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www.organicconsumers.org

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!

NOTE: This is a special jam-packed issue of Organic Bytes. We are currently facing a barrage of anti-consumer / anti-small farmer regulatory changes proposed by the FDA, USDA, and EPA. If we don't take action now, Big Food, Big Pharma, and indentured government bureaucrats will continue to restrict our access to healthy foods and natural herbs and medicines, and undermine our inalienable right to know what's in our food. We encourage you to take the time today to learn more about these issues, and take action. Please forward this newsletter to anyone you think might be interested in these topics.

Alert: New Proposed USDA Organic Regulations Could Drive Thousands of Small Organic Farmers Out of Business

A controversial new directive from the USDA threatens to deny organic certification to thousands of small organic coffee, tea, banana, rice, sugar cane, cacao and other farmers around the world.



The USDA's directive would eliminate the longstanding practice of certifying organic and Fair Trade family farm cooperatives as a group, rather than forcing each coop member to pay for individual certification. Thousands of organic and Fair Trade farming cooperatives around the world have been established over the past few decades to help low-income farmers in financing and marketing, and in acquiring otherwise cost-prohibitive certification for their farms.

Most of the world's small-scale organic coffee farmers take part in these cooperatives, so eliminating group certification will drive thousands of family farmers out of business while giving large-scale commercial coffee plantations a competitive advantage.

Though the OCA supports careful monitoring of all organic farms, we are adamantly opposed to the elimination of group certification for low-income farm cooperatives. Take action at www.organicconsumers.org/rd/usda-coop.cfm

Alert: FDA Seeks to Remove Labeling Requirements for Irradiated Foods

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed new federal regulations that will allow manufacturers and retailers to sell controversial irradiated foods without labeling them, as previously required by law.

Consumers are justifiably wary of foods bombarded with nuclear waste or powerful x-rays or gamma rays—since irradiation destroys essential vitamins and nutrients, creates unique radiolytic chemical compounds never before consumed by humans, and generates carcinogenic by-products such as formaldehyde and benzene.

Although irradiation, except for spices, is banned in much of the world, and prohibited globally in organic production, US corporate agribusiness and the meat industry desperately want to be able to secretly “nuke” foods in order to reduce the deadly bacterial contamination that is now routine in industrial agriculture and meat production.

OCA and other public interest groups have repeatedly pointed out that the best way to reduce or eliminate America's 78 million cases of food poisoning every year would be to clean up the nation's filthy slaughterhouses and feedlots, stop contaminated runoff from intensive confinement feedlots from polluting adjacent farms (as in the recent spinach e-coli outbreak), and to stop feeding animals slaughterhouse waste and manure. Instead, FDA and corporate agribusiness have apparently decided, with the backing of the nuclear power and weapons industry, to take away consumers' rights to know if their food has been irradiated or not. Take action: www.organicconsumers.org/rd/irrad-label.cfm

Alert: FDA Says Almonds Labeled as 'Raw' Can Be Pasteurized

Under pressure from industrial agriculture lobbyists, the FDA has quietly approved a new regulation that will effectively end distribution of raw almonds, while putting many family farmers out of business.

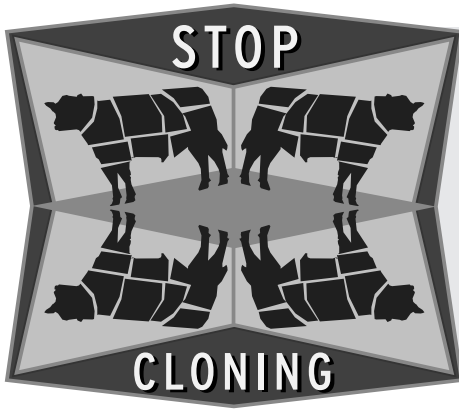
The rule requires pasteurization of almonds, including organic, yet allows those same almonds to continue to be labeled as “raw”. Nutritionists point out that raw, organic almonds are far superior, in terms of nutrition, than pasteurized almonds.

