



ORGANIC BYTES

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Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association
www.organicconsumers.org

Quote of the Week

“The nightmare that county bans on genetically engineered crops represent to intra- and interstate commerce is ridiculous. We’d be ground to a halt.”

-Allan Noe, vice-president of CropLife America, a lobby group working for Monsanto, DuPont and Syngenta.
San Jose Mercury (California) 3/1/04

Monsanto Resumes Its Bullying on GE Wheat

Up until last week, Monsanto had promised that it would not press for Bush Administration approval for its genetically engineered (GE) wheat until Canadian regulatory officials were ready to approve the controversial crop. However, due to strong resistance to GE wheat from Canadian consumers and farmers, Monsanto has announced it may choose to break this vow, causing great concern inside the US wheat industry. “If we introduce and the Canadians do not, that would make it easier for countries to continue to insist on buying from a country that is GM-free and it would give Canada a distinct marketing advantage,” said US Wheat President Alan Tracy. Monsanto claims it has every right to do what it pleases. The bottom line is that Monsanto is desperate and believes that its friends in the White House have no qualms about forcing Frankenfoods down consumers’ throats—even if it means billions of dollars in export losses for hapless US wheat farmers. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/forcewheat031904.cfm

Alert! Defend the Mendocino Victory & Spread GE-Free Zones Everywhere

People across the US and the world have been inspired by the historic David versus Goliath victory in Mendocino County, California on March 2, 2004 where voters banned the production of genetically engineered crops and animals. Mendocino is the first county in the US to implement such a ban. The Mendocino

GE ban has rattled Monsanto and the Gene Giants, who fear that global civil society will now follow Mendocino’s example. Of course this is exactly what is happening. Just in the past week, halfway across the world, a number of major agricultural states in Australia, including Western Australia, Tasmania and Victoria, have already passed, or will soon pass, GE crop bans. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/tasmania032504.cfm

But as the OCA warned in an Action Alert last week, Monsanto and their friends are fighting back. Sources have warned the OCA that the



biotech lobby will soon introduce a bill in California to nullify the Mendocino GE ban and make it illegal for other California counties to pass similar laws. World Trade Organization bureaucrats and the White House have also made it clear in the past that local citizen control over unpopular technologies such as genetic engineering will not be tolerated. OCA has launched a major campaign called the Biodemocracy Alliance to defeat this legislation and spread GE-Free zones across at least a dozen of California’s 59 counties, as well as counties all over the US.

We need your help to spread the word, organize GE bans in your local area, and, most of all, we need donations to finance this effort. In the past 10 days, since we sent out an Action Alert, we have raised \$20,000 from online donations and checks in the mail, but we need to raise at least \$30,000 more in the next few weeks to keep up the momentum. We believe this is the most crucial moment in the ten-year history of the anti-GE foods movement. Please make an online donation today at: <https://www.securemysite.com/greenpeople/ocadonate.cfm>

Regulating Rocket Fuel Levels in Water

California has become the first state to consider regulating the levels of allowable toxic perchlorates in drinking water. The pollutant has been found in increasing levels in waterways around the US, particularly in areas near military bases and test sites (the toxin is most commonly originates in rocket fuels). Perchlorates cause severe neurological and thyroid dysfunction and are currently unregulated. In related news, the US Department of Defense is insisting to Congress it should not be forced to comply with any environmental regulations, as a matter of national security. www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/water032204.cfm

Scary Fish Facts

The US Food & Drug Administration has released new safety guidelines for fish consumption, due to ever-increasing levels of mercury contamination. The fish containing the highest levels of mercury are: shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. The guidelines suggest eating up to two meals a week (totaling 12 ounces) of fish that are low in mercury such as shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock and catfish. www.organicconsumers.org/food-safety/fish032204.cfm

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. www.organicconsumers.org/chat/index.php If you are interested in being a moderator of one of these forums, please contact Craig@OrganicConsumers.org
- 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

New Mad Cow Regulations Still Make US Mad

In response to the discovery of the first case of Mad Cow Disease in the US last December, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced it will increase testing of the nation's cattle up to 240,000 cows per year. Consumer groups, including the Organic Consumers Association and the Consumers Union, say these new projections for testing are completely inadequate, given that the US Cattle industry slaughters 35 million animals annually. The government and large beef corporations fear more tests since they know Mad Cow disease has now spread to more and more cattle in North America. However, many ranchers in Kansas, California, and other states, desperate to regain their export markets, say they're willing to test all cows, as Japan and other nations have demanded. www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/nytimes032204.cfm



Earth Friendly Labeling Lies

Consumers are quickly learning that government oversight of product labeling is all too loosely regulated. To add to the already existing confusion, the Hudson Institute's Center for Global Food Issues (CGFI), an agribusiness and biotech front group, has announced it will now be labeling qualifying products as "Earth Friendly". This designation will be placed on genetically engineered foods and factory farmed meat and dairy products.. The corporate-funded CGFI claim they have

a right to label products as such, given their "scientific" opinion that certain aspects of GE crops and densely packed feedlots are better for the environment than organic agriculture. www.organicconsumers.org/organic/labels031904.cfm

Getting Junk Food Out Of Schools

With the Bush Administration's reduced funding for education, many school districts have been forced to seek other sources of income, including widespread installation of junk-food vending machines. School districts can make up to \$100,000 per year under these contracts, but as a result of increased access to unhealthy foods, the childhood obesity and diabetes epidemics are on the increase. In response, two dozen states are now considering banning junk food vending machines in schools. The National Soft Drink Association is contesting this ban, claiming that high levels of junk food consumption are okay, and placing the blame on schools for not teaching the kids to exercise more. www.organicconsumers.org/school/obesity031904.cfm

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

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