



Alert: Secretary Vilsack: Support Organics, not Genetic Engineering

While the Obama Administration has supported organics with several notable actions during its first 100 days of office, appointing organic advocate Kathleen Merrigan to Undersecretary of Agriculture and planting organic gardens at the White House and USDA headquarters, the Administration has followed in the footsteps of Clinton & Bush, cheerleading for genetically engineered (GE) crops at home and abroad.

Upon returning from the G8 summit in Italy, Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack pledged to promote Big Biotech abroad as part of President Obama's foreign policy. Vilsack's comments came in the wake of President Obama's announcement that the United States would provide "double support for agricultural development to over \$1 billion so that we are giving people the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty... This is not just charity though. These are future markets for all countries, and future drivers of growth." "Agricultural development," from the Administration's perspective seems to mean exporting the US's toxic industrial agriculture model, with GE crops at the forefront.

Take Action! Send Vilsack a letter and urge him to:

- ▶ Require mandatory labeling of all GE food.
- ▶ Promote truly sustainable and organic agriculture in the US and abroad.
- ▶ Protect non-GE and organic farmers by passing "polluter pays" legislation for damages caused by genetically engineered organisms.

Learn more and take action:

organicconsumers.org/articles/article_17886.cfm

How to Start an Organic Garden

The most affordable way to eat local organic foods is to grow your own. As global food prices continue rising, a record number of first-time gardeners are planting their own organic veggie plot. Whether you have a yard or are joining a community garden, watch this video for some quick and easy tips for beginning a vegetable garden with minimal soil disturbance: organicconsumers.org/articles/article_17824.cfm

Does Homeopathy Work or is it Quackery?

In the last two issues of *Organic Bytes*, the OCA has linked to articles discussing how homeopathy was used during the pandemic of 1918. The articles offered a historical perspective and opened the question of whether homeopathy is a serious remedy to be considered in the context of the recent Swine Flu outbreak. We received a large number of emails from our readers. Although some were happy we were opening the discussion of homeopathy, others felt strongly that the practice has no scientific basis whatsoever. So we've opened up the topic in our web forum and are inviting our readers to post their thoughts, experiences or links to scientific articles regarding homeopathy.

Join the discussion at: organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php?showtopic=2710

Victory and Newsflash of the Week

Federal Assistance Available for Farmers Making Transition to Organic

In 2008, the Organic Consumers Association's supporters sent nearly 100,000 emails to Congress urging our leaders to support organic farming in the 2008 Farm Bill. In fulfilling a portion of our requests, Congress approved funding for farmers needing financial and technical assistance to make the transition from conventional farming to organic. The USDA has announced a three week sign-up period for this assistance beginning May 11. For our farmer readers who would like to go organic, now is the time. Learn more:

organicconsumers.org/articles/article_17887.cfm

Headlines of the Week

Grateful Body Refutes Claims That All Honeysuckle Extracts Contains Parabens

In last week's issue of *Organic Bytes*, we linked to an article where organic supplier Eliza Moriarty made the claim that products using honeysuckle extract as a 'natural' preservative are simply hiding parabens in their products. This week, USDA organic personal care product leader, Grateful Body, says those are false claims and shows documentation that its products have been tested free of parabens, despite the use of honeysuckle extract. Let the debate begin!

The Good Times as We Knew it Aren't Coming Back, So Now What?

What's needed in American life is a redefinition of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." People remain yoked to economic demands despite wanting something more from life—freedom to explore the mysteries and bring forth all that is within them. Collectively, Americans need to take a deep breath and reconsider what it means to be rich.

Peak-Oil Prophet James Howard Kunstler on Food, Fuel and Why He Almost Became Vegan

Kunstler's relentless skewering of suburbia, and his penchant for apocalyptic predictions have landed him a reputation as a cranky Cassandra. But as Ben McGrath observed while strolling around Saratoga Springs with Kunstler for a recent *New Yorker* piece,

"Far from the image of the stereotypical Chicken Little, he was more like an amiable town crier whom the citizenry regarded fondly, if a bit skeptically."

Pesticides Blamed for Some Childhood Brain Cancers

"A new study finds that children who live in homes where their parents use pesticides are twice as likely to develop brain cancer versus those that live in residences in which no pesticides are used..."

Something Smells at Whole Foods

"Whole Foods Market is a highly profitable corporation that far outperforms its competitors, while maintaining an aura of commitment to social justice and environmental responsibility. Yet the company has successfully quelled unionizing attempts by employees..."

Read these articles and many more at OCA's website:
www.organicconsumers.org

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

WE NEED FOOD AND FARMING REGULATION NOW



"Taxpayers are demanding that government enforce existing regulations and create more stringent rules to limit the excess and greed in banking, insurance, housing, and on Wall Street. But, in the rush to regulate, we can't forget to oversee industrial agriculture. It is one of our most polluting and dangerous industries." -Will Allen, a leading organic farmer in the US and a member of the Policy Advisory Board of the OCA has written an excellent overview of the major problems and hazards of our currently out-of-control system of industrial agriculture.

organicconsumers.org/articles/article_17849.cfm