



ORGANIC BYTES

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www.organicconsumers.org

Food and Consumer News Tidbits with an Edge... From the Organic Consumers Association
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Alert: E.coli - Getting to the Root of the Problem

The recent tragic outbreak of E.coli contamination in spinach that has killed one person and poisoned at least 146 others, is being mistakenly blamed, by some in the media, on organic farming practices—specifically the use of animal manure in making fertilizer compost on organic farms. While no conclusive source of the current E.coli outbreak has yet been determined, mountains of E.coli-tainted manure on conventional factory farm feedlots and rainfall-induced agricultural runoff are the likely culprits.

Despite this fact, a number of apologists for industrial agriculture continue to attack organic food in the press as “unsafe.” To send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper in support of organics, go to: www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/oca/pickMedia.jsp?letter_KEY=569

Alert: Tiny Toxins – Nano, Nano Everywhere

Despite a lack of federal oversight and no requirements for labeling, nanoparticles have been placed into countless consumer products, including food, food packaging, nutritional supplements, and body care products. Nanoproducts contain extremely small particles, roughly one-billionth of a meter in size. Laboratory studies already warn that nanoparticles can cause inflammation, damage brain cells, and cause pre-cancerous lesions. The Food and Drug Administration has scheduled its first-ever Public Meeting on October 10, 2006 to address the emergence of nanotechnology. Learn more about nanotechnology and contact the FDA to call for a moratorium on untested and unlabeled nanoproducts until adequate testing and federal oversight is in place: www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/oca/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=5232

Confused About Which Eco-Labels You Can Trust?

That weekly trip to the grocery store is getting to be as much of a cranial work-out as a day at the library. Ethically-minded consumers everywhere are spending ever-increasing time trying to grind through aisle after aisle of ingredient and product labeling mumbo jumbo. It seems there are constantly new labels and certification logos showing up on products. But what do they all mean and which ones can you trust? That bottle of “Cruelty Free, Bird Friendly, All Natural, Hypoallergenic” wonder-goo may not be as great as it claims to be. Learn more about the different types of humane and eco-labels at: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_2322.cfm

The Truth About Socially Responsible Investments

Corporations are increasingly confusing potential investors with phrases like “corporate social responsibility,” “sustainability,” “green business” and “socially responsible investing.” But rarely do these terms accurately reflect the corporation’s true business ethics. Greenwashing has become one of the most successful modern-day marketing arts, whereby corporations tout themselves as practitioners of sustainability while actually practicing business-as-usual. Although incredibly popular among green consumers seeking to make ethical investments, the international SRI (socially responsible investing) mutual fund industry has fallen prey to a variety of greenwashing tactics, leaving the SRI market littered with corrupt corporations dressed up in earth-friendly costumes. Paul Hawken’s Natural Capital Institute provides an in-depth analysis of the problems in the SRI market and has begun to publish an online database to help consumers identify which SRIs and mutual funds truly promote health, justice, and sustainability. Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_2415.cfm

Fast Food Chains Going Organic

While most fast-food chains still generate billions in profits selling junk food, at least two national chains are starting to show how convenience food can be nutritious and sustainably and humanely produced. Chipotle touts its “Food With Integrity” philosophy, offering naturally raised pork, free-range chicken and a sprinkling of organic ingredients in its Mexican menu, while the Panera fast-food chain serves only all-natural, antibiotic-free chicken, as well as organic kids’ meals. A recent CIBC World Markets report indicates the two chains are growing at rates well above the national average for fast-food restaurants and attributes that success to the fact that consumers are increasingly choosing to spend their dollars on healthier and more ethically produced foods. Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_2405.cfm

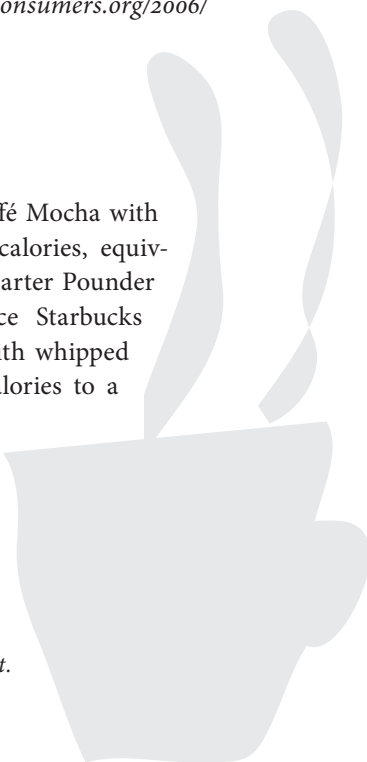
Who Cares Where Your Food Comes From?

Surveys show 86 percent of consumers support a law that would require foods to have a label identifying their country of origin. Congress responded to consumer pressure way back in 2002 and passed a Country of Origin law (COOL) for beef, lamb, pork, fish, peanuts, and fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, except for fish, this law has never been implemented. The meat portion of the COOL law was supposed to go into effect by the end of this month. But some of the biggest players in the meat industry, including Cargill and Tyson Foods formed a massive lobbying group affectionately entitled the “Meat Promotion Coalition.” The group has successfully badgered Congress into delaying implementation of the law until at least 2008.

Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_2615.cfm

Health Tip of the Week: Sweetened Coffee Can Make You Fat

A 20 ounce Starbucks Caffé Mocha with whipped cream has 490 calories, equivalent to a McDonald’s Quarter Pounder with cheese. A 24 ounce Starbucks Java Chip Frappuccino with whipped cream is equivalent in calories to a standard cup of coffee plus 11 of their creamers and 29 packets of sugar. Source: Center for Science in the Public Interest’s September issue of *Nutrition Action Healthletter*. www.cspinet.org/new/pdf/coffee.pdf



Ben and Jerry’s Get Egged:

Ben and Jerry’s ice cream company has responded to pressure from animal rights activists and discontinued sourcing its eggs from a factory farm. The Humane Society said a June investigation of a Michael Foods egg farm (where Ben and Jerry’s is sourcing its eggs) found hens dying of starvation, live hens living among dead ones and sick or injured birds caught in cage wires. Following the investigation, the Humane Society launched a campaign against the ice cream company, entitled “A Scoop of Lies.” Ben and Jerry’s, which was bought by Unilever in 2000, has announced it will source its eggs from a different provider. When asked if the company would switch to cage-free eggs, Ben and Jerry’s CEO Walt Freese made no comment. Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/2006/article_2592.cfm

Be an OCA State News Scout:

We need your help. Become a News Scout! The OCA, with your help, will be unveiling News and Action Centers for all 50 states in the next few weeks. We want to keep your state’s news items up to date. Send us news, events, organizations, and campaigns for your state. Learn more: www.organicconsumers.org/state/statecontribute.cfm

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