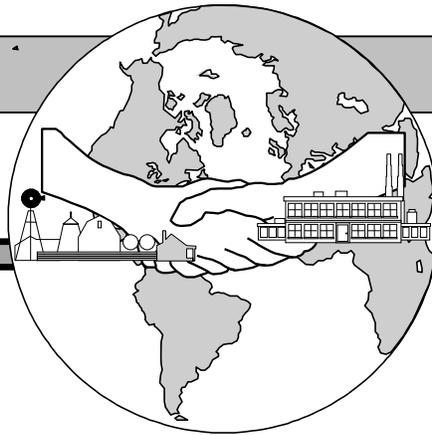


ORGANIC

VISION



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Betty's Bits

I don't know of one part of this country that has not had so many weather problems. Seems like it is either to wet to plant or too cold to germinate. Then it gets really hot and dry, until harvest, then it is wet again. But, I know that we will all be right there come next Spring, trying it all again. Thank God for brave, hardy and dedicated farmers.

I am very sorry for GOA being behind on everything this year. Between an enormous number of new member/clients, new staff people, it has been a trying year. You have all been so patient, I deeply appreciate your understanding.

But it does make me very happy to tell you that the majority of the newbies are first time organic growers seeking certification, but several have done their homework, kept their fields clean for 3 years and maintained records, however the OSP does throw them a bit. I have high hopes for a smoother 2016. We will certainly do our best. Mustn't forget to thank those of our member/clients for guiding some of our new applicants. You have done your jobs well, thank you.

A very nice surprise one Sunday afternoon. David and Sue Hutcheson of Rose, NE stopped by on their way to the East Coast. I always enjoy showing off our office building and having face to face chats with our wonderful members. I so appreciated them taking time from their busy schedule to "hunt" us down. Not always an easy task when you're looking for a farm in the sticks even in populated Ohio.

Another big Thank You to those of you who have permitted and welcomed the inspector evaluators on your farm/facility. You help us to be in compliance with the NOP requirements.

Our sincere sympathy goes out to the Morley family for the loss of Ivan. Known around our office as Uncle Ivan, he will be sorely missed.

Thanks again to all GOA member/clients for your patience this past season.

Best to all, Betty

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Organic Vision is published quarterly, when possible, for the benefit of our members and associates. The editor is happy to hear comments and suggestions: Phil Fry; 5370 N. Elm Tree Rd.; Conover, OH 45317; (937) 362-4493 pfryohio@gmail.com

My name is Linda Calvin and I work for USDA's Economic Research Service in Washington, DC. We are doing big, national surveys of food safety practices for produce growers and post-harvest operations—see the blurb below. Our grower food safety questions are in the last half of the Fruit Chemical Use Survey in 2015. The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), who is doing the surveys for us, tells me that this survey goes out to any fruit grower who matches the targeted commodity and targeted state without regard to whether they are organic or conventional. I'm concerned that organic growers may be less likely to fill out the Chem Use Survey than conventional growers, thinking that any statistics on chemical use are not so relevant to their industry, and will miss the important food safety survey. The 2015 Fruit Chemical Use Survey will go to a sample of growers of targeted fruit in 12 states: California, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington. The post-harvest survey, which is not tied to chemical use, can go to potentially any post-harvest produce operation in any state.

Linda Calvin: Economic Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture
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NEWS FROM GOA AND BEYOND

[Ed Note: I get much of the material for this section of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) at <http://www.organicconsumers.org/> and The Cornucopia Institute at <http://www.cornucopia.org/>]

GMOs, Herbicides, and Public Health

Philip J. Landrigan, M.D., and Charles Benbrook, Ph.D.,
N Engl J Med
20 Aug 2015

Widespread adoption of herbicide-resistant crops has led to overreliance on herbicides and, in particular, on glyphosate. In the United States, glyphosate use has increased by a factor of more than 250 — from 0.4 million kg in 1974 to 113 million kg in 2014. Global use has increased by a factor of more than 10. Not surprisingly, glyphosate-resistant weeds have emerged and are found today on nearly 100 million acres in 36 states. Fields must now be treated with multiple herbicides, including 2,4-D, a component of the Agent Orange defoliant used in the Vietnam War.

The first of the two developments that raise fresh concerns about the safety of GM crops is a 2014 decision by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to approve Enlist Duo, a new combination herbicide comprising glyphosate plus 2,4-D. Enlist Duo was formulated to combat herbicide resistance. It will be marketed in tandem with newly approved seeds genetically engineered to resist glyphosate, 2,4-D, and multiple other herbicides. The EPA anticipates that a 3-to-7-fold increase in 2,4-D use will result.

In our view, the science and the risk assessment supporting the Enlist Duo decision are flawed. The science consisted solely of toxicologic studies commissioned by the herbicide manufacturers in the 1980s and 1990s and never published, not an uncommon practice in U.S. pesticide regulation. These studies predated current knowledge of low-dose, endocrine-mediated, and epigenetic effects and were not designed to detect them. The risk assessment gave little

consideration to potential health effects in infants and children, thus contravening federal pesticide law. It failed to consider ecologic impact, such as effects on the monarch butterfly and other pollinators. It considered only pure glyphosate, despite studies showing that formulated glyphosate that contains surfactants and adjuvants is more toxic than the pure compound.