One of the FDA-recommended pasteurization methods requires the use of propylene oxide, which is classified as a “possible human carcinogen” by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and is banned in Canada, Mexico, and the European Union.

Organic and family-scale almond farmers are protesting the proposed rule, saying it will effectively put them out of business, since the minimum price for the pasteurization equipment is \$500,000.

The FDA claims pasteurization is necessary, since there have been two food contamination incidents with raw almonds since 2001. But both of these incidents, in fact, were the result of blatant mismanagement on large industrial-scale almond farms.

Take action now to demand that the FDA re-open this proposed rule to public comments: www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_4859.cfm



FDA Forced to Extend Public Comment Period on Food from Clones

Over the past few months, the FDA has received over 100,000 letters from OCA network members and other consumers, rejecting proposed federal regulations that would allow meat, eggs, and dairy products derived from cloned animals to be put on the market, without safety-testing or labeling. Thanks to this massive public backlash, the FDA has been forced to extend its public comment period another 30 days (expiring May 3). If you have not yet informed the FDA about your position on cloned animals and food, please learn more and take action now: www.organicconsumers.org/rd/clones.htm

Alert: FDA Releases 'Guidance' Document Regarding Policing of Natural Health

The FDA has released a new directive that is causing major concern in the natural health community. Although the document does not specifically propose any new federal laws beyond those already in place, the OCA and our allies are keeping a close eye on what this directive might mean in terms of future proposed regulations.

Specifically, the FDA's guidance statement elaborates on current regulations that state that any product, food, or supplement making health claims must be carefully policed by the FDA. This has been a longtime FDA rule. Notably, the document suggests that foods such as vegetable juices making health claims must undergo federal monitoring.

Because this is a "guidance directive," rather than proposed legislation, the OCA is not currently calling for a mass letter writing campaign. But we do encourage organic and alternative health consumers to learn more about this directive, to offer individual comments or queries to the FDA, and to remain vigilant.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_4893.cfm

Survey: Most US Citizens Dissatisfied With FDA

According to a survey published last week by the *Consumer Reports* National Research Center:

- 4 out of 5 Americans think big pharmaceutical companies have too much control over the FDA.
- 96 percent believe the government should have the power to require warning labels on drugs with known safety problems. According to *Consumer Reports*, "Right now, the Food and Drug Administration must negotiate safety warning labels with a drug maker."
- 84 percent believe that advertisements for prescription drugs with safety concerns should be outlawed.
- 92 percent oppose the FDA's practice of allowing drug companies to submit only positive clinical trials of new drugs while burying negative drug trial results.
- 93 percent are troubled by the fact that the FDA has no power to do follow-up safety studies of drugs after they have been allowed to enter the market.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_4842.cfm

Tip of the Week: Ask for Organic Pet Food

More than 60 million packages of pet food were recently recalled from store shelves after thousands of pets were poisoned by products containing contaminated wheat gluten, imported from China. Following this disaster, thousands of the nation's pet owners are switching to organic pet foods. Natural and organic pet food sales increased by 46% last year, and will likely increase even more this year. As more and more pet owners are learning, conventional pet foods are loaded with a host of shocking fillers, including contaminated slaughterhouse waste and preservatives that are considered too dangerous for human foods. It's no wonder that cancer rates for cats and dogs are skyrocketing.

So, next time you're shopping for pet food, consider going organic. If organic pet foods are still hard to find, ask your favorite natural food store or coop to order some for you.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_4751.cfm

Order organic pet food online: www.greenpeople.org/PetFood.html

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Or mail your tax deductible donation to the OCA:

Organic Consumers Association

6771 South Silver Hill Drive · Finland, MN 55603

Or by phone: 888-403-1007 (toll free).

Organic Bytes is a publication of the Organic Consumers Association · 6771 S. Silver Hill Drive · Finland, MN 55603

Phone: 218-353-7454 · Fax: 218-353-7652

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