



ALERT: USDA to Deregulate GE Crops

The USDA is looking to fast-track the deregulation of GE corn for ethanol production, despite growing evidence that GE crops are dangerous for human health and the environment. GE crops have been forced on consumers without mandatory labeling or adequate assessment of negative human health and environmental impacts. A recent study by the Austrian government even demonstrated how a type of GE corn causes infertility in lab rats. The current industrialized processes of creating biofuels, like ethanol, are inherently unsustainable and actually cause more total greenhouse gases and use more petroleum than gasoline. Take Action: salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/642/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=26307



The Next Secretary of Agriculture?

It's one of the most powerful positions in DC. The Secretary of Agriculture oversees the safety of the US food supply, domestic farming policies, food stamp programs, and the nation's 297,000 square miles of forest. Obama was initially considering the pro-biotech Iowa governor Tom Vilsack for the position, but thousands of organic consumers raised their voices in response to an OCA alert that apparently stopped that plan in its tracks.

According to press reports, Obama is now considering Rep. Collin Peterson (D-MN) to head the USDA. Peterson, like Vilsack, is a strong biotech supporter, head of the House Agriculture Committee, and a man who categorized organic consumers as "dumb" last year. *Organic Bytes* readers sent Peterson several thousand irate letters in response to his put-down of organic food and farming.

Last week OCA delivered a petition with 10,000 signatures to Obama's transition team in Washington, asking him to take a strong stand in support of organic food and farming and to move beyond "business as usual" by appointing visionaries like Michael Pollan to top USDA positions. We also posted on our website a list of other progressive candidates for high-level USDA positions, including Jim Riddle, a national organic farmer leader, Texas populist Jim Hightower, Tom Buis from the National Farmers Union, and Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie.

The Obama transition team has set-up an innovative website to facilitate public input for policy initiatives in the new Obama Administration. Please take the time to share your insights and opinions at www.change.gov

Quote: Grocery Stores and Lab Rat Mazes

"The resemblance to rats in cages in laboratories is more than cosmetic. The way that we shop today in supermarkets is profoundly manipulated. Everything about it is the result of millions of dollars in investments and experiments. Everything about it: the lighting, the positioning of things, the reason that the milk is always at the back, all of these are ways in which we're manipulated. The profound irony is that we go into supermarkets and we are made to believe that we choose freely but the moment we step through the doors of the supermarket, we have been made for our food. We are being crafted in that environment into people who will impulse purchase, will accept a range of fruits and vegetables that is very narrow, will think that when we pick between Coke and Pepsi, that that's real choice."

-Raj Patel in an interview about his new book *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*

The Scoop on Organic Pet Food

One of OCA's Web Forum users posted the following topic: "I don't know if this is the right place to post, but my husband and I *attempt* to eat an organic diet... I want our husky to eat just as healthily. Before coming to the States, it was as easy to order online and lo and behold certified organic dog food appeared on the door step. I've had no end of bother obtaining good certified organic feed for my dog... any ideas or help out there?"

OCA Response: Buying certified "USDA Organic" pet food is definitely a smart consumer choice. Conventional pet food contains everything from animals put down at animal shelters to slaughterhouse waste (including spinal columns and potentially diseased tissue). Conventional pet food can also legally contain fillers like newspaper and feathers. Organic pet foods have much higher quality. Because of a successful lawsuit filed against the USDA by the OCA and Dr. Bronner's relating to body care and other non-food agricultural products, pet food manufacturers cannot display the USDA Organic seal unless their products meet the same strict standards as organic food for humans. If you do not see the USDA Organic seal, you need to read the product ingredient label carefully to determine which of the ingredients are actually organic.

Help OCA raise \$75,000!


It's that time of year when we look to our readers to support OCA's efforts with your tax deductible donations. We need to continue our fight for health, justice and sustainability in 2009, so we need your support today!


Donate Now!
organicconsumers.org/donations.cfm




GREEN IDEAS FOR HOLIDAY GIFTS

Buy green, organic gifts and support your local economy by buying from local businesses. Ideally, the items would be produced locally, but if not, you are still supporting a local business and circulating your money through your community.

 **Gift certificates:** In a struggling economy, letting your loved ones choose what they want to buy can sometimes be the best gift. Consider buying gift certificates from your local co-op or natural food store, independent bookstore, or locally-owned restaurants.

 **Get crafty:** Don't be afraid to offer handmade gifts. Put together a book of family favorite recipes. Make your own calendar. Give your loved one a coupon book offering your free services for massages, chores, and hugs.

 **Donate to a nonprofit** of your choice in your friend or loved one's name. For example, a gift membership to the Organic Consumers Association. Many organizations, including the OCA, provide certificates to give to your loved one, acknowledging that you have made a gift donation in their name.