The second new development is the determination by the IARC in 2015 that glyphosate is a “probable human carcinogen” and 2,4-D a “possible human carcinogen.” These classifications were based on comprehensive assessments of the toxicologic and epidemiologic literature that linked both herbicides to dose-related increases in malignant tumors at multiple anatomical sites in animals and linked glyphosate to an increased incidence of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in humans.

These developments suggest that GM foods and the herbicides applied to them may pose hazards to human health that were not examined in previous assessments. We believe that the time has therefore come to thoroughly reconsider all aspects of the safety of plant biotechnology. The National Academy of Sciences has convened a new committee to reassess the social, economic, environmental, and human health effects of GM crops. This development is welcome, but the committee's report is not expected until at least 2016.

In the meantime, we offer two recommendations. First, we believe the EPA should delay implementation of its decision to permit use of Enlist Duo. This decision was made in haste. It was based on poorly designed and outdated studies and on an incomplete assessment of human exposure and environmental effects. Second, the National Toxicology

Program should urgently assess the toxicology of pure glyphosate, formulated glyphosate, and mixtures of glyphosate and other herbicides.

Finally, we believe the time has come to revisit the United States' reluctance to label GM foods. Labeling will deliver multiple benefits. It is essential for tracking emergence of novel food allergies and assessing effects of chemical herbicides applied to GM crops.

Read more:

<http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1505660>



Growing Doubt: A Scientist's Experience of GMOs

Jonathan R. Latham, PhD, Independent Science News
31 Aug 2015

By training, I am a plant biologist. In the early 1990s I was busy making genetically modified plants (often called GMOs for Genetically Modified Organisms) as part of the research that led to my PhD. Into these plants we were putting DNA from various foreign organisms, such as viruses and bacteria.

I was not, at the outset, concerned about the possible effects of GM plants on human health or the environment. One reason for this lack of concern was that I was still a very young scientist, feeling my way in the complex world of biology and of scientific research. Another reason was that we hardly imagined that GMOs like ours would be grown or eaten. So far as I was concerned, all GMOs were for research purposes only.

Gradually, however, it became clear that certain companies thought differently. Some of my older colleagues shared their skepticism with me that commercial interests were running far ahead of scientific knowledge. I listened carefully and I didn't disagree. Today, over twenty years later, GMO crops, especially soybeans, corn, papaya, canola and cotton, are commercially grown in numerous parts of the world.

Depending on which country you live in, GMOs may be unlabeled and therefore unknowingly abundant in your diet. Processed foods (e.g. chips, breakfast cereals, sodas) are likely to contain ingredients from GMO crops, because they are often made from corn or soy. Most agricultural crops, however, are still non-GMO, including rice, wheat, barley, oats, tomatoes, grapes and beans.

I now believe, as a much more experienced scientist, that GMO crops still run far ahead of our understanding of their risks. In broad outline, the reasons for this belief are quite simple. I have become much more appreciative of the complexity of biological organisms and their capacity for

benefits and harms. As a scientist I have become much more humble about the capacity of science to do more than scratch the surface in its understanding of the deep complexity and diversity of the natural world. To paraphrase a cliché, I more and more appreciate that as scientists we understand less and less.

Read more:

<https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/growing-doubt-scientists-experience-gmoS>



Bija Swaraj Not Bt Raj: The Future Is Organic, Not GMOs

Dr. Vandana Shiva
30 Aug 2015

Farmers, first of all, are breeders. They might not have the lab coats that have come to define modern plant breeding, but their wisdom, knowledge and contribution is unquestionable. To be able to continue breeding, using their own seed, is their first right, their first freedom and their first duty.

This right has been recognised in India's Plant Variety Protection and Farmers Rights Act

"39 (iv) a farmer shall be deemed to be entitled to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this Act in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this Act :

All seeds bred by the public sector or by private corporations are based on varieties bred by farmers.

For the last 2 decades, Monsanto has forcefully monopolised the cotton seed sector with its Bt Cotton seeds, through illegal, illegitimate and corrupt means. It controls 95% of the cotton seed supply and collects royalties in the form of technology fees even though it does not have a valid patent – because Monsanto introduced Bt cotton into India illegally, before India changed its patent laws (following a WTO – TRIPS dispute), and when we did amend our patent act we introduced clause 3 (j) clearly defining that biological processes are not inventions.

"ARTICLE 3(J) EXCLUDES FROM PATENTABILITY "PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN WHOLE OR IN ANY PART THEREOF OTHER THAN MICROORGANISMS; BUT INCLUDING SEEDS, VARIETIES, AND SPECIES, AND ESSENTIALLY BIOLOGICAL PROCESSES FOR PRODUCTION OR PROPAGATION OF PLANTS AND ANIMALS".

Knowing that Monsanto was collecting illegal royalties, and that there is an epidemic of farmers suicides (300,000 farmer

suicides due to a debt trap created by costly seeds and chemicals) the government has failed to act. The government failed to break Monsanto's illegal monopoly, and it failed in its public duty to ensure a supply of safe, reliable, renewable seed for our farmers.

