



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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Looking Back at Some of OCA's Biggest Success Stories in 2006!

This is a special issue of *Organic Bytes*, highlighting some of the successful work and campaigning of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) in 2006, made possible, of course, by your participation and support. It's also that time of year when we look ahead and map out our strategy for 2007. Your grassroots donations—providing over 80% of our budget—are the lifeblood of the OCA, so please consider sending us a tax-deductible donation today, either online or by calling our office. The OCA particularly needs your donations this year because a number of progressive, although unpredictable, foundations have recently let us down. We need to raise at least \$50,000 during December in order to hit the ground running at full capacity in the New Year.



Supporting Family Farmers by Stopping Factory Farms from Labeling Their Products as Organic

Organic dairy farms in the US and worldwide have traditionally been family-scale, pasture-based, and humanely operated. Unfortunately the booming demand for organic dairy products, coupled with a lack of support for family scale dairy farmers wishing to convert to organic, have prompted several profit hungry dairy corporations to set up industrial scale farms, with a wink and a nod from USDA bureaucrats, to supply grocery store chains, including Wal-Mart, with millions of gallons of cheap organic milk. In response, in April 2006, 96% of OCA network members voted in an online survey to launch a boycott of two leading organic dairy brands for mislabeling their products as "USDA Organic." Shortly thereafter OCA launched a national boycott against Horizon Organic (a division of Dean Foods, the world's largest dairy conglomerate) and Aurora Organic. All of Aurora's, and much of Horizon's, "organic" milk is coming from industrial dairy feedlots, where the cows routinely have been imported from conventional dairies and have little or no access to pasture. Since April, thousands of consumers and a growing number of co-ops and natural food stores have joined the boycott.

Horizon is apparently feeling the heat. Company representatives have recently contacted the OCA to see if we are willing to negotiate. This is good sign in the ongoing battle to preserve organic integrity and stop the "Wal-Martization" of organics.

www.organicconsumers.org/sos.cfm

Building Up Strong Support for Organics Among Elected Public Officials



In 2006, the OCA helped bring to mass public attention a new non-profit sister political organization, the Organic Consumers Fund (OCF). Prior to the November elections, thousands of organic consumers across the nation called on their candidates to fill out OCF's 17 question nonpartisan survey dealing with a broad range of inter-related issues including organics, energy, climate, health care, peace, justice, and sustainability. Over 100,000 voters visited the OCF website to look at the results of the survey and to better gauge who to vote for in local, state and federal elections. We were happy to see that many of the state and federal candidates who scored high in the *Organic Consumers Candidate Survey* won their races. In 2007, we plan to work closely with this new crop of leaders in an effort to redirect a fair share of the USDA's annual \$100 billion budget to help us family farmers make the transition to organic, develop local markets, and incorporate renewable energy practices on their farms. www.organicconsumersfund.org



Keeping Synthetic Hormones Out of Dairy Products

Since our founding in 1998, the OCA has been a leading force educating consumers about the serious human and animal health hazards of Monsanto's recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH). The synthetic hormone rBGH (sometimes called rBST) is a genetically engineered drug designed to force non-organic dairy cows to produce more milk. This controversial and inhumane animal drug has been banned in Europe, Canada, and Japan, due to concerns over increased risks for breast and colon cancer and antibiotic resistance, yet it is still used on many factory farms in the US. Thanks to ongoing consumer pressure by OCA and our allies, a growing number of mainstream dairy producers and distributors went rBGH-free in 2006. Several months ago, in response to increasing grassroots demand, Dean Foods and Wal-Mart (the largest dairy and grocery chain in the US) began asking their dairy suppliers to stop injecting their cows with rBGH. In October, Vermont's Secretary of Agriculture called on the state's farmers to stop using rBGH. As a result, Monsanto has been forced to cut back production of rBGH, while informed sources tell the OCA that Dean Foods and Starbucks—long time targets of OCA pressure—will soon announce a ban on rBGH milk.

