



ORGANIC BYTES

April 22, 2004 · Volume 1, Issue 31

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

Organic Labeling In Jeopardy

The USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) has published a new scope document that compromises efforts to establish meaningful organic standards for personal care products, dietary supplements, fertilizers, soil amendments, manure and related materials, fish and seafood, and pet foods. The new NOP Scope will make it illegal for makers of the aforementioned products to display the USDA Organic Seal in the future or make any other claims suggesting these products are made under the USDA NOP standards. The OCA is pressuring the USDA to retract its new position, which hurts organic farmers and consumers by allowing companies to make organic claims without being certified. www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/nop-scope.cfm

Food Safety Apparently Illegal

Creekstone Farms Premium Beef LLC recently announced it would voluntarily test all of its cattle for Mad Cow Disease as a courtesy to its customers and to re-open foreign markets, especially Japan. But the USDA responded last week, saying it won't allow Creekstone to test all of its cattle. Bill Hawks, the USDA secretary for marketing, said the tests aren't necessary and "would have implied a consumer safety aspect that is not scientifically warranted." Creekstone's chief executive officer, Jon Stewart, disagrees and is ready to take legal action against the USDA, saying the company has every right to test their cattle if that's what their domestic and foreign customers are demanding. www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/fight041404.cfm



Anti-GE Movement Gathers Steam Across the US

In the wake of the Mendocino, California GMO ban on March 2, 2004, the movement to create GE Free Zones across the United States has accelerated, as have legislative efforts to strictly regulate GMOs.

Recent events include:

California: Following in the footsteps of Mendocino there are activists in at least 12 of California's 59 counties organizing to create GE-Free zones, including Humboldt, Butte, Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and San Luis Obispo. Activists from all over California are meeting this weekend in Mendocino to plan their next moves. In other California news, the state's top agriculture official denied a proposal that would allow the planting of rice, genetically engineered to create a drug. The proposal is likely to return for reconsideration next planting season. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/ricehold041304.cfm

North Dakota: A petition is being circulated for a ballot measure that would give the state the authority to reject Monsanto's new genetically modified wheat. Farmers are concerned introduction of the crop will result in profit losses due to decreased export demand. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/wheat042004.cfm

Pennsylvania: More than 50 townships have passed ordinances that regulate the expansion of local factory farms, and now the state farm bureau and big agribusiness are teaming up to implement legislation that would make it illegal for communities to have this kind of local control. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/factoryfarm042004.cfm

Vermont: Governor Douglas has agreed to sign the "Farmer Right to Know" bill that will require labeling of genetically engineered seeds in all retail outlets. www.organicconsumers.org/ge-free.htm

Help the OCA defend the Mendocino ban and spread GE free zones throughout the Americas! <https://payments.auctionpay.com/ver3/?id=w011082>

EU Requires Strict Labeling for Frankenfoods

Responding to intense pressure from the Bush Administration and the biotech industry, the European Union (EU) is now, at least in principle, opening its doors to imports of some genetically engineered (GE) foods. But producers of GE seeds, like Monsanto, are still unhappy with the arrangement. In agreeing to allow the import of these GE foods, the EU is also mandating that food products containing more than .9% GE ingredients, be labeled as such. In response to consumer demands, major EU supermarket chains and food companies have announced that they will continue to ban GE foods and ingredients from their products. www.organicconsumers.org/ge/labels042004.cfm

Sustainable Agriculture Protects World's Freshwater

A new United Nations report calls for sustainable food production and consumption, as conventional methods are swallowing-up the world's scarce fresh water supply. For example, producing just 3.5 ounces of beef requires 1,849 gallons of water, while making enough flour for a loaf of bread requires less than a tenth of that. Sustainable agriculture is particularly beneficial in developing countries, where agriculture accounts for 70-90% of fresh water use. www.organicconsumers.org/food-safety/water042104.cfm



No Butts About It

One benefit of the delay in implementing new Mad Cow regulations is that it provides an extended period of public comment. The USDA will be excepting comments on the new regulations until May 7. This input is critical, given the heavy lobbying forces of the meat industry, who are complaining that keeping cow brains out of the US burger supply will cost them \$150 million per year. One of the USDA's proposals would also keep cow rectum, colon and anus from entering the human food supply. **Take Action!** Send your comments to the USDA: www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/usdapubcom0304.cfm

The Law that Never Became a Law

With the discovery of the first case of Mad Cow Disease in the US, nations all over the world stopped importing American beef, consumers feared for their safety, and the US government fell under intense scrutiny for its lack of related regulatory oversight. By mid-January the USDA attempted to appease consumers and the press by announcing new rules that would reduce the potential spread of the fatal disease. Interestingly enough, those rules have still not been implemented. In order for the rules to become enforced, they must be published in the Federal Register, a daily governmental publication. Stephen Sundlof of the FDA spoke of the delay in enforcement, saying the fact that it's taking so long "shows that we do consider it important."

www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/Mishra041404.cfm

Consumers Fed-Up with Advertising

The New York Times recently reported that a recent Yankelovich Partners poll has found that consumers are fed up with the constant deluge of advertising. In fact, 69% of respondents said they "are interested in products and services that would help them skip or block marketing;" and a full 45% said the amount of advertising they were exposed to "detracts from the experience of everyday life." Ron Berger, Chairman of the American Association of Advertising expressed his concern over the poll results, by suggesting that perhaps advertisers could respond to the problem of over-advertising by doing some advertising about how important advertising is: "Our industry must do a better job of talking about the tremendous value we create for clients and the economy."

www.organicconsumers.org/corp/ads041504.cfm

Americans are Shrinking

At the time of the American Revolution, the average US male was two inches taller than his British counterpart. Today he is almost half an inch shorter. According to new research out of Munich University, the average American is getting shorter, while the average European is getting taller. To explain this peculiar physiological transformation, scientists are pointing to the increasing gap in social classes in the US. Despite a physically robust upper class in the US, there are eight million unemployed people, 40 million individuals with no health insurance, 35 million living below the poverty line, and a population that relies on junk food. In contrast, Europe's social welfare programs provide good health care and food for most citizens.

www.organicconsumers.org/corp/shrinking041404.cfm

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

Organic Bytes is a publication of the Organic Consumers Association

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If you prefer to send a check, please mail a check made out to "OCA/BioDemocracy Alliance" to: Organic Consumers Association · 6101 Cliff Estate Rd · Little Marais, MN · 55614

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