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Health, Justice, & Sustainability News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association
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→ALERT: EPA Accepting Comments on Pesticide Residues in Food

A coalition of health and environmental groups have filed a petition with the EPA, indicating the agency has violated federal laws for establishing allowable levels of fluoride pesticide residues in foods. The petition comes on the heels of over 7,000 EPA employees calling for stronger limitations of fluoride in food and water, as well as a recent report from the National Academy of Sciences indicating the average American diet has unsafe levels of fluoride. Specifically, the petitioners (including Fluoride Action Network, Beyond Pesticides and Environmental Working Group) are asking the EPA to prohibit the use of sulfuryl fluoride in food production. Elevated levels of fluoride are associated with bone fractures, thyroid function losses, IQ deficits, bone cancer, and Alzheimer's disease. The EPA has posted a public comment period on the issue ending August 4, 2006. Learn more and take action here: www.organicconsumers.org/rd/fluoride.htm
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Things Your Lawn Never Wanted You to Know

The EPA estimates that the total amount of residential lawn in the United States ranges around 40 million acres, making turf grass the nation's biggest irrigated crop. Americans pour as much as 238 gallons of water per person, per day onto lawns during the growing season. The us lawn industry is a \$70 billion annual business. America's 50 million or so lawnmowers burn through 800 million gallons of gas every year.

Source: United States EPA: Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program

Turning America's Water-Guzzling Lawns into Edible Estates


The average temperature for the continental United States from January through June, 2006 was the warmest first half of any year since records began being kept, according to scientists at the NOAA National Climatic Data Center. As many us states suffer from drought, tensions over water usage are escalating, particularly over the nation's obsession for green lawns. In Los Angeles, Fritz Haeg


has launched a nationwide campaign called "Edible Estates," helping homeowners convert their water thirsty lawns into vegetable gardens or native vegetation. "It's about shifting ideas of what's beautiful," says Haeg. According to homeowners across the us who have taken similar steps to convert their yards into more practical (and less water-hungry) plots of land, the biggest problem comes from neighbors who believe such yards will reduce property values in the neighborhood. Meanwhile, groups like Edible Estates, are working to highlight the major problems inherent in fertilizing, watering and applying pesticides to the millions of acres of lawns across the us. "Diversity is healthy," says Haeg. "The pioneers were ecologically-minded out of sheer necessity, because they had to eat what they grew. But we've lost touch with the garden as a food source."

Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_1105.cfm


Written and edited by Craig Minowa & Ronnie Cummins

Quick Tidbits


 Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has announced the most sweeping restrictions on genetically engineered crops in the Western Hemisphere. Chavez has called for a cancellation of all contracts with biotech companies and has declared that for the sake of protecting the nation's farmers, genetically engineered crops will not be allowed. Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_1038.cfm

 Media, Pennsylvania has become the first "Fair Trade" town in the US. The city's Council passed a resolution that requires that local businesses source a set percentage of its products from certified Fair Trade sources. "It benefits (consumers) by making a different kind of consumer—consumers who are aware that they can do good by what they purchase. They don't just buy something for themselves," said Hal Taussig, a local activist who helped spearhead the city's Fair Trade resolution.

Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_1061.cfm

 CBS has launched an advertising campaign for its fall show lineup that is designed to catch consumers off guard. The television network has printed advertisements on the shells of over 35 million eggs destined for refrigerators across the country. Marketers have coined the phrase "egg-vertising" for the new technique. Depending on the success of the campaign, marketers hope to expand the technique to the edible portions of food products, wherein consumers would literally ingest the advertisement. Learn more:

www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_1112.cfm

 McDonald's has taken over Coca Cola's long lead in spending more on advertising than any other company on the planet. In a survey of over 10,000 children, Ronald McDonald was found to be the second most identifiable fictional character (the first being Santa Claus). In order to further entice young consumers, McDonald's also operates more playgrounds than any other American private corporation, all while being the leading seller of children's clothes in the US with its "McKids" line of clothing. In related news, a new study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* indicates that obese children run a three-fold greater risk of premature death when they reach middle-age.

Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_1092.cfm

Supermarkets and Gas Stations Begin to Battle for World's Grains

As oil prices continue to rise, the world's affluent are converting millions of acres of food crops to fuel crops. In the US, ethanol plants are being constructed on a mass scale. In Iowa alone, 55 ethanol plants are operating or have been proposed. According to Iowa State University economist Bob Wisner, if all these plants are built, they would use all the corn grown in Iowa. With so many distilleries being built, livestock and poultry producers fear there may not be enough corn to produce meat, milk, and eggs. Meanwhile, in Brazil, half of the sugar crop is now being converted to fuel, causing world sugar prices to double. In Europe, 1.6 billion gallons of biofuels were made from food crops last year. Given the new demand for these crops, global donations of food grains are not keeping up with the world's increasing starving populations. According to Lester Brown, President of the Earth

Policy Institute, "Simply put, the stage is being set for a head-on collision between the world's 800 million affluent automobile owners and food consumers." Meanwhile, researchers are attempting to perfect the science of "cellulosic ethanol" wherein instead of being made from grain crops, the ethanol is made more efficiently (and with less greenhouse gases) from switchgrass, hemp, plant waste and paper waste.

Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_1108.cfm

Things an Ethanol Mascot Would Never Tell You

The grain required to fill a 25 gallon SUV gas tank with ethanol would feed one person for a year. The grain to fill the tank every two weeks over a year would feed 26 people. US taxpayers now subsidize the ethanol industry at a rate of 51¢ per gallon (a law in effect until 2010).

Source: *Earth Policy Institute*

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