www.organicconsumers.org/monlink.cfm



Leading the Charge Against GE Foods

OCA continues to focus on the hazards of unlabeled and untested genetically engineered (GE) foods. In 2006 major controversies developed as GE grass and rice contaminated the environment and food stocks. Although the US government has approved the cultivation of GE wheat, sugar beets, flax, potatoes, fish, and rice, pressure from the OCA and allied consumer and farm groups around the world has convinced the biotech industry to hold off indefinitely on releasing these varieties commercially. An ongoing series of USDA and industry polls have found that 80-95% of Americans support mandatory labels for GE food, mainly so they can avoid buying these products. The OCA is working to recruit over 100 Congressional co-sponsors for a 2007 bill that would require GE foods to be labeled and safety tested. Mandatory labeling requirements in the European Union have basically driven GE foods and ingredients off the market.

www.organicconsumers.org/ge-free.htm



Protecting Our Children's Health

OCA's Appetite for a Change Campaign has become one of the most visited areas of our website, which now receives over a million visitors per month. In 2006, the campaign focused on educating parents and schools about issues related to children's environmental health, including alerts on toxins in toys and schools, strategies for curbing the childhood obesity epidemic, and banning pesticides known to pose specific threats to infants and fetuses. In 2006, we saw more schools introduce organic foods, while simultaneously eliminating junk food vending machines. The soft drink industry also agreed, at least rhetorically, to remove soda pop machines from elementary schools. And the number of parents buying organic foods, with their children's health in mind, increased more than any other year in history. We look forward to expanding our Appetite for Change Campaign in 2007. www.organicconsumers.org/afc.cfm



Promoting Sustainable Agriculture

The OCA and our allies recently came close to bringing industrial hemp farming back to the us for the first time in 70 years. A legislative Bill (AB 1147) in California would have given the state's farmers the right to grow industrial hemp, which is currently used in numerous products, including clothing, hemp foods, body care products, plastics, and oils. The Bill was passed with a strong majority by both the California Senate and Assembly, but in early October, it was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger. With the efforts of our Clothes for a Change campaign, OCA and our allies in the hemp movement will work to reintroduce this bill in 2007. OCA's Clothes for a Change campaign will also continue to campaign against sweatshop labor and advocate for organic cotton and hemp in clothing.

www.organicconsumers.org/clothes/

Fighting for Safety and Organic Integrity in the Body Care Sector



Throughout 2006, the OCA has continued its Coming Clean campaign to stop unscrupulous companies from labeling their conventional or so-called natural body care products as "organic." The lack of federal organic standards for cosmetics and personal care products has resulted in rampant label fraud—with body care sections of natural food stores filled with products mislabeled as "organic," although these products' ingredient labels typically reveal a problematic brew of conventional synthetic ingredients and preservatives. The OCA has been working with a committee to develop a new set of labeling standards for organic body care. This has been a long and intensive process. Although the OCA is the only consumer advocate on this committee, we are optimistic that we can develop a rigorous standard that protects the interests of organic consumers and farmers. Draft text of the new standard should be available for public input in 2007. In the meantime, we continue to advise consumers to look for the "USDA Organic" label when purchasing body care products claiming to be organic. Most recently OCA has begun an education campaign for consumers to boycott body care and other products containing untested and potentially harmful nanotechnology particles.

www.organicconsumers.org/bodycare/

In addition to the above, the OCA has been involved in a wide range of other important work in 2006. Here's a sampling of some of our other campaigns where we have mobilized a massive nationwide network of concerned citizens, like you, into a positive force for change:

- ✦ Pressuring the FDA to mandate more safety testing on nanotech products.
- ✦ Supporting farming legislation that promotes organic, local production, and sustainability.
- ✦ Kicking fluoride pesticides out of foods.
- ✦ Supporting sweatfree procurement and worker rights.
- ✦ Stopping the commercial release of GE plums.
- ✦ Getting toxic chemicals out of consumer products and our bodies.
- ✦ Stopping EPA approval of pesticides toxic to children, infants and fetuses.

None of this work and none of our successes would have been possible if it had not been for your donations and support. One year from now, OCA will be sending out a 2007 Progress Report just like this. With your help we can make great progress over the next year. But please, we need your help now! Thank you for walking your talk. Send your tax deductible donation to the OCA now: www.organicconsumers.org/donations.htm

Organic Consumers Association

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If you don't want to make a contribution online, you can talk to us in person about a donation.

Our toll-free number is 888-403-1007.

