



May 4, 2007 · Issue 108
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!

Alert: Tell Congress We Want Country of Origin Labels

Concerns over long distance food transportation (food miles) and global warming, compounded by recent food poisoning scandals, linked to contaminated pet, poultry, and pig food ingredients from China, have taken away many Americans' appetites for cheap imported foods.

Shocked at media reports that the US Food and Drug Administration is inspecting approximately one-percent of all imported food, health-minded consumers are demanding that Congress implement mandatory *Country of Origin Labels* (COOL) labels on food. Federal farm policy theoretically requires Country of Origin Labeling for food.

Reacting to polls indicating that 80% of American consumers want to know where their food is coming from, Congress incorporated COOL into the 2002 Farm Bill. COOL was supposed to go into effect in September 2004. Unfortunately, corporate agribusiness, Wal-Mart, and the supermarket chains bribed an ethically-impaired Congress with millions of dollars to block implementation of COOL labels.

As a result, Americans are buying billions of dollars of imported foods without knowing it. In order to promote health and sustainability, and to save North American family farms, we need to restore our right to know where our food is coming from. Tell Congress we want Country of Origin Labels for both conventional and organic food, and we want it now: www.organicconsumers.org/rd/cool.htm

Comedy Central Parodies the rBGH Controversy

Comedy Central's *Colbert Report* takes a hilarious look at the rBGH controversy. Although the synthetic hormone has been banned in most nations, due to its links to endocrine disruption and cancer, it is still widely used in the US.

Monsanto recently filed a formal complaint with the FDA demanding that dairies that have banned the use of rBGH should not be able to label their products as "rBGH-free."

Learn more at OCA's **Millions Against Monsanto** campaign and watch the short Colbert web video at: www.comedycentral.com/shows/the_colbert_report/

(Note: Mr. Colbert's humor is irreverent and for adult audiences. Viewer discretion is advised.)



Pet Food Contamination Moves into US Meat Supply

The pet food poisoning scandal that has prompted the largest recall of pet foods in history has spread into the livestock and meat sector.

This week, the USDA admitted that the contaminated food ingredients that have killed thousands of pets across the US were also used to feed hogs and chickens that have already been processed and eaten by several million Americans. Over three million chickens and pigs have consumed the tainted food.

Although there have been no government studies done on the toxicity of this contamination, the FDA claims the risk is low. It's important to note that organic animal feed was not contaminated in this latest incident, underlining the obvious point that pet owners and meat eaters should give preference to safer, more nutritious organic products.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5017.cfm
Find organic pet foods : www.organicconsumers.org/state/greenbiz.cfm?all=PetFood

Alert: It's Time to Phase-Out the Poisonous Plastic PVC

Polyvinyl chloride is the most toxic plastic on the planet, yet it is one of the most widely used plastics in the US. The World Health Organization classifies it as a carcinogen; so many businesses are voluntarily phasing it out. From production to disposal, PVC plastic releases poisonous chemicals that can cause cancer and birth defects.

The good news is safer alternatives are available... we don't have to use PVC in our kid's toys or shower curtains. Unfortunately, Target lags behind Wal-Mart and other major retailers in phasing out this unnecessary and dangerous plastic.

Join a coalition of groups from around the country fighting for safe and healthy communities at a national **PVC Day of Action** on May 24th to urge retail giant Target to phase out PVC. The May 24th day of action will take place in conjunction with Target's annual shareholder meeting.

Putting together an event is fun and easy, and can be as small as you and a friend or as big as dozens of people outside of your area Target. We'll help you set it up. Get involved and sign up now: www.organicconsumers.org/rd/pvc.htm

More Reasons to Buy Local

Each year, the average American consumes 260 pounds of imported food.

- 98.7% of foods imported into the US are *not* inspected by the FDA for safety.
- Of the scant 1.3% of imported foods the FDA tests, over 200 shipments of grains, fish, vegetables, nuts, spice, oils and other imported foods are detained each month for issues ranging from filth to unsafe food coloring to contamination with pesticides to salmonella. The other 98.7% of untested food is immediately green-lighted for the American diet.
- The US imports almost twice as much food today as it did just ten years ago, yet the FDA's budget for testing imports has been cut nearly in half since 2000.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_4897.cfm

Five Ways to Reduce Your Ecological Footprint

This month's issue of *E Magazine* includes interviews with leading advocates for ecological shopping, including OCA's Environmental Scientist Craig Minowa. Here are five quick tips for becoming a green shopper:

- Switch to environmentally friendly cleaning supplies. The use of conventional cleaners exposes your family and our environment to some very nasty toxic chemicals.
- If you buy only one or two organic items, make them milk and meat. Most conventional milk and meat are produced on factory farms that feed their animals massive amounts of pesticide and fossil-fuel intensive conventional corn, at the same time creating massive manure lagoons that contaminate local ground water.
- Be as conscious about the packaging as you are about the product. The production and disposal of packaging takes a heavy environmental toll. You can eliminate 1,200 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO₂) every year by simply reducing your waste by 10%. While you're at it, bring your own shopping bags.
- Buy local and regional, or at least USA-grown, whenever possible, to reduce energy and pollution from long transportation. But of course some products are not produced in the US... For overseas products, look for the organic and Fair Trade label.
- Buy in bulk. If you regularly buy a certain product, consider buying it in bulk. It usually has less packaging, is more affordable, and requires fewer trips to the store.

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5006.cfm



Organic Bytes Readers Talk Back:

Is the FDA Going to Start Regulating Veggie Juice & Holy Water?

Question from Reader: "I'm confused about your stance on the FDA's new Guidance Document pertaining to alternative health care products. I've seen an alert from another group that seems to suggest the sky is falling, but the OCA's stance in your previous issue of *Organic Bytes* seems mellow in comparison. Can you please elaborate?"

Answer from OCA: There is only one group that has launched an alert on this issue, while all other health freedom groups have taken a more reserved stance. After much research and discussion with our allies in the alternative health world, it is the opinion of the OCA that although this FDA Guidance Document deserves attention, it does not change any laws that are already in place, and, in fact, serves as a distraction from some of the more important issues currently going on in regards to alternative health care regulations. Read an in-depth review of this controversy: www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_4988.cfm

Why Haven't I Received Your Organic Bytes Emails?

Question from Reader: "I used to get *Organic Bytes* regularly, but lately it seems to arrive only sporadically. What's up?"

Answer from OCA: As our *Organic Bytes* subscriber list has grown larger, we have run into more problems with getting blocked by various spam filters. The best way to guarantee you'll receive each issue is to add ronniecummins@organicconsumers.org to your email address book. Thanks!

Learn more about how to guarantee *Organic Bytes* will land in your inbox: www.organicconsumers.org/whitelist.cfm

Please Donate to the OCA

As a nonprofit, we need your donations so we can continue to move forward. You can donate online at:

www.organicconsumers.org/donations.htm

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

Note to co-op and natural food store subscribers: *Organic Bytes* is a great tool for keeping your staff and customers up to date on the latest issues. Feel free to print *Organic Bytes* for posting on bulletin boards and staff break tables. You are welcome to use this material for your newsletters.

Subscribe to *Organic Bytes*:

www.organicconsumers.org/organicbytes.htm

For many more food issue daily headlines:

www.organicconsumers.org/log.html