

America's Largest Corporate Dairy Processor Muscles Its Way into Organics

Dean Foods Kills USDA Investigation of Their Horizon Label

After a three-and-a-half year battle with Dean Foods regarding the legality of milk it labels as Horizon Organic, the country's most aggressive organic industry watchdog filed additional legal actions today. Dean, the nation's largest dairy processor, with nearly \$12 billion in sales and controlling 50 different milk brands, has obtained a large percentage of its organic milk supply from giant factory farms milking thousands of cows each.

The Cornucopia Institute filed a formal legal complaint in May with the USDA claiming that one of Dean's Horizon suppliers, a dairy in Snelling, California, was skirting the law by confining the majority of their cows to a filthy feedlot rather than allowing them fresh grass and access to pasture as the federal organic regulations require.



The organic cow feedlot at the Fagundes Bros. dairy near Snelling, CA. Cornucopia filed a complaint with USDA for lack of pasturing at the 3000-head operation.

Cornucopia has also asked the Inspector General at the USDA to investigate appearances of favoritism at the agency that has benefitted Dean Foods. Cornucopia charges that past enforcement of the Organic Foods Production Act, the law governing organic food labeling and production, has been unequally applied toward major corporate agribusiness by the USDA.

"We are asking the USDA, once again, to investigate serious alleged improprieties at dairies that produce Horizon organic milk," said Mark A. Kastel, Senior Farm Policy Analyst with Cornucopia. *(continued on page 5)*

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Infant Formula Manufacturers Under Ethical Cloud

"Marketing Gimmick" Linked to Serious Illnesses

A new report from The Cornucopia Institute presents research indicating that new additives placed in infant formula are seriously endangering the health of some formula-fed newborns and toddlers.

The report, *Replacing Mother—Imitating Human Breast Milk in the Laboratory*, (available at www.cornucopia.org) details research questioning the alleged benefits of adding "novel" omega-3 fatty acids, produced in laboratories and extracted from algae and fungus, into infant formulas.

The additives raised health and safety red flags during preapproval testing while aggressive marketing campaigns by some infant formula manufacturers appear to have encouraged new mothers to give up nursing for the questionable infant products. Perhaps more startling, through a Freedom of Information request at the FDA, Cornucopia found algal- and fungal-based DHA/ARA have been linked to serious side effects such as virulent diarrhea and vomiting in infants consuming infant formula, many of whom required medical treatment and hospitalization.

"When I worked in the hospital's neonatal ward, the nurses all called it 'the diarrhea formula'," says Sam Heather Doak, LPN, IBCLC, from Marietta, Ohio. "We've seen infants, tiny little humans, with diarrhea that just wouldn't stop after being given this formula." For infants, virulent and long-term diarrhea is considered a serious and life-threatening medical episode.

The infant formula referenced by Doak was supplemented with Martek Biosciences Corporation's laboratory-produced oils containing DHA and ARA. DHA, an omega-3 fatty acid, human breast milk and are considered important nutrients for rapidly developing infants.

But laboratory-produced DHASCO and ARASCO (Martek's names for their proprietary oils) are materially different from the fats found in a mother's breast milk. Martek's products are extracted from fermented algae and fungus, with the

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DILBERT: © Scott Adams/Dist. by United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

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use of the synthetic solvent hexane, a neurotoxic chemical. They contain only 40 to 50% DHA and ARA, with the balance being sunflower oil, diglycerides, and nonsaponifiable materials. Some of these components are not found in human breast milk, and the triglycerides carrying DHA and ARA are not identical to those found in human breast milk—and have never been part of the diet for human infants.

Infant formula manufacturers suggest that DHA and ARA oils in formula are necessary to support proper development, yet serious doubts persist within the scientific community regarding whether these oils actually confer any long-term benefits to an infant's brain and eye development.

"It's true that DHA and ARA are important nutrients for developing infants—that's why they're found in human breast milk. But we have also seen that some infants are experiencing side effects like diarrhea from consuming the manufactured DHA and ARA oils in formula," says Jimi Francis, Ph.D., a biochemist specializing in DHA in infant nutrition at the Allie M. Lee Laboratory for Omega-3 Research at the University of Nevada at Reno. Also, humans are able to produce DHA and ARA on their own from other fats.

The Cornucopia Institute and presented its report, in partnership with the National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy, to government officials and medical professionals at the 25th meeting of the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee in Arlington, Virginia earlier this year.