A Right To Information (RTI) request submitted by the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (RFSTE) to the Central Institute for Cotton Research in Nagpur revealed that CICR has not released a single variety of cotton for the farmers of Vidarbha since Monsanto entered India's cotton seed market.

Suddenly, after 20 years of slumber, there is a flurry of activity – in the press, in the PMO, in the Agriculture Ministry – to rush the introduction of a straight variety of Bt cotton by the CICR, claiming that it will serve the farmer. “Straight” is a word used to describe renewable varieties which are selections from farmers varieties. These farmers' varieties have been bred in the commons and belong to the commons.

Could this sudden rush be a desperate attempt by the biotech industry and government to use the public sector as a Trojan horse to dilute and dismantle India's Biosafety regulations? Could this be an attempt by Big Biotech to bypass the Indian Judiciary by bypassing the pending Supreme Court Case on GMO field trials? The biotech industry is using the public sector as a mask.

Read more: <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/bija-swaraj-not-bt-raj-future-organic-not-gmos>



Saturated Fats Have No Link to Heart Disease

Dr. Mercola
31 Aug 2015

In February the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) submitted its 2015 Scientific Report to the US Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS).

This report serves as the foundation for the development of US dietary guidelines.

In a surprise twist, the DGAC not only suggested eliminating warnings about dietary cholesterol, it also reversed nearly four decades of nutrition policy by concluding that dietary fats have no impact on cardiovascular disease risk.

Unfortunately, the DGAC didn't set the record straight with regards to saturated fats, as it makes no firm distinction between healthy saturated fats and decidedly unhealthy trans fats.

For decades, healthy fat and cholesterol have been wrongfully blamed for causing heart disease, but over 70 published studies overwhelmingly dispute this.

Trans Fat, Not Saturated Fat, Raises Your Heart Disease Risk

Now we can add yet another large study to this ever-growing list. The meta-analysis, published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), found no association between high levels of saturated fat in the diet and heart disease.

Nor could they find an association between saturated fat consumption and other life-threatening diseases like stroke or type 2 diabetes.

However, the study DID find a disease link to trans fat consumption. As reported by Newsweek:

“[C]onsumption of trans unsaturated fats found in everyday supermarket goods such as margarine, processed cakes, and microwave popcorn can increase the risk of death from coronary heart disease (CHD) by 28 percent.”

Trans fats also increased all-cause mortality by 34 percent. This is important because many “experts” frequently confuse trans fat with saturated fat intake.

Moreover, a pooled analysis of 11 studies showed that replacing saturated fat (found in foods like meat, egg yolks, dairy products, salmon, nuts, avocados, coconut oil, and olive oil) with monounsaturated fat (vegetable cooking oils), or carbohydrates (sugars and grains) raised the risk of non-fatal heart attacks.

This prompted the authors to comment that dietary guidelines for saturated fats and trans fats “must carefully consider the effect of replacement nutrients.” This too is in line with previous findings.

Read more: <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/saturated-fats-have-no-link-heart-disease>



A Bill to End GMO Labeling for Good

OCA
10 Sep 2015

In case you're still in the dark about the DARK Act, here's the Readers Digest background.

Rep. Mike “Agribusiness Puppet” Pompeo (R-Kan.) introduced H.R. 1599 earlier this year. He then managed to rush it through the House, where it passed by a vote of 275 to 150 on July 23 (2015).

The bill is a sweeping attack on states' rights to self-govern on the issue of GMO labeling, and on consumers' right to

know if their food has been genetically engineered. If the Dark Act becomes law, there will never be GMO labels, safety testing of GMOs, protections for farmers from GMO contamination or regulations of pesticide promoting GMO crops to protect human health, the environment or endangered pollinators.

Under what most of us would consider a fair and democratic process, the bill would move next to the Senate, where there would be the opportunity for debate, amendments and a vote.

But with the July 1, 2016 enactment of Vermont's GMO labeling law, Act 120, looming, Monsanto is probably thinking it doesn't have time to slog through a Senate hearing and stand-alone vote, especially as the Senate has yet to introduce its own version of the bill. And perhaps even more daunting than the July 1 deadline, is the prospect that the DARK Act might get watered down, or worse yet killed, in the Senate—a risk Monsanto would likely prefer to avoid.

This year, Congress could procrastinate until December and then cram all of its must-pass legislation into one "grand bargain." This would be the perfect opportunity for Monsanto to launch a sneak attack. We might not even know until it's too late, if unscrupulous House and Senate leaders were to slip the DARK Act into a "grand bargain" that included appropriations, reauthorizations, extensions of expiring legislation, and an increase in the debt ceiling.

Read more:

<https://www.organicconsumers.org/essays/will-monsanto-launch-another-sneak-attack-congress>



False 'Profits'

OCA
27 Aug 2015

Last week, the USDA approved yet another GMO crop—potatoes. In March, the agency approved GMO apples.

