



May 28, 2004 · Volume 1, Issue 33  
[www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org)

# ORGANIC BYTES

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

## Canadian Supreme Court Rules Against Family Farmers

The epic battle of Canadian family farmer Percy Schmeiser against biotech giant Monsanto Corporation officially came to a close on May 21. A hairline 5-4 Canadian Supreme Court ruling sided with Monsanto, saying Schmeiser is guilty of the “crime” of saving seeds from his canola plants—seeds which Monsanto claims they own. In the late 90s, Schmeiser’s canola field was contaminated with Monsanto’s genetically engineered (GE) seed, most likely from a neighboring farm or from trucks passing in front of his Saskatchewan farm. Monsanto’s patent monopoly on GE crops, such as canola, mandate that farmers using the seed must pay “royalty” fees to the gene giant. Since Schmeiser never purchased his seeds from Monsanto or signed an agreement in the first place, he continued to save his seeds and replant each year, so Monsanto sued. The court’s decision has angered family farmers across Canada, and emboldened organic farmers to continue their class action lawsuit against Monsanto and Aventis (Bayer) for contaminating organic crops with mutant GMOs. Join OCA’s Millions Against Monsanto Campaign

[www.organicconsumers.org/monlink.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/monlink.html)



## Victory! USDA Backs Off from Degrading Organic Standards

Stung by a nationwide backlash by Organic Consumers Association members and the entire organic community, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced May 26 that it would rescind controversial policies issued last month that would have undermined organic standards and violated federal law requiring public input. In April, the USDA announced that it would no longer monitor organic labels on non-food products, and added that pesticides, animal drugs, growth hormones, antibiotics, and tainted fish meal would be allowed on organic farms. In response to this frontal assault on organic integrity, the OCA immediately sent out an Action Alert and launched a media campaign to pressure the USDA into reversing its controversial directives. Thanks to all of you in our network, within two days, over 5,000 petition signatures were gathered and a landslide of faxes, emails and phone calls hit the USDA and National Organic Program offices. Amplifying OCA efforts, other public interest groups such as the Consumers Union and the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture joined the fray, while the Organic Trade Association rallied industry support. Meanwhile a class action lawsuit against the USDA was being prepared by Dr. Bronners (an organic soap and hemp bar company), the OCA, and others. The USDA ultimately capitulated on May 26, when it became clear that America’s 30 million organic consumers were not going to accept the agency’s dictatorial practices.

Unfortunately, consumers are still being locked out of many important policy discussions at the USDA, and of course Congress is still subsidizing—with our tax dollars—genetically engineered crops, factory farms, and chemical-intensive agriculture to the tune of \$20-30 billion a year, while giving crumbs (less than \$5 million annually) to organic programs for research, promotion, and monitoring. But the OCA, with your support, will continue to safeguard organic standards and move organic agriculture from a \$15 billion dollar industry to becoming the dominant force in America’s \$800 billion food and fiber market.

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



## Thousands In UK May Have Human Form of Mad Cow Disease

Scientists in the UK have discovered thousands of the nation’s citizens may be incubating the human form of Mad Cow Disease (vCJD) in their bodies. Researchers at Plymouth’s Derriford Hospital and the CJD Surveillance Unit tested 12,674 human tissue samples and found three that had vCJD. Applying those numbers to the overall population of the UK resulted in an estimation that as many as 3,800 people may be carriers of the deadly disease.

[www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/incubate052404.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/incubate052404.cfm)

## Pesticides Inside Everyone

The Ontario College of Family Physicians has released an international study, conducted over a 13 year period, saying that there is no evidence that certain pesticides are safer than others—rather, pesticides misconstrued as “safe” may simply have delayed effects on health. Meanwhile, the Pesticide Action Network has compiled data from the Centers for Disease Control that shows that 100% of blood and urine samples, collected from 9,000 random people, showed residues of pesticides. [www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/pesticides051704.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/pesticides051704.cfm)

## Junk Food Dealers Turning Us Into Addicts

A recent study involving brain scans has found that when people smell foods like pizza, fried chicken, ice cream, cake, and other junk foods, specific areas of the brain react similarly to that of a cocaine addict. Dr. Gene-Jack Wang of the Brookhaven National Laboratory said that this reaction, coupled with constant junk food advertising, is fueling the obesity epidemic. The FDA is considering mandating placement of warning labels on certain junk foods. [www.organicconsumers.org/school/addictive051804.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/school/addictive051804.cfm)

## Coffee that Supports Indigenous Coops and the OCA

Even though the White House and the Mexican government denounce them as “Zapatistas,” autonomous Mayan cooperatives in Chiapas are making some of the most eco-friendly and socially conscious coffee on the global market. The coffee is bird and rainforest-friendly, fair trade, organic, and supports indigenous farmers. Higher Grounds in Michigan is currently supporting these farmers by purchasing their coffee and selling it to customers in the US. 15% of profits from direct web sales on the OCA website go to the Organic Consumers Association. To learn more, or to order coffee go to:

[www.organicconsumers.org/coffee.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/coffee.htm)

## Bringing the Organic Revolution to Your Lawn

The cumulative flow of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides applied to the 30 million acres of lawns in the US has become a major environmental issue. According to the National Gardening Association, each household spends an average of \$457/year on maintaining their lush green turf, and thankfully, a growing portion of that is being invested in organic lawn maintenance methodologies. Collective consumer choices can have a major impact on local ecosystems.

Here are a few quick organic lawncare tips:



- ❖ 78 million pounds of toxic lawn pesticides were sold in the US last year. Use a dandelion digging fork instead of purchasing dangerous pesticides.
- ❖ Synthetic fertilizers run off into streets and ultimately into local waterways, choking aquatic life and polluting our water. Substitute organic fertilizers for synthetics.
- ❖ The average lawn drinks 10,000 gallons of water each year (in addition to rainfall). Don't be afraid to let your grass grow a little bit. This builds deeper roots, which results in needing to water less.
- ❖ Use electric, rechargeable or push mowers. The EPA estimates that a mower emits as much pollution in one hour as a car emits in driving 20 miles.

-[www.organicconsumers.org/organic/lawn052104.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/organic/lawn052104.cfm)

## Twenty Ways to Reduce Your Intake of Body Care Chemicals

The *UK Guardian* has released a brief consumer guide with some great techniques to maintain good hygiene while protecting your health.

Of the 20 tips, here are some of our favorites:

- #5 · Avoid unnecessary use of products with a high sun protection factor. At night you don't need to use a moisturizer with an SPF.
- #8 · Become label savvy. Everyone reads food labels - get in the habit of doing the same with your toiletries. They won't tell you everything, but it will help.
- #16 · The average make-up wearing woman will eat two pounds of lipstick in her life-time. Most lipsticks contain petroleum derivatives. Try brands based on bees-wax, plant oils or vitamin E instead.
- #20 · Ask your Granny for tips. Lemon juice, for example, has always been used as a beauty aid - to make fair hair shine, to soften hard skin, and get rid of blackheads. Cosmetics haven't always been all about products devised in laboratories.

Read all of the tips here: [www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/reduce052104.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/reduce052104.cfm)

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