"While infant formula manufacturers claim that these oils are perfectly safe and necessary for proper development, our report aims to provide a more balanced and detailed picture," said Charlotte Vallaeyes, lead author of the report. "We investigated how a toxic chemical is used as processing agents in the manufacturing process, the inadequate testing for safety, and most importantly, how some infants are experiencing serious adverse reactions from consuming formula supplemented with these oils," Vallaeyes added.

The Cornucopia Institute is urging parents of infants who have reacted negatively to formula with DHA and ARA to report these adverse reactions to the FDA's Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program. Reports can be submitted online by following this link: <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/medwatch/h/medwatch-online.htm>.

Cornucopia and the National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy are calling for a warning label on all formula containing DHA/ARA. The groups are petitioning the FDA for a label alerting parents of the range of possible complications from DHA/ARA-supplemented formula.

"Although many infants seem to be able to tolerate these materials, regardless of their efficacy, we know that some children face serious and even life-threatening impacts," said Vallaeyes. "At a minimum parents need to be informed of the risks so they can immediately pull children off these designer formulas if health complications occur."

While FDA officials had previously noted studies that reported diarrhea, flatulence, jaundice, and apnea in infants fed DHA/ARA-supplemented formula, they nevertheless did not block the use of the oils. That action gave the green light for infant formula manufacturers to add the oils to formula. Today, Martek boasts that 90% of formula in the U.S. contains its patented DHA- and ARA-containing oils.

Advertisements touting DHA/ARA-supplemented formula as "closer than ever to breast milk" have sparked another action from Cornucopia and the National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy. The two groups have jointly filed a petition with the Federal Trade Commission alleging that formula companies are engaged in misleading advertising. The ads appear based on shaky scientific evidence.

"Adding these two fatty acids to formula does not make it 'close to breast milk,'" says Jennifer Thomas, M.D., a pediatrician practicing in Racine, Wisconsin. "Breast milk has nutrients, live cells, and bioactive compounds that are absent from formula," she added. "These advertisements make it a lot harder for me, as a pediatrician, to convince new mothers to breastfeed if they have seen advertisements or labels implying that formula is just as good as breast milk."

New USDA Secretary Talks Science and Policy

On Wednesday, April 30, the Secretary of Agriculture spoke at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University and at Harvard University. Throughout his talk at the Friedman School, Secretary Schafer lauded science and repeated his belief that scientific facts must form the backbone of our nation's agricultural policies.

At a graduate school devoted entirely to—and named for—Nutrition Science and Policy, this affirmation should have resonated highly. There was just one problem: following right in the footsteps of the administration that appointed him, the Secretary either seemed unaware of the latest science, or intentionally distorted scientific facts for a political agenda.

Addressing genetic engineering, the Secretary devoted about one-third of his talk to praising genetically engineered crops as a way of feeding a growing world population—arguing that biotechnology increases crop yields. This would

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be fine if the argument actually rang true. But the most commonly grown genetically engineered crops are not bred to increase yields; they are bred to resist pests or pesticides.

Scientific studies comparing yields of these genetically engineered crops consistently show that they actually produce *less* than their conventionally bred counterparts. Genetically engineered Roundup Ready® soybeans, which now account for 91% of soybean plantings in the United States, time and again show decreases in yields ranging from 4-12%. The only genetically engineered crop that shows modest increases is Bt corn—engineered to contain pesticides in the plants’ cells—but these increases in yields are no greater than their conventional counterparts. We have yet to see, planted in the real world, a crop variety that has been specifically engineered to increase yields. So much for feeding the world.

What if we actually followed the Secretary’s advice and used science to guide our agricultural policies—with the feeding of a growing population in mind? We need look no further than what scientists have shared with us just in the past month. On April 15, an international panel of 400 agricultural scientists presented its scientifically backed conclusions on how to feed a growing population. Genetically engineered crops were specifically identified as *not* being the answer.

Instead, the international panel’s report pointed to small-scale farmers and agro-ecological methods used by organic farmers as the best way to reduce hunger and poverty, while at the same addressing the urgent challenges of climate change. These conclusions were reached not by a small group of people that could easily be ignored by the Secretary of Agriculture—the report represented a shared effort of the World Bank, various branches of the United Nations including the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization, and hundreds of scientific institutions, governments and members of the private sector. Their conclusion that organic farming methods and local food are the way forward simply cannot be ignored when setting agricultural policies at the US Department of Agriculture.

