



# ORGANIC BYTES

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Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association  
[www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org)

## Quote of the Week

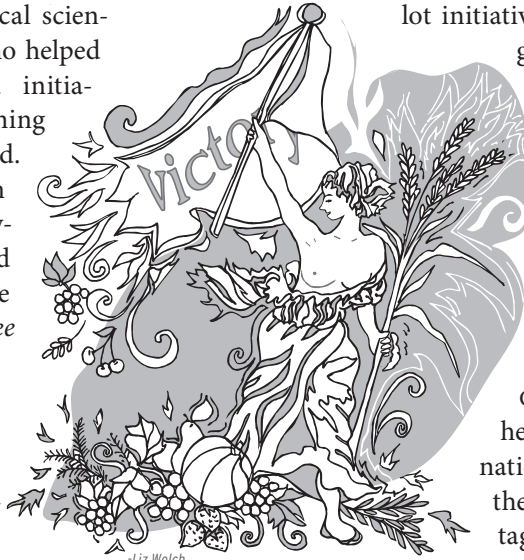
“These multi-billion dollar corporations underestimated the savvy and determination of Mendocino County voters,” said Els Cooperrider of Ukiah, CA, a retired medical scientist and business owner who helped spearhead the citizen-led initiative. “This is just the beginning of the revolution,” she said. “We’re the first county in the US to prohibit the growing of genetically altered crops and animals—but we won’t be the last.” -*GMO Free Mendocino* 3/3/04

## Hydrosol Scheme Running Out of Steam

It’s been a week full of victories! One year after the OCA launched the Coming Clean Campaign to establish strong labeling standards for “organic” cosmetics, the Organic Trade Association’s Personal Care Task Force rejected a scheme of counting ordinary water as “organic” in body care products. In a 13-2 vote on Saturday, March 6 at the Natural Products Expo West in Anaheim, CA, the task force of natural body care companies condemned the practice of counting as “organic” water added during the steaming of botanicals to make hydrosol water extracts. The task force subsequently voted 10-5 to not count any amount of hydrosol water extracts as organic until the minority percentage of water from plant material versus added from steam can be determined. The OCA will continue to drive this campaign ahead, until meaningful organic standards are established for body care products.

[www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/](http://www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/)

## Mission Accomplished - Mendocino County Bans GE Crops!



It’s official! Mendocino County, California has passed a ballot initiative making it the first county in the US to ban genetically engineered crops and animals. This is an important and precedent-setting victory for farmers and consumers, particularly given the fact that corporate agribusiness and the biotech industry spent over \$620,000 attempting to convince citizens to vote against the referendum (grassroots supporters of the referendum had only \$100,000 to work with, including \$11,500 from the Organic Consumers Association). Organic and non-GMO farmers in Mendocino say the new law will help protect their crops from potential contamination from neighboring GE fields. The success of the initiative is already proving to be highly contagious. Humboldt County (California) claims it’s next in line for passing a similar referendum, while

farmers in the US Midwest see it as evidence that they may be able to resist the release of Monsanto’s new GE wheat. Grassroots activists across California and the nation will be meeting in San Francisco this weekend to discuss launching similar initiatives. Similarly Prince Edward Island in Canada is now considering becoming a “GMO Free Zone.” Meanwhile, the biotech industry has made it clear that it will do its best to snuff out Mendocino’s GE ban with state legislative or legal action. Informed sources have told the OCA that the California Farm Bureau and the Gallo wine company are spearheading an effort to introduce a bill in the California Senate that will nullify the Mendocino GMO ban and make it illegal for other California counties to pass similar laws. OCA and its allies are planning a major campaign to stop or defeat this legislation. Stay tuned to *Organic Bytes* and the OCA website for forthcoming news on this front...

[www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto/mendocino030804.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto/mendocino030804.cfm)

## Mad Cow Update: US Government under Criminal Investigation

A criminal investigation is underway to determine whether the US Government falsified documents pertaining to the recent case of Mad Cow Disease in Washington. Specifically, the Department of Agriculture reported that the beef that tested positive for the disease came from a “downer” cow (a cow too ill to walk). Three key eye-witnesses at the slaughterhouse argue otherwise, saying the cow was walking and appeared to be healthy. The US Government used the potentially altered documents to assuage concerns that cattle are not tested sufficiently for this deadly disease in the US.