You can now add potatoes and apples to the long list of crops and foods, including corn, soybeans, alfalfa, papaya, summer squash, sugar beets, cotton and canola, that unless labeled USDA organic, could (or in the case of many of these, probably do) contain GMOs.

Read more: <https://www.organicconsumers.org/bytes/organic-bytes-482-food-fight-2015-next-steps>



Conventional Ground Beef Is Three Times More Likely to Contain Antibiotic-Resistant Fecal Bacteria than Grass-Fed Beef

Dr. Mercola
9 Sep 2015

Factory farming methods may be efficient and cost-effective, but they produce a number of side effects that can threaten your health and even your life. Contamination with disease-causing fecal bacteria is one of them.

To combat foodborne illness, the food industry has created solutions that further worsen matters — sterilization methods such as high heat, chemicals (chlorine-based or lactic acid washes, for example), and/or radiation are all common industry attempts to "sterilize" your food before it reaches the store.

Yet the central issue remains unaddressed, which is the lack of hygiene standards in the raising, slaughtering, and processing of the animals.

A large percentage of meat products become contaminated when the animals' intestines are punctured and stool spills onto the meat being processed.

This is the real problem — not undercooking, as properly processed healthy meat will not harm you if it's undercooked because it will not be contaminated with fecal bacteria.

In 2011, researchers found about half of all meats and poultry sold in grocery stores were contaminated with drug-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, the bacteria that causes most staph infections.

Now, a new Consumer Report study warns ALL store-bought ground beef contains fecal bacteria, and factory farmed beef often contains dangerous antibiotic-resistant bacteria as well.

Read more: <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/conventional-ground-beef-three-times-more-likely-contain-antibiotic-resistant-fecal-bacteria-0>



Food Industry Enlisted Academics in G.M.O. Lobbying War, Emails Show

Eric Lipton, The New York Times
5 Sep 2015

WASHINGTON — At Monsanto, sales of genetically modified seeds were steadily rising. But executives at the company's St. Louis headquarters were privately worried about attacks on the safety of their products.

So Monsanto, the world's largest seed company, and its industry partners retooled their lobbying and public relations strategy to spotlight a rarefied group of advocates: academics, brought in for the gloss of impartiality and weight of authority that come with a professor's pedigree.

"Professors/researchers/scientists have a big white hat in this debate and support in their states, from politicians to producers," Bill Mashek, a vice president at Ketchum, a public relations firm hired by the biotechnology industry, said in an email to a University of Florida professor. "Keep it up!"

And the industry has.

Corporations have poured money into universities to fund research for decades, but now, the debate over bioengineered foods has escalated into a billion-dollar food industry war. Companies like Monsanto are squaring off against major organic firms like Stonyfield Farm, the yogurt company, and both sides have aggressively recruited academic researchers, emails obtained through open records laws show.

The emails provide a rare view into the strategy and tactics of a lobbying campaign that has transformed ivory tower elites into powerful players. The use by both sides of third-party scientists, and their supposedly unbiased research, helps explain why the American public is often confused as it processes the conflicting information.

The push has intensified as the Senate prepares to take up industry-backed legislation this fall, already passed by the House, that would ban states from adopting laws that require the disclosure of food produced with genetically modified ingredients.

Read more: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/06/us/food-industry-enlisted-academics-in-gmo-lobbying-war-emails-show.html?_r=0



Monsanto Favorite Glyphosate Soon to Join California's Cancer List

Nadia Prupis, Common Dreams
8 Sep 2015

In an unprecedented move, the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) will soon start labeling the common herbicide ingredient glyphosate a "probable carcinogenic," stepping up efforts to protect health and wildlife in the agriculture-heavy state even as use of weedkillers that include such toxins hits an all-time high.

Read more:
<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/09/08/monsanto-favorite-glyphosate-soon-join-californias-cancer-list>

Regenerative Agriculture and the Dawn of Planetary Engineering

J.S. McDougall, Farmer, Author
8 Sep 2015

Regenerative agriculture is the dawn of planetary engineering. And that's great news for the future of the planet. Here's how I know.

We have five hay fields on our farm. They are the kind of rolling, green, and gorgeous fields that are typical across Vermont's pastoral green mountains. All five of the fields have been incredibly productive over the past forty years using our area's conventional methods for hay farming--frequent tilling, a corn rotation, chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Our hay was regarded as some of the best in the area. And we produced a lot of it.

Then, in 2012, we stopped tilling. We stopped spraying chemicals. We stopped rotating in corn. And, as a result, fields that once produced three cuttings of broad-leafed, green, tall grasses struggled to produce two cuttings of thin, dry, yellowed grass. Our hay production collapsed.

Despite that, we stuck to our idealistic guns: no tilling, no chemicals, no corn. And, now, three years later, the grass growth is still dismal in all of our fields...except one.

This one field--our eastern-most field--is not struggling to produce grasses. In fact, this particular field is now producing far more than it ever did under conventional management. This field, this year--when all grass production across the northeast is at alarming lows--is producing a fourth-growth of broad-leafed, green-as-can-be, lush, tall grasses. The improvement in this one field has one farmer (me) doing backflips of joy.

I attribute this field's booming growth to changes in our management and changes in our thinking.