If the Secretary is serious about using science to guide agricultural policies, we should expect a drastic change at the Department of Agriculture away from promoting genetic engineering and toward endorsing organic farming methods. Instead of biotechnology research, millions more dollars should be devoted to organic farming research. Policies that have opened the door to GMOs, greased by hundreds of millions of dollars of political money spent in Washington, should make way for policies that facilitate the transition to organic and sustainable agricultural models. And instead of strong-arming other countries to plant genetically engineered crops, USDA officials should promote the spread of organic farming methods around the world in support of food sovereignty and self-sufficiency.

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But of course, Secretary Schafer’s talk clearly reflected how science and policy are disconnected in the top offices at the Department of Agriculture, as they are elsewhere within our current administration and Congress. Proponents of genetic engineering have always used the “feeding a growing population” argument, even if it has never received actual sound and convincing scientific backing. So the Secretary can say all he wants about science guiding agricultural policies at the USDA—but I’ll believe it when I see our genetically engineered acres make way for an agricultural landscape dominated by certified organic farms managed to deliver dividends to society rather than corporate investors.

- Charlotte Vallaeyes, a graduate of both Harvard University and the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, sat in on Secretary Schafer’s speech.

More Than Skin Deep: Finding Healthy Body and Cosmetic Products

For years, consumer advocacy groups have reported on toxic chemical ingredients and residues in beauty and body care products, revealing that this notoriously under-regulated industry is rather liberal with its use of possibly carcinogenic and other toxic synthetic ingredients.

Consumers with an interest in avoiding unnecessary toxic exposure believed they found refuge in body care products made with “natural” and “organic” ingredients.

But what few consumers know is that unlike organic claims on food, beauty products can freely use the word “organic” on their label as long as they don’t use the green “USDA Organic” seal. The green seal may only appear on products that are made with at least 95% certified organic ingredients and no potentially carcinogenic or toxic synthetics.

A recent report by the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) reveals that this distinction—between beauty and body care products using the word “organic” and those actually bearing the green “USDA Organic” seal—is significant. Using an independent testing lab, OCA analyzed various beauty and body care products for residues of one toxic chemical, 1,4-dioxane.

While some of the self-proclaimed, so-called ‘organic’ and ‘all-natural’ products tested up to 30 parts per million 1,4-dioxane residues, all of the USDA certified organic products—with the green seal—were found to be free of these residues.

The International Agency for Cancer Research classifies 1,4-dioxane as a probable human carcinogen, and it is banned from cosmetics and personal care products in Europe. Unfortunately, there is no prohibition against the use of suspected carcinogens in such products in the US.

Scientists disagree over the level of carcinogenicity of this chemical, especially since few studies have been performed on the effects of dermal contact with 1,4-dioxane. Only one study found an increase in tumors in rats after application of 1,4-dioxane directly to the skin; most found no increase in cancers or tumors. Some scientists have suggested that 1,4-dioxane may not be genotoxic, and Dr. Julie Stickney concludes in a scientific article that the EPA may have significantly overestimated the potential cancer risk from 1,4-dioxane.

And yet other scientists, like Dr. Devra Davis, head of the Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh, believe that the possibility of carcinogenicity of 1,4-dioxane should not be taken lightly.

As with most chemicals, we will not find an easy answer or a clear verdict. Scientists have a very rudimentary understanding of thousands of chemicals and their effects on our health and our bodies. Our ability to produce



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chemicals and our understanding of how they affect the environment and public health rarely progress simultaneously; one need only remember DDT, PCB’s and other chemicals to realize that we humans tend figure out how to produce and widely distribute a chemical before we fully understand its impacts.

As a consumer, does it not seem only natural and wise to question the sanity of putting a probable human carcinogen in products with which some of us cover our skin, and our babies’ skin, every day? The FDA would require manufacturers to remove 1,4-dioxane from products only if there is demonstrated harm. But why should the burden of proof be on the unsuspecting consumer—you and me and our children?

We encourage all companies marketing themselves as “organic” or “all-natural” to take the necessary steps to remove these chemicals and residues from their products. In the meantime, the surest way to distinguish safe and truly organic products from the dubious self-proclaimed “organics” with questionable residues is the presence of the little green seal that officially states “USDA Organic.”

Report Targets Costs Of Factory Farming

Factory farming takes a big, hidden toll on human health and the environment, is undermining rural America’s economic stability and fails to provide the humane treatment of livestock increasingly demanded by American consumers, concludes an independent, 2 1/2 -year analysis that calls for major changes in the way corporate agriculture produces meat, milk and eggs.

The report, sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, finds that the “economies of scale” used to justify factory farming practices are largely an illusion, perpetuated by a failure to account for associated costs.

