



## Alert: Help Educate Deputy Secretary Merrigan

USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, who helped craft the organic law and regulations as an aide to Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and the head of the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service under President Clinton, should be well-versed on the organic industry's controversies. In a speech at the *All Things Organic* trade show in Chicago on June 17, Deputy Secretary Merrigan said that she was going to get "tough on crime" and go after fraud in the organic marketplace. But, when asked whether she was going to do something to help family-scale dairy farmers who are struggling to compete with factory farms masquerading as organic, she dodged the organic dairy controversy by saying, "I'm not sure what a factory farm is or what a family farm is."

The current organic dairy crisis was precipitated by widespread fraud in the organic dairy industry. For over five years, the USDA has delayed enforcement of the law requiring mandatory pasture access for organic cows, while allowing giant intensive confinement dairy feedlots to supply nutritionally inferior "organic" milk to Aurora and Dean Foods/Horizon, who in turn supply Wal-Mart, Safeway, and Target with the cheapest "organic" milk in the country. Justice delayed is justice denied. While we wait for the USDA to enforce the law, the 90% of small and medium-sized organic dairy farmers (and even some large ones), who play by the rules and put their cows out to pasture every day during the growing season, are going out of business because they can't compete with the big confinement dairies of Aurora and Horizon, where production costs are 30% lower than grass-fed, pasture-based organic dairies.

Please tell Deputy Secretary Merrigan that, as an organic consumer, you know the difference between family farms and factory farms and that you expect President Obama's USDA to stop labeling fraud in the organic dairy and personal care sectors and to maintain consumer trust in the USDA Organic label: [capwiz.com/grassrootsnetroots/issues/alert/?alertid=13678531](http://capwiz.com/grassrootsnetroots/issues/alert/?alertid=13678531)

## Natural Food Inc. Responds to OCA's Criticisms

In last week's *Organic Bytes*, OCA criticized Whole Foods Market (WFM) and United Natural Foods (UNFI) for undermining organics by promoting and selling mostly conventional products (greenwashed as "Natural"), instead of certified organic products. OCA and thousands of organic consumers asked WFM & UNFI to begin to put pressure on their so-called "Natural" product suppliers to sign contracts with accredited certifiers and make the transition to organic.

Unfortunately, instead of pressuring these companies to rethink and to stop marketing conventional foods as if they were as good as or nearly organic, WFM and UNFI have put the squeeze on a number of OCA's advertisers—costing our organization thousands of dollars in lost revenue. In spite of this blatant intimidation, OCA will not be silent. We will continue to expose the myth of so-called "Natural" foods and farming. We will continue educating ethical consumers, retailers, wholesalers, farmers, and food processors to put their money and their practices where their supposed values lie. To learn more, read the essay by OCA Director Ronnie Cummins: *The Organic Monopoly and the Myth of "Natural" Foods: How Industry Giants Are Undermining the Organic Movement*: [organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_18493.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/articles/article_18493.cfm)

## OCA's Position on Food Safety Bill

Although OCA is fairly satisfied that the new Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009 (HR-2749) is intended to protect organic farmers from being negatively impacted by new food safety regulations, the bill does not address the underlying causes of America's persistent and serious food safety crisis: factory farms and chemical-intensive agriculture. When addressing the concerns of E.coli or salmonella, the bill focuses on fresh vegetables and fruits rather than CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations), in effect treating the symptom and not the disease. A close look at the nation's food poisoning epidemics over the past decade reveal that the overwhelming majority of fruit and vegetable contamination incidents are a direct result of water and soil pollution from large factory farms.

OCA believes that HR-2749 should be amended to address factory farming:

- ▶ Animals should never be fed blood, manure or slaughterhouse waste.
- ▶ Cows need to eat grass.
- ▶ Animals need to be spread out on enough land to absorb their waste.
- ▶ CAFOs pose unacceptable risks to human health such as antibiotic resistance, incubate dangerous viruses and pathogens such as the Swine Flu and Bird Flu, contaminate the environment, institutionalize animal cruelty, and need to be phased out and shut down.

## QUOTE: ON FACTORY FARMING

"If one person is unkind to an animal it is considered to be cruelty, but when a lot of people are unkind to animals, especially in the name of commerce, the cruelty is condoned and, once large sums of money are at stake, will be defended to the last by otherwise intelligent people." Ruth Harrison - *Animal Machines*

## HEADLINES OF THE WEEK

### Top 12 Food Additives to Remove From Your Diet

Thanks to *MSN Health & Fitness* contributor Jean Weiss, a list of the most medically questionable and harmful additives in everyday foods has been compiled:

- ▶ Sodium nitrite
- ▶ BHA & BHT
- ▶ Propyl gallate
- ▶ Monosodium glutamate
- ▶ Trans fats
- ▶ Aspartame
- ▶ Acesulfame-K
- ▶ Food colorings (Blue, Red, Green, Yellow)
- ▶ Olestra
- ▶ Potassium bromate
- ▶ White sugar
- ▶ Sodium chloride



### Washington Post Reports on Organic Label Integrity

"Relaxation of the federal standards, and an explosion of consumer demand, have helped push the organics market into a \$23 billion-a-year business. But the USDA program's shortcomings mean that consumers, who at times must pay twice as much for organic products, are not always getting what they expect: foods without pesticides and other chemicals, produced in a way that is gentle to the environment..."

### Preservatives in Meat Linked to Dementia & Cancer

According to a study published last week in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, sodium nitrite, a very common additive added to meat and fish to destroy toxins, reacts with proteins in the meat, damaging human DNA cells. The study links the preservatives to dementia diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. The ingredient, which has also been linked to cancer, can be avoided by reading ingredient labels on meats like cold-cuts, hot dogs, and sausages. Sodium nitrite is a synthetic ingredient not allowed in organic foods.

Read these articles and many more at OCA's website:

[www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org)

## IN MEMORIAM • CRAIG WINTERS

Craig Winters was a long time ally and friend of all of us at the OCA, and everyone in the anti-GMO movement, as well as a great fighter for holistic health and all things organic. In memory of Craig, all of us at the OCA pledge to redouble our efforts to campaign for mandatory labeling of Genetically Engineered foods, and to drive GMOs off the market. [organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_18453.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/articles/article_18453.cfm)