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# ORGANIC BYTES

Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association  
Please forward this publication to family and friends, websites, print it, & post it. Knowledge is power!

## Have a House Party!

Join hundreds of other Organic Consumer network members across the US and host an OCA House Party/Film Showing this fall. Meet up with other food and anti-genetic engineering activists in your community and watch the powerful new documentary, *The Future of Food*. One reviewer described *The Future of Food* as the "Fahrenheit 911 of the genetically engineered food battle." Discuss how you can spread the organic revolution, take action locally, and spread GE-Free Zones

across the Americas. OCA's goal is to have 300 simultaneous house parties across America in September, and we're already half way there, with 150 house parties organized so far! Join us to make this goal a reality!

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

## Born to Buy

New research on the effects of commercialization on children is now available in Professor Juliet Schor's book *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*. The research indicates that a high level of consumerism is a significant cause of depression, and children who shop less actually get along with their parents better. According to Schor, "Psychologically healthy children will be made worse off if they become more enmeshed in the culture of getting and spending. Children with emotional problems will be helped if they disengage from the worlds that corporations are constructing for them."

[www.organicconsumers.org/school/book083104.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/school/book083104.cfm)

## Bush and Kerry Vying for Rural Votes

In a heated Presidential race, both Bush and Kerry have begun making promises to the nation's farmers and rural communities, hoping to swing a few more votes in their direction. Kerry has proposed doubling the amount of ethanol required in US automobile fuels, which would theoretically increase demand for corn and lower dependence on foreign oil. Unfortunately in terms of energy conservation, this is a rather dubious proposition, given that conventional chemical-intensive corn

production requires more energy to produce ethanol than it produces. Kerry says he's also considering putting together an "insurance plan" where farmers can receive government assistance if their organic crops are contaminated by pollen from neighboring genetically engineered crops. In the meantime, Bush is seeking to woo large corporate farms producing strawberries, tomatoes, and other crops by pulling the US out of the Montreal Protocol, an international treaty signed in the late 80s to protect the ozone layer. By rejecting this environmental treaty, US farmers will be able to continue using methyl bro-

midide, an extremely toxic fungicide which poisons farmworkers and depletes the ozone layer.

Unfortunately both Kerry and Bush are listening more closely to agribusiness lobbyists and the biotech industry than they are to consumers, environmentalists, and family farm advocates. Neither candidate is talking about policies such as mandatory labels for GE foods, supported by over 80% of US consumers. Nor have Bush or Kerry had much to say about increasing subsidies for organic and sustainable farming practices or promoting energy conservation on family farms—as opposed to maintaining our current \$25 billion annual farm subsidy system, which mainly rewards the nation's largest factory style farms and cotton plantations for using up unsustainable amounts of energy, water, and topsoil while polluting the air, food, and water with pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and genetically engineered crops. [www.organicconsumers.org/corplink.html](http://www.organicconsumers.org/corplink.html)

## More Water/ Less Meat

In its ongoing investigation into options for feeding the world, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) has released a report that lists fresh water scarcity as the leading issue limiting global food production, stating that "groundwater levels are plummeting and our rivers are already overstressed, yet there is a lot of complacency about the future." IWMI's report suggests a dietary shift, wherein meat consumption is reduced, would greatly alleviate these problems. Meat consumption in the world's wealthiest nations continues to be on the rise, yet it takes up to ten times as much water to produce a pound of beef, for example, as it does to produce an equivalent amount of nutrients and calories via fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains. The report does not state the human population of the world needs to become vegetarian, but does recommend a basic reduction in meat intake. [www.organicconsumers.org/corp/meat-water.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/corp/meat-water.cfm)

## EPA: "Mercury is Everywhere"

Fish in nearly all of the nation's lakes are contaminated with mercury, according to a recent announcement from the EPA. All but two states (Wyoming and Alaska) had mercury advisories last year. EPA Administrator Michael Leavitt claims this is due to increased monitoring, not increased mercury emissions. "Mercury is everywhere," said Leavitt. "The more waters we monitor, the more we find mercury." [www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/mercury-fish.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/mercury-fish.cfm)