First, I'll address our changes in management. Once we stopped fertilizing the fields, we knew our production would drop. We didn't know, however, how to replace the fertilizer and stimulate growth without chemicals. After much research and YouTubeing, we came across the work and writings of Allan Savory, Joel Salatin, Allan Nation, Courtney Smith, and Judith Schwartz. These are the pioneers of regenerative agriculture--a form of farming that respects and harnesses the nuances of nature to produce crops, restore the land, and sequester atmospheric carbon back into the earth.

Intrigued though we were, being skeptics, we didn't commit all five fields to the experiment. We gave it a go on one small test patch...and, when that worked, we did it in just one field. Next year, we'll expand again.

In a natural system (a.k.a. before fences and highways), our fields would have been frequently visited by roaming packs of herbivores and migratory birds and fowl. So, with much hesitation, we brought in a bunch of grass-loving animals. The grasses, after all, evolved to depend on the animals as much as animals evolved to depend on the grasses.

This one eastern field is now home to 60 sheep, 40 turkeys, 100 chickens, and a fat sweetheart of a donkey named Ben--our guard donkey.

The sheep rotate about the field in a pack, behind mobile fencing. They graze. They fertilize. They aerate the soil. And they trample grass.

The chickens and turkeys follow the sheep in the rotation by a few days. They graze. They fertilize. They aerate the soil. They eat bugs. And they also trample grass.

After every pass of the sheep and the poultry pens, the soil is shaded, fertilized, aerated--primed for water retention, and microbial, fungal, and algal activity. The grass is well-fertilized and grazed to an optimal height. Everything is primed for rapid regrowth.

Every time the grass comes roaring back after the animal activity, it is drinking in the CO₂ from the atmosphere. The plant splits the carbon (C) molecule from the carbon dioxide, releases the oxygen (O₂), and uses the carbon as the foundational building block for everything else it does: build plant matter, build root systems, build topsoil, and feed the soil's microbial critters. Essentially, the grass is doing the work we sorely need right now--putting the excess atmospheric carbon to work and storing a large percentage of it back in the ground where it will be safely stored for hundreds of years.

Well-managed grasses can do this often, and very quickly, making them ideal allies in the campaign to reverse climate change.

Our changes in management would not have been possible without changes in our thinking. We stopped thinking of ourselves as hay farmers (growers and harvesters of as much grass as possible) to thinking of ourselves as stewards of the fields (managers and aides to an already-existing natural system). This turned our focus from the grass we were growing to the soil in which it grew. It is a subtle shift of thinking, but it has huge practical implications. Clearly, this shift is yielding results: we're growing more grass than we ever did, improving the nutrient content of our hay, improving the soil for (and productivity of) future hay crops, and sequestering carbon.

This type of regenerative agriculture marks the dawn of planetary engineering.

You see, we know how much carbon should be in the atmosphere (fellow Vermonter Bill McKibben offers a target of below 350 ppm). And, we know how to stop dumping it into the atmosphere (clean energy, no-till agriculture, etc.). And, we now know how to put it back into the ground...WHILE boosting the productivity of agricultural land AND raising healthy animals and humans. Therefore, we have the nascent knowledge and tools to tackle climate change. We are learning to be stewards of the carbon cycle--regulating the atmosphere of the planet by working with natural systems to move carbon back into the earth. It is now just a matter of doing the work.

The global discussion regarding climate change will soon shift: from vague doomsdayism to excited talk for what's possible. Humans are taking another evolutionary step forward and it is exciting to watch. The groundwork is now being laid for the large-scale tools and global strategies that will allow modern humans and nature to live symbiotically. Planetary engineering is starting--to the benefit of us all.

Read more: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/js-mcdougall/regenerative-agriculture_b_6801096.html



Blumenthal Joins Advocates In Push To Label Genetically Engineered Food

Christine Stuart
14 Aug 2015

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal joined advocates Thursday at the Hartford Farmer's Market to urge support for the Genetically Engineered Food Right-To-Know Act.

The legislation, which was introduced in February, would require the Food and Drug Administration to clearly label genetically engineered foods "so that consumers can make informed choices about what they eat," Blumenthal said.

Last month, the U.S. House passed H.R. 1599, which has been dubbed the DARK (Deny Americans the Right to Know) Act by its opponents. It passed the House by a vote of 275 to 150.

"We are gathering today to send a message to my colleagues in Washington D.C. the DARK Act ought to be kept in the dark," Blumenthal said. "Consumers have a right to the light of public disclosure to let them know what's in their food."

Read more:
http://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/archives/entry/blumenthal_joins_advocates_in_push_to_label_genetically_engineered_food/

Organic Faces Growing Pains as Demand Outpaces Supply

Christopher Doering
2 Aug 2015

When Andrew and Melissa Dunham took over a 150-year-old corn, soybean and cattle farm from a relative in 2006, the 80-acre spread northeast of Des Moines couldn't support a full-time farmer.

So the young couple decided to overhaul the operation by embracing what was then a small but growing niche in agriculture — organic farming, now one of the hottest sectors in the multi-billion-dollar food industry.

