this exclusive conference, the Vatican is expected to take a formal stance on the issue, which ultimately represents the viewpoint of the Catholic Church. On that level, the outcome of the conference, organized by the pro-biotech Cardinal Renato Martino, could have massive political ramifications. Many priests who oppose biotech have already shared their concerns over the fact that the majority of

experts consulting the Vatican on the topic are pro-biotech. The final decision is likely to be heavily influenced by the biotech claim that GE seed global proliferation could ease world hunger. organicconsumers.org/ge/vatican111303.cfm

Cloned Yummy Nummies—It's for Dinner

The FDA has vowed it will release a foods risk assessment of food products from cloned animals within the next six weeks. The assessment will be developed from the input of the FDA's Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee and will then be made available for public comment. FDA committee scientists are complaining that there is far too little data available to make a judgment either way. The cost of cloning is such that only a small handful of large companies are able to afford it. These same companies say much of their research data is proprietary. Complicating matters, there are very few comprehensive public sector studies focused on food safety, relating to cloned animal by-products.

"Most of the data presented this week was based on the result of one company's work," said pathobiologist Jack Sherman, speaking about the committee's most recent meeting. "There's no evidence yet to base a go/no-go decision." Stay tuned. www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/clonedmeat111303.cfm

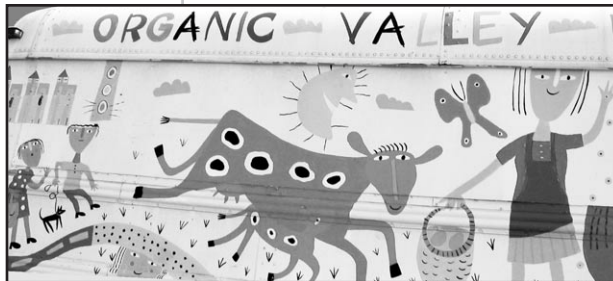
For many more food issue daily headlines: www.organicconsumers.org/log.html

Organic Bytes is a publication of the Organic Consumers Association
6101 Cliff Estate Road · Little Marais, MN 55614 · 218-226-4164 · fax: 218-353-7652

Subscribe to *Organic Bytes*: www.organicconsumers.org/publications.cfm

Help support the work of the Organic Consumers Association with a tax deductible donation: www.securemysite.com/greenpeople/ocadonate.cfm

Note to co-op and natural food store subscribers: *Organic Bytes* is a great tool for keeping your staff and customers up to date on the latest issues. Feel free to print *Organic Bytes* for posting on bulletin boards and staff break tables. You are also welcome to use this material for your newsletters. There's also a plain text version of *Organic Bytes* available at www.organicconsumers.org/organicbytes.htm



Organic Valley Bus, LaFarge, Wisconsin