## Fair Trade Coffee Brewing

As the world's second most valued trading commodity, after oil, coffee is a prime example of how "Free Trade" is increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. While Proctor and Gamble, Sara Lee, Nestle and Kraft—and their junior partners such as Starbucks—are making super profits, buying up most of the world's coffee beans at some of the lowest prices in history, 25 million coffee farmers and their families in 50 countries are living in desperate poverty. Responding to this crisis, socially conscious consumers are voting with their pocketbooks against the global coffee cartel by purchasing organic and Fair Trade coffee, which guarantees the coffee farmer is paid a living wage. Not only is Fair Trade coffee experiencing a boom in its 18,000 retail outlets in the US, it's also catching on at institutions like churches, schools and even hospitals. Saint Louise Regional Hospital in California recently converted all of their coffee to Fair Trade, demonstrating that with a little consumer consideration, social responsibility can be found just about anywhere... even in a cup of java. [www.organicconsumers.org/Starbucks/index.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/Starbucks/index.htm)

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## Battle of the Biotech Brutes

Syngenta, the world's largest agrichemical company, has sued Monsanto, a company whose GE corn, cotton, canola and soybeans are grown on 70 million US acres. Syngenta is accusing Monsanto of unfair business practices, claiming Monsanto has "maintained and increased its monopoly power in multiple markets through a series of coercive tactics and exclusive dealing arrangements designed to keep out all competition." Monsanto has responded, saying the company "will vigorously defend against these allegations." What happens when two massive biotech corporations get in the ring? [www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto/monopoly.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto/monopoly.cfm)

## Drinkin' Too Much Soda Pop

The American Medical Association (AMA) is calling on the US government to change its stance on sugar intake. Specifically, the AMA is targeting soft drink consumption, which has increased by 61% in the last two decades, according to a new report published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. At 40-50 grams per soda, an adult can put on 15 pounds of weight per year, just by drinking a single can a day. [www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/soda-pop.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/Toxic/soda-pop.cfm)

## Is it Safe to Go Back to School?

According to the EPA, nearly half of America's 53 million students will soon be returning to schools where they will be exposed to hazardous levels of toxic chemicals, including pesticides, lead, and asbestos—not to mention the worst school cafeteria food in any industrialized nation. "Schools need help implementing legislation and recommendations at the local level," stated Janelle Sorensen of BE SAFE, a coalition of groups working to clean up schools. OCA's *Appetite for a Change* Campaign provides a variety of links to groups like BE SAFE and other related organizations, news articles, and tools for helping make your local schools safe from pesticides and other potentially harmful chemicals, putting the power for positive change in the hands of the parents. [www.organicconsumers.org/sos.htm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/sos.htm)

## Sponsored Message: Smile, Laugh and Cry with Ode

As you read *Ode* you will realize it is an international news magazine unlike any other. *Ode* reports on inspiring people & ideas, sustainability, natural health, leading-edge science & spirituality, and much more. *Ode*, a successful European-based magazine since 1995, has been making lots of waves in the US and elsewhere recently. Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop, calls *Ode* "essential reading," and Benjamin Zander, conductor of the Boston Philharmonic calls *Ode* a "way of life." Now, for a limited time, you can get an introductory subscription to *Ode* of 6 issues for only \$10! Smile, laugh and cry with *Ode*.

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## Organic Farming Increasingly Profitable

Sales of organic products are continuing to grow at an average of 20% per year. More farmers are growing organic crops now than at anytime since the commercialization of chemical pesticides in the mid-1900s. Even with major corporations starting to buy out independent organic companies, a recent survey of the industry shows that 50% of organic farmers are finding that prices paid for their crops are holding steady, and more than a quarter of farmers said they are witnessing an increase in prices paid for organic crops. [www.organicconsumers.org/organic/prices.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/organic/prices.cfm)

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

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