Organic food sales have risen by double digits annually as the public consumes more fruits, vegetables, pastas, dairy and meats raised and grown without pesticides, genetic modification or antibiotics, among other stringent requirements. Over the past decade, organic food revenue has tripled, reaching a record \$36 billion last year.

"Organic is much more mainstream now. More people are seeking it out," said Andrew Dunham, who sells beef along with carrots, kale, cabbage and almost 60 other crops to Whole Foods, co-ops and farmers markets in Iowa. "We actually do end up saying 'No' quite a bit. We're pretty much selling everything we grow now."

Dunham said embracing organic has made it easier to get his produce and meats into grocery stores and attract customers seeking organic goods at farmers markets. The decision also has been a boon to the farm's bottom line. The operation posted sales of around \$400,000 last year, up 20 percent from two years earlier.

Their success has allowed the Dunhams to focus full-time on farming. Melissa quit her job in Minneapolis-St. Paul to work on the family operation.

Read more:

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2015/08/01/organic-food-growth/31007929/>



Pesticide Drift Threatens Organic Farms

Kristofor Husted, Harvest Public Media
31 Jul 2015

Chert Hollow Farm sits nestled between rows of tall trees and a nearby stream in central Missouri. Eric and Joanna Reuter have been running the organic farm since 2006. That means they don't plant genetically modified crops and can only use a few approved kinds of chemicals and fertilizers.

"We've traditionally raised about an acre and a half of pretty intensively managed produce, so it's a very productive acre and a half," Eric Reuter says.

Their neighbors grow acres of conventional corn and soybeans, and they mostly got along. That is until one July evening in 2014. Joanna Reuter was transplanting some broccoli when a sound caught her attention.

"I basically heard this loud noise," she says. "It was coming north to south, and I basically yelled, 'What the 'beep' is that?'"

They spotted a crop duster passing unusually close to their property. Shortly after experiencing headaches and irritation, they knew the wind had blown something chemical onto their land. Without knowing what it was, they were left in the lurch, with a big asterisk on the authenticity of their organic crops.

"We were concerned about how do we properly market ourselves, because we feel very strongly about openness and honesty," Eric Reuter says. "We felt a little odd about marketing farm shares and such for the next year as a sustainable, chemical-free farm."

They've opted not to sell their produce this year and hope the contaminated soil will rebound for next year. It's a big hit for their small business.

And for the crop duster? He received a warning letter. The farm next door did not respond to my requests for an interview.

"We're more susceptible to that kind of contamination than we thought," Eric Reuter says. "And that raises the stakes significantly for a farm like ours."

Read more:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/07/31/427857297/pesticide-drift-threatens-organic-farms>



Genetically Modified Salmon Headed to Rivers and Stores

Dr. Mercola
28 Jul 2015

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been considering the approval of AquaAdvantage genetically modified (GM) salmon since 1993. After reviewing the research, which reportedly came from the salmon's creator AquaBounty, the FDA concluded in 2012 that the fish was likely safe for human consumption and would not put the environment at risk.¹

Three years and a public commentary later, the FDA has yet to make a final approval, and environmentalists and food-safety advocates alike have expressed serious concerns about unleashing GM food animals into the US – a decision no other country in the world has approved.

The GM salmon are engineered to grow about twice as fast as typical farm-raised salmon. While a typical salmon might take up to 36 months to reach market size, AquaAdvantage GM salmon is ready for market in just 16 to 18 months.

Read more:

<http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2015/07/28/genetically-modified-salmon.aspx>



Meet Your Reno, Nevada Farmer with this New App!

Phil Lempert
18 Sep 2015

Check out this grocery store that's come up with an innovative way for customers to meet their farmers!

It's nothing new that consumers these days want to know more about where their food is coming from, and who is responsible for growing it. Well now, a grocery store in Reno, Nevada is combining this ever popular "know your farmer" trend with mobile technology to create a unique way for its customers to meet and interact with local produce growers.

The Great Basin Community Food Co-op in Reno is launching an innovative app that will allow shoppers to virtually connect with the producers of their food. It's called the 'Meet Your Farmer' app and it's the first-of-its-kind for a U.S. grocery store – designed to increase awareness and appreciation of local food.

So how does it work? Simply by downloading the app, customers will be able to point their phones to signs throughout the aisles, learn about the local grower who produced the food, and watch a quick video from the farmer.

The Meet Your Farmer App will feature 25 producers local to the Reno area and will share facts about their history, farming practices and produce, these growers will connect with individuals to tell a story not only about the produce, but also the farmers working behind the scenes to deliver fresh, healthy foods to the store.

The architect of the idea is Steve Cook, creative director of NEON, a Reno-based marketing agency, he said; "I went on a farm tour and saw how people really enjoyed getting to know their farmers and seeing how their food was produced. It set me off thinking of ways to use new technology so it could be done easily in-store by potentially

thousands of people."

And Amber Sallaberry, general manager of the Great Basin Community Food Co-op, said; "We are excited to be the first grocer to incorporate this technology. It reinforces our emphasis on local food and community, and our core belief in complete transparency about what we sell to our customers."