[www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/falsify030404.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/falsify030404.cfm)

## Quick Related Facts

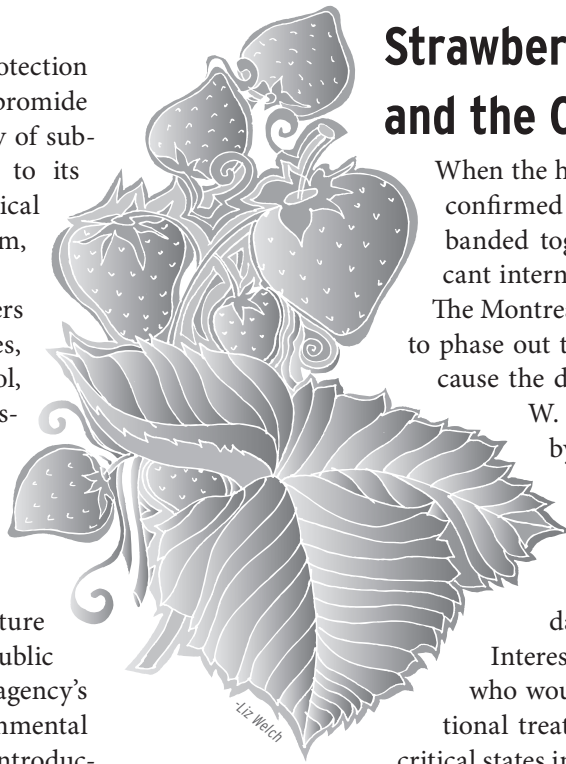
- The Environmental Protection Agency classifies methyl bromide in the most deadly category of substances (Category I), due to its ability to cause neurological damage, reproductive harm, and fatal poisonings.
- Organic strawberry growers use a mix of safe alternatives, including biological control, crop rotation, and pest-resistant root stocks, to produce strawberries without the need for methyl bromide.

## Take Action

The Department of Agriculture is currently accepting public comments regarding the agency's plan to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the introduction of genetically modified organisms. This is a great opportunity for consumers to share their concerns about the spread of GE crops. Send an email message to the USDA:  
[www.saveorganicfood.org/usdaalert.php](http://www.saveorganicfood.org/usdaalert.php)

## We Need To Talk

- Interested in sharing your thoughts and ideas with thousands of other like-minded folks locally and around the world? Register free for OCA's new online web forum and chat center. The OCA website has been getting 4-6 million hits every month, so we decided it's time to open up the communication channels and let everyone share their ideas, post articles, comment on related issues, and come together with others who share your concerns. Start talking with others in the organic consumers community right now! [www.organicconsumers.org/chat/index.php](http://www.organicconsumers.org/chat/index.php)
- Help others learn about food safety, organics, and related topics. Place a link on your website to: <http://OrganicConsumers.org>  
Find OCA Banners for your use at: [OrganicConsumers.org/logos.htm](http://OrganicConsumers.org/logos.htm)



## Strawberries, Tomatoes and the Ozone Hole

When the hole in the ozone layer and its causes were confirmed in the 1980s, nations around the world banded together to create one of the most significant international environmental treaties in history. The Montreal Protocol of 1987 was a global agreement to phase out the production and use of chemicals that cause the depletion of the ozone layer. Now George W. Bush has shocked the world (once again) by threatening to pull out of this landmark treaty. Bush claims the US strawberry and tomato agriculture industry should be able to continue using the pesticide methyl bromide, the most dangerous ozone depleting chemical in use. Interestingly enough, the majority of growers who would benefit from this violation of international treaty are situated in California and Florida, critical states in the coming election.

[www.organicconsumers.org/corp/ozone112403.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/corp/ozone112403.cfm)

## International GE Labeling Treaty Confirmed

An international biosafety treaty has now been finalized in Malaysia, where 87 countries from around the world have successfully negotiated a protocol that establishes labeling and documentation regulations regarding imports/exports of genetically modified organisms. Under the new system, any international shipment containing genetically engineered ingredients intended for food, feed or processing must be labeled as such. Despite consensus between the attending nations, President Bush has refused to sign the agreement.

[www.organicconsumers.org/ge/biosafety-pact.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/ge/biosafety-pact.cfm)

## New Study Indicates Health Hazards of GMOs

New scientific research has revealed some disturbing health implications related to genetically modified foods. The viral promoter used in GE crops to "turn on" certain genes has been found in the tissue of test rats. The biotech industry has consistently claimed this is impossible. According to Dr. Terje Traavik, the study's results indicate that these same promoters could switch on any number of viruses that normally lay dormant within our own DNA and/or change the activity and structure of chromosomes, creating the potential for inducing cancer and/or metabolic changes.

[www.organicconsumers.org/ge/studies030404.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/ge/studies030404.cfm)

For many more food issue daily headlines: [www.organicconsumers.org/log.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/log.html)

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