



Alert: EPA May Weaken Fumigant Regulations

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is under pressure to weaken proposed regulations that protect farm workers and rural communities from fumigant exposure. A public comment period is open until October 30. Please take action now, and let the EPA know these regulations should not be weakened.

Fumigants are among the most toxic pesticides in use today, drifting into schools and homes in rural communities and threatening the health of farm workers. Exposure has been linked to birth defects, cancer, Parkinson's disease and acute poisonings. Fumigants are used in large quantities to sterilize soils before planting—an archaic tool of chemical-intensive industrial agriculture, and the polar opposite of soil-nurturing sustainable farming. Tell EPA we want the highest safety precautions for fumigant pesticide use and a timeline to phase out fumigants. Take action: organicconsumers.org/articles/article_15381.cfm

How Green is Your Cell Phone?

Email from reader: “I know that most people use cell phones, and I appreciate the OCA looking for the best companies to purchase such a service, but I have a couple concerns. First of all, I have read that cell phones can cause brain tumors. Secondly, I hear there are environmental and child labor issues related to coltan mining for cell phones.

Response from the OCA: Thanks for sharing your concerns. You are correct, the electromagnetic fields emitted by cell phones are likely problematic if the phone is used inappropriately. In *Organic Bytes* #141, we discuss this issue in detail and provide tips for reducing exposure. The most important health precaution is to keep cell phones away from children and for adults to get in the habit of using an ear piece or speaker phone and not putting the phone directly to your head.

As for the coltan mining issue, the OCA has deep concerns about what is happening in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where more than 60% of coltan is mined. Because of its ability to hold high electric charges, coltan is used in cellular phones, computers, jet engines, missiles, ships, and weapons systems. Without coltan the digital age would not exist. Having said that, the electronic industry (and consumers) have done a horrible job recycling this precious substance. Learn where you can recycle your old phones at collectivegood.com.

Hard Times and Home-Cooked Meals

As the financial crisis deepens, more Americans are cutting back on eating out and staying home to cook their own meals. According to the NPD Group, a market research company, restaurant meals now cost on average about three times what it takes to make a similar meal at home. While fast-food restaurants are maintaining a relatively steady customer flow, sit-down restaurants are seeing sales plummet.

According to Edward E. Leamer, director of the *UCLA Anderson Forecast*, “There has been so much of a focus on Wall Street and the credit problem, but the real source of the problem in the fourth quarter is going to be consumer spending, and restaurants are one of the canaries in this coal mine.”

USDA Proposes Organic Dairy Farm Rules

After years of pressure from organic farmers, consumers, and advocacy groups, spearheaded by the OCA and the Cornucopia Institute, the USDA has finally decided to mandate pasture requirements for cattle on organic farms. The pasture requirements will be required for every day of the growing season (minimum 120 days) for dairy (and beef) cattle, with a minimum requirement that 30% of organic cattle feed come from pasture. It is our hope that these new requirements will put so-called “organic” factory farms, like those operated by Horizon and Aurora, out of business.

Although the OCA applauds the USDA for finally proposing regulations that will put an end to intensive confinement dairy feedlots under the “USDA Organic” label, we strongly oppose a separate section of the proposed regulation that would allow non-organic heifers (young milk cows) from conventional farms to be brought onto organic dairy farms and then be considered “organic.”

The OCA will be mobilizing our national network to take action on this issue in the coming weeks. Learn more: organicconsumers.org/articles/article_15315.cfm

Farm to School Programs Booming

The economic crisis is having a positive impact on the diets of children in thousands of schools across the US. School budgets may be shrinking, but family farmers are filling in the gap with low-cost locally-grown foods. It's getting prohibitively expensive for family farmers to ship their goods to customers thousands of miles away, so groups like the National Farm to School program, a national network of community-based food systems that assist farmers and improve student health, are connecting schools directly to local farms.

More than 8,700 schools across the US are actively participating in these programs, which can vary everywhere from simply stocking locally grown foods in the cafeterias to developing vegetable gardens on school property.

Learn more about these programs and how to start a similar program in your own community: organicconsumers.org/articles/article_15243.cfm

The Worst the Economy Has to Offer

Next week, after the elections, hopefully after celebrating Regime Change, OCA will be launching a new long-term grassroots campaign called *Organic Transitions: Beyond the Gloom and Doom of Recession, Climate Change, Peak Oil, Deteriorating Public Health, and Endless War*. In the meantime you can read an article by best-selling author of *The Long Emergency*, James Kunstler, to remind yourself how desperately we need, not only change, but radical change: organicconsumers.org/articles/article_15343.cfm

Please Donate

We need your support today to continue fighting for the rights of organic farmers & consumers! organicconsumers.org/donations.cfm



CHANGE IN AMERICA

Time to get out and vote! Election Day is Tuesday, November 4, and many states have already begun accepting votes by mail or have opened up early-voting polling places. No more stolen elections! We need your help to make sure that everyone gets to vote and that every vote is counted accurately. The Organic Consumers Fund's Grassroots Netroots Alliance has put together a get-out-the-vote video and Action Alert, listing all the ways you can get involved. Watch the video, learn more about how voting rights are already being violated, and take action at grassrootsnetroots.org.