While consumers become increasingly interested and conscious about their food and where it comes from, its not always easy to actually visit a farm or speak with a farmer, and so when supermarkets and producers come up with innovative ideas, such as the Meet Your Farmer app, shoppers and local producers can be connected in a way that they could never be before.

Read more: <http://www.cornucopia.org/2015/09/meet-your-reno-nevada-farmer-with-this-new-app/#more-17697>



The Future of GMOs, Meat Safety and Organics Under the Influence of the Same Corrupt, Corporate-Lapdog: the USDA

Jérôme Rigot, PhD
17 Sep 2015

Can we be sure that the "organic" in the USDA Certified Organic seal retains its meaning and remains true to its mandate of assuring consumers that food under this label is truly healthy and grown or raised with minimal impact to the environment and respects the health and well-being of the workers and animals involved?

There are growing concerns that the organic label may be losing its meaning.

Indeed, the Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, recently downgraded their rating of the USDA's organic seal and label. Dr. Urvasi Rangan, the director of the Consumer Safety and Sustainability Center for Consumer Reports, told the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) late last year, "Organic is slipping. And as a result, we have downgraded its rating from highly meaningful to meaningful." Dr. Rangan explained that the role of Consumer Reports "is to help educate people about what organic means as well as what it doesn't mean."

What is fueling such concerns?

As an example, The Cornucopia Institute filed formal legal complaints with the USDA in December 2014 against 14 giant poultry and dairy CAFOs (read: concentrated animal feeding operations or "factory farms") for allegedly violating the USDA organic regulations requiring outdoor and pasture access. Each complaint was summarily dismissed,

without an investigation, by the enforcement division of the National Organic Program (NOP), which stated, “The NOP has reviewed these complaints and has determined that investigation is unwarranted.”

Considering that hundreds of high resolution photographs, satellite imagery and state regulatory documents were submitted to the NOP, one would have thought that the doubts raised by this compelling body of evidence would have at least motivated some type of investigation.

Kevin Englebert, a dairy farmer and former NOSB board member who manages the nation’s first certified organic dairy, clearly states his discontent about this latest National Organic Program lapse:

For the NOP to not even investigate these facilities means one of three things: 1) the personnel who made that decision are inept, 2) they are too close and friendly with corporate lobbyists and multimillion-dollar certifiers that are involved in the process, or 3) the most likely scenario, corrupt politicians are preventing them from enforcing the law.

The one possible scenario that Englebert did not offer as an option: all of the above!

What does “business as usual” mean? It means making money at all cost, regardless of the impact to the integrity of the organic label or to people’s lives.

This is well-exemplified in a recent Frontline episode, “The Trouble with Chicken,” which aired on PBS May 12, 2015. [<http://video.pbs.org/video/2365487526/>] The program closely examined a deadly outbreak of salmonella which had spread over 29 states and gone unchecked by the USDA for 16 months.

This largest salmonella outbreak in US history occurred in 2013. It was linked to Foster Farms, the largest poultry producer on the West Coast. Although over 600 people became seriously ill, the USDA failed to force a recall for almost a year and half after the onset of the outbreak because salmonella in chicken is not legally considered an “adulterant” – as is the deadly strain of *E. coli*, 1057:H7, when it contaminates beef. It’s no coincidence that the poultry industry fought long and hard against efforts to regulate deadly strains of salmonella the same as *E. coli*. It appears that making money was more important than the lives of the people threatened by this outbreak.

Last year, with more severe strains of salmonella emerging, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro questioned Secretary Vilsack about the problem. She pointedly asked him whether he wanted Congress to give him the authority to recall chicken. The Secretary sat, literally speechless, looking like a deer caught in the headlights, and, repeatedly, refused to answer the Congresswoman’s question. (A full transcript

can be found at the end of this post.)

At another point in the “The Trouble with Chicken,” Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro is asked by David Hoffman, Frontline investigator:

DAVID E. HOFFMAN: Did the Obama administration ask for more authority?

Rep. ROSA DeLAURO: No.

DAVID E. HOFFMAN: Why not?

Rep. ROSA DeLAURO: I still I believe that there’s a question of the — of the industry. It’s a very powerful industry, and I believe they have a very strong lobbying effort that the USDA is not willing to buck.

Thus, this incident seems to clearly illustrate that USDA Secretary Vilsack has allowed powerful agribusiness lobbyists influence the USDA’s enforcement actions, as have most of his predecessors appointed by presidents of both political parties.

The National Organic Program is a very small part of the USDA, but a number of large corporations are significantly vested in organics, especially the processed food industry (General Mills, WhiteWave, Smuckers, Coca-Cola, etc.).

Circumstantial evidence makes it reasonable to conclude that the same type of undue industry influence that appears to have prevented Vilsack and the USDA from acting quickly to end the Salmonella outbreak and limit the health toll is behind efforts to dilute the federal organic standards, control the NOP leadership, and limit or obstruct the ability of the congressionally authorized National Organic Standard Board from doing its job efficiently and with integrity.

Read more: <http://www.cornucopia.org/2015/09/the-future-of-gmos-meat-safety-and-organics-under-the-influence-of-the-same-corporate-lapdog-the-usda/#more-17539>



Is the Organic Label Worth Saving?

