



Alert: Tell USDA to Close All Loopholes Allowing Organic Dairy CAFOs

OCA alerted consumers on October 29 about a proposed rule that represents the broadest rewrite of federal organic regulations in history. OCA welcomes the new proposed rules in terms of closing loopholes relating to pasture and forage requirements that had previously allowed dairy companies like Aurora and Horizon to source their milk from giant industrial feedlots. Unfortunately, the new proposed rules also include a number of new cumbersome regulations that would cause tremendous hardship, or even put the majority of organic livestock farmers out of business. OCA also objects to the part of the proposed regulations that would allow non-organic cattle to be brought onto a certified organic dairy farm and then be considered organic. OCA has joined together with the Cornucopia Institute and a number of the nation's leading organic certifiers to encourage the USDA to revise its proposed rule to crack down on factory farm abuses, and uphold organic integrity, without making it impossible for existing organic farms to operate and thrive. Please sign your name to our petition at organicconsumers.org/articles/article_16038.cfm

Quote of the Week

"We feel like this is the moment for us as organizers. Yesterday, there were 2,000 organizers that were brought into Washington, DC, many of them coming from the community organization where Barack Obama was trained in Chicago, talking about how we have to be there to push this administration forward. Groups are planning, January, February, bringing thousands of people to Washington, and also to be a part of this ten million email list that has been created..."

-Medea Benjamin, the founder of CODEPINK, speaking in an interview on *Democracy Now*.

Workers' Stand-Off in Chicago

In an inspiring scene of solidarity, the likes of which hasn't been seen since the 1930s, more than 200 workers at a Chicago plant have refused to leave work after being unexpectedly laid off. Executives at the company, Republic Windows and Doors, announced massive layoffs after banks informed the company of credit cut-backs. Although Bank of America received a \$25 billion taxpayer funded bailout, the financial behemoth continues to constrict credit, including cutting off operating credit to Republic Windows and Doors. In response to the layoffs, members of United Electrical Workers Local 1110 called for a sit-in at the factory. Worker backlash of this kind hasn't been seen in the US since the Great Depression. Protesting workers wear signs reading, "You got bailed out, we got sold out."

Obama Prepares to Appoint USDA Head

President-Elect Obama is extremely close to naming a new Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary of Agriculture is responsible for directing the US Department of Agriculture and its \$90 billion annual budget, including the National Organic Program, food stamp and nutrition programs, and agriculture subsidies. Through the OCA web portal, you can now directly communicate with the President-Elect about your choice for Secretary of Agriculture and your vision for our nation's food system

How to Avoid GE Sugar this Holiday Season

Over the past year, *Organic Bytes* has warned its readers about the forced introduction of genetically engineered sugar beets into the US food supply in 2008. The health and environmental effects of these crops are relatively unknown and have historically resulted in an increase in pesticide use. Most of the mainstream table sugar, cereal and candy companies have refused to ban genetically engineered sugar in their products, including American Crystal and Kelloggs. While OCA and its allies continue to work to remove this new biotech food from the mainstream market, before it

becomes as ubiquitous as genetically engineered corn, soybeans and RBGH, we have some tips for consumers:

- ✂ Purchase organic sugar. The USDA organic standards do not allow foods labeled as "organic" to contain ingredients derived from genetically engineered crops.

- ✂ According to Ken Roseboro, the editor of *The Organic & Non-GMO Report*, two non-organic sugar companies that are still GE-free are Spreckels Sugar in California and Rogers Sugar Alberta, Canada. Spreckels is processing non-GMO beets because sugar beet farmers in California do not yet have GM sugar beet varieties. According to Roseboro, "I spoke with the plant manager and he said farmers would plant GM varieties as soon as they are available possibly by next year. Unless farmers are given extra incentives to grow non-GMO beets they will grow GM." Maybe it's a good time to contact the company and let them know you'd like them to stay GE-free.

- ✂ The OCA is continuing its campaign to pressure major sugar and candy companies to use GE-free sugar. Take Action at: organicconsumers.org/kelloggs.cfm

FDA Admits Mercury Fillings Danger

After years of pressure from scientists, citizen groups and health advocates, the FDA has posted a statement to its website that is nothing less than a watershed event in oral hygiene history (it's actually quite a bit more exciting than that may sound). Although the FDA has previously adamantly denied any and all scientific evidence pointing to negative health impacts from mercury fillings, the FDA has now posted the following to its website: "Dental amalgams contain mercury, which may have neurotoxic effects on the nervous systems of developing children and fetuses... Pregnant women and persons who may have a health condition that makes them more sensitive to mercury exposure, including individuals with existing high levels of mercury bioburden, should not avoid seeking dental care, but should discuss options with their health practitioner."

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. OCA's year-end donation campaign launched on December 1st, and you've helped us raise \$15,000 so far. But in order to continue to fight as successfully in 2009 for health, justice and sustainability, we still have a long way to go to reach our goal. Send your tax-deductible donation today or donate in a loved one's name as a holiday gift, and we'll send a special OCA holiday card to let them know. Donate Online at organicconsumers.org/donations.htm



CHOOSING A TRULY GREEN CHRISTMAS TREE

The majority of Christmas trees sold in the US are grown on large plantations where pesticides are used that may cause the trees to contaminate your house with pesticide residues.

Here are some quick tips to avoid that problem:

- ✂ Buy a used artificial tree. People are always buying the latest and greatest and looking to dispose of perfectly beautiful ornamentation. Check out ebay, craigslist, freecycle or your local newspaper.

- ✂ Shopping for a tree at a big box store, large garden center or city lot usually means you'll have no idea where the tree was grown or what chemicals were used.

- ✂ Trees found at "cut-your-own-tree" farms and farmers' markets usually have little to no pesticides.