Among those costs are human illnesses caused by drug-resistant bacteria associated with the rampant use of antibiotics on feedlots and the degradation of land, water and air quality caused by animal waste too intensely concentrated to be neutralized by natural processes.

The report, “Putting Meat on the Table: Industrial Farm Production in America,” comes at a time when food, agriculture and animal welfare issues are prominent in the American psyche.

Source: *The Washington Post*, 4/30/08

(“America’s Largest” continued from page 1)

Besides legal issues that Cornucopia raised, they suggest Dean Foods has seriously injured the value of its Horizon label and organic milk’s reputation. “In the eyes of consumers, factory farms—with questions about humane animal husbandry and records of endemic pollution—do not meet the ethical litmus test,” Kastel added.

Cornucopia’s recent complaint is the third filed with the USDA alleging Dean Foods has broken the federal law that governs organic production. Prior complaints also charged Dean was confining cattle on their two corporate-owned dairies, one managing as many as 8000 head.

Although the USDA, based on Cornucopia research, sanctioned or decertified two independent factory farms supplying Horizon, the federal agency dismissed both legal complaints against Dean Foods itself. According to documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) by Cornucopia, the USDA never investigated or even visited Dean’s largest corporate-owned industrial dairy, in the desert-like conditions of central Idaho.

“It appears that Dean Foods has more political clout in Washington than the two independent factory farm operators that were found to have been abusing the trust of organic consumers,” according to Will Fantle, Research Director at Cornucopia.

According to FOIA documents, Dean Foods hired lawyers at Covington and Burling, one of the capital’s most powerful and influential legal and lobbying groups, to plead their case.

“The USDA closed complaints we filed in 2005 and 2006 without ever having visited the Horizon dairy in Idaho, and warned Dean Foods in advance before inspecting their Maryland farm,” stated Fantle.

In a letter to USDA Inspector General Phyllis K. Fong, Cornucopia asked her to investigate why the agency arbitrarily chose to adjudicate some of the formal legal complaints filed by Cornucopia but looked the other way when it came to the largest corporate dairy processor and marketer in the country for almost identical alleged offenses.

Cornucopia’s letter stated, “Conditions on the 8000-head factory farm operated by Dean/Horizon in Idaho were very similar to the factory farms that the USDA has already sanctioned. The only discernible difference appears to be how much money Dean Foods has spent on lobbyists and campaign contributions in Washington.”

On May 10, Cornucopia filed a legal complaint alleging organic livestock management violations at the Fagundes Bros 3000-head factory dairy near Snelling, CA. The factory farm sells its milk to Dean Foods/Horizon. Cornucopia staff visited the Fagundes operation in April 2008 and observed the overwhelming majority of the dairy herd confined to a dirt feedlot. Additional interviews with industry professionals familiar with the facility corroborated the confinement practice as standard operating procedure.

Nearby neighbors were pasturing their animals on fields of green grass. (Revealing photos of the Fagundes operation are on Cornucopia’s web page photo gallery at www.cornucopia.org.)

The Fagundes complaint further calls into question Dean Foods’ oft-repeated marketing claim that “80% of our milk comes from ... family farmers.” Says Kastel: “We have been challenging Dean Foods’ greenwashing of their Horizon label for a number of years now. One of Horizon’s decertified suppliers, milking 10,000 cows in a feedlot in Pixley, CA was categorized as a “family farm” by Dean.”



Here’s how organic cows are supposed to be managed. This organic dairy, near the Fagundes operation, pastures its herd in fields of grass.

“My family and 1800 or so other organic farmers around the country have worked hard to build the stellar reputation organic dairy products deservedly enjoy in the eyes of consumers,” lamented Tony Azevedo, one of the first organic dairy farmers in California milking 350 cows near the town of Stevinson. “Virtually every other name-brand organic dairy product in the country depends exclusively on real family farmers to produce their milk. We don’t want subterfuge by confinement dairies giving us all a black eye and endangering our livelihoods.”

“Ninety percent of all participants in the marketplace are approaching organic dairy production ethically,” emphasized Kastel. A comprehensive report and scorecard, listing organic brand-name and private-label organic dairy products, can be found on The Cornucopia Institute website.

Although past complaints regarding the integrity of organic production have taken months or even years to adjudicate at the state and federal levels, Cornucopia’s concerns about the Fagundes farm elicited a response in less than 24 hours from their organic certifier, CCOF, based in Santa Cruz, CA.

In a letter to Cornucopia, CCOF said, “Please note that CCOF takes organic livestock living conditions extremely seriously.’ They added, “We will immediately initiate a full investigation which will include an on-site inspection of the operation.

Organic certifiers are on