Mark Kastel, Cornucopia News Editorial
29 Sep 2015

We are getting more correspondence from our farmer-members, and consumers, asking whether it’s time to give up the fight to save the integrity of the organic label from corporate plunderers and their all-too-accommodating federal regulators. Many suggest that it’s time to create an alternative label and/or an alternative certification system.

My standard reply to this suggestion is: “Too many good people have worked too hard, for too many years, to grow

organics into a marketplace force with real economic value (now \$40 billion/year) to hand over the label to a pack of corporadoes out to make a quick buck.”

Although many people around the country have access to local food that is produced under organic management, most citizens still need a reliable retail alternative to the dominant, toxic agricultural paradigm that is conventional food.

We thought that the USDA organic seal would equate to a CliffNotes version of ethical food research. Sadly, it’s just not good enough anymore. The USDA has sat back and greased the skids for corporate agribusiness to redefine what organic farming means.

That’s why Cornucopia has created several in-depth reports and associated scorecards rating the ethical approach brands take to creating organic dairy products, eggs, soy foods, breakfast cereal, yogurt, and more. In a few weeks we will release a major update to our Scrambled Eggs report and scorecard.

We are also in the process of creating similar resources investigating meat chickens and organic beef. These reports will distinguish between the brands that depend on family farmers, whose animals are respected and live rich lives, and those that source from factory farms and imports.

The scorecards should not be necessary. You and I are already paying taxes for the USDA to assure, as charged by Congress, that it will protect the organic marketplace for ethical farmers, and the processors they partner with, and the authenticity of organic food for consumers. It shouldn’t take the tireless work of a public charity, The Cornucopia Institute, and the thousands of members who financially support the organization, to get the job done.

But that’s not the case today. The USDA needs to step up and do their job!

If we succeed in our efforts to turn around the USDA, the scorecards will change. Instead of a 1-5 scale, there will only be the top two tiers: certified organic, complying with the minimum requirements of the law, and the heroes in this industry that are going “beyond organic.”

Today organics has become a bifurcated industry. On one side you’ve got certified organic farmers who attend farmers markets, run CSAs, and sell directly to co-ops and other local stores. They are joined by a handful of ethical companies, some of them very large, like Nature’s Path, North America’s largest organic cereal manufacturer; Eden Foods, a diversified organic food company; Nutiva, maker

of organic “superfoods”; and Dr. Bronner’s (don’t drink their soap, but it is made with certified organic oil).

These large companies, still controlled by the founding families, are truly walking their talk, proving that you can sell 100 million dollars’ worth of products and not betray your values.

On the other end of the spectrum are large agribusinesses that primarily sell conventional food, that have invested in organic brands (see Dr. Phil Howard’s Who Owns Organics infographic at cornucopia.org). They are either betraying organic consumer goodwill, sourcing from giant factory farms or dubious imports from China and elsewhere, or they are operating in secrecy, with the blessing of the USDA, and we just don’t know the true pedigree of their food.

The organic farmers who comply with the spirit and the letter of the law, and their high-integrity certifiers, are doing so because they are honest and ethical—not because there’s a high likelihood of the USDA sniffing out improprieties. The majority of organic farmers, the smaller family-scale operations, really do believe in the mission.

Who owns the organic label anyway? We all do. Large and small farmers, large and small businesses, and especially customers, who are willing to pay a premium for food produced to a different ethical standard.

In this world of massive corporate corruption, where government regulators have been “bought and sold” (think FDA oversight of Big Pharma or USDA assurance of GMO safety), why should organics be any different? Because we said so!

Congress enacted a damn good law in the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990. It set up the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) as a multi-stakeholder independent body to advise the Secretary of Agriculture and create a buffer between corporate lobbyists and the regulators. That law has been grossly disrespected and violated under Democratic and Republican administrations, but it has never been more undermined than it is right now.

So, stay tuned. If we need to shift gears, you will be the first to know. In the meantime, we are going to continue to fight like hell, in Washington, in the federal courts, and in the court of public opinion, to save the organic label. After 30 years of a loving farmer/consumer partnership in building this viable marketplace alternative, it’s worth the effort.

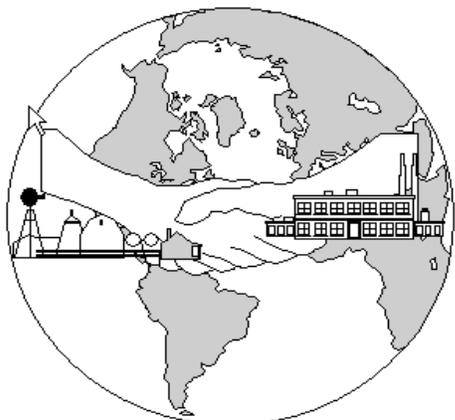
Read more: <http://www.cornucopia.org/2015/09/is-the-organic-label-worth-saving/>



From our Members

We would like to hear from our members. Are there changes you would like to see in your newsletter? Please send us your stories about organic farming on your farm so we can share them with all the GOA members.

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