



OCA Under Attack

For the second time in a month, sophisticated hackers have attacked the OCA website. The previous attack forced us to delay putting out *Organic Bytes* for a week. We're not sure whether these cowardly cyber-criminals are agents of Monsanto or one of our other "profits before people" adversaries, but we are sure of one thing: nothing will stop OCA from speaking out and mobilizing for health, justice, and sustainability. Even though OCA's tireless web team have once again foiled the latest assault, these attacks are costing us valuable time and money. We need your financial support to help us strengthen our defenses and ward off future attacks. Please make a tax deductible donation to OCA today:

organicconsumers.org/donations.cfm

SOS: Tell NOSB to Strengthen Organic Standards

Twice yearly, the National Organic Standards Board holds public meetings to hear from the public and make recommendations to the USDA National Organic Program. The next meeting is May 4-6, in Washington, DC. The Organic Consumers Fund, the voice for organic consumers in the Nation's Capitol, will be submitting written and oral comments to the NOSB and we would like to have your input.

Please go to the OCA Forum (organicconsumers.org/forum/) to let us know what you think about the following issues that the NOSB will be discussing:

Biodiversity

Biodiversity should be prioritized in organic system plans. Maintaining healthy, biologically diverse farms is essential for the long-term sustainability of our food system and ecosystem. Currently, biodiversity is being neglected by the USDA National Organic Program and many organic farmers, inspectors, and certifiers.

Food Packaging

Carbon dioxide and other inert atmospheric gases or packaging aids create an appearance of freshness even after food has spoiled. These should not be allowed in organic products. The NOSB Certification, Accreditation and Compliance Committee is considering allowing this loophole, under the premise that inert atmospheric gases are not processing aids because they have no functional effect in the food, but merely modify the environment in which the food is packaged.

Personal Care Products

Personal care products labeled or marketed as organic should meet USDA standards. Unlike organic foods, many personal care products are falsely labeled as "organic." The USDA has not used its enforcement power to go after shampoos, cosmetics and other personal care products that mislead consumers by improperly using the term "organic" in their name, branding and marketing claims.

National Organic Program Peer Review Board

The overwhelming majority of organic farmers, producers, and certifiers are playing by the rules, but a single example of organic fraud can crumble consumer confidence in organic certification. We need a professional, well-funded and independent NOP Peer Review Board, as required by law, so that respected members of the organic community can monitor and police violations of organic standards.

Nanotechnology

Nanotechnology is the radical new technology of manipulating matter at the sub-molecular, atomic level. Nano-technology is being used increasingly in numerous areas of agricultural production and food production and handling. The UK's Soil Association has banned the use of nano-materials in organic, but the USDA NOP and NOSB have not yet acted, and it is unclear whether current regulations would prevent nanotechnology from entering the organic marketplace.

Take Action: organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php?showtopic=2635

Alert: Tell Obama not to Appoint Former Monsanto Lawyer to Food Safety Panel

President Obama announced on March 14 the creation of a White House Food Safety Working Group to improve and coordinate the government's approach to the nationwide food safety crisis. Included in the President's working group members is Michael Taylor, a former Monsanto executive who has a long history of lobbying for Monsanto and fast tracking Monsanto's controversial rBGH while at the FDA. Taylor is a case study of the "revolving door," having worked within the USDA and FDA, as well as Monsanto. Take action now. Tell President Obama and Secretary Vilsack to appoint true champions for food safety, not shills for Monsanto.

Take Action: organicconsumers.org/action.cfm

Mars Takes Step Towards Sustainability

Last week, Mars, Inc. announced a commitment to source 100,000 metric tons of cocoa certified by the Rainforest Alliance annually for use in Mars products. Over 40% of the world's conventional chocolate (i.e. non-organic and non-Fair Trade) comes from Africa's Ivory Coast, where the International Labor Organization and US State Department have reported widespread instances of child slavery. Exploitation of cocoa farmers and farm workers is the norm in the chocolate industry. While the OCA recognizes Mar's progress towards sustainability with Rainforest Alliance certification, OCA and partners like the International Labor Rights Forum, have long urged Mars for stronger labor standards, organic certification and a commitment to source GE Free sugar. Contact Mars, Inc. today and urge them to solidify their commitment to sustainability and transition their product line to certified organic and Fair Trade, as well as commit to GE Free sugar.

Take Action: organicconsumers.org/action.cfm



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The ambition for broad acres leads to poor farming, even with men of energy. I scarcely ever knew a mammoth farm to sustain itself; much less to return a profit upon the outlay. I have more than once known a man to spend a respectable fortune upon one; fail and leave it; and then some man of more modest aims, get a small fraction of the ground, and make a good living upon it. Mammoth farms are like tools or weapons, which are too heavy to be handled. Ere long they are thrown aside, at a great loss."

-Abraham Lincoln
Sept 30, 1859, Wisconsin State Fair

Headlines of the Week

The Carbon Tax - A Moral Issue

"The disagreement as to the most effective remedy to confront the climate change crisis may seem like just another controversy among Washington energy wonks. It is, in fact, a vital moral question that could help decide whether our planet's fate is life or death..."

A Solar Revolution May Be Coming to Your Town

A new "feed-in tariff" is boosting home solar paneling in cities like Gainesville, FL. Under this tariff system, the local power company is required to buy renewable energy from independent producers, no matter how small, at rates slightly higher than the average cost of production. This means anyone with a cluster of solar cells on their roof can sell the power they produce at a profit.

New Study: More Bad News About Plastic Containers

"New research analyzing mineral water held in bottles made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) raises questions about whether contaminants might leach from PET into the water where they mimic estrogen's effects..."

www.organicconsumers.org/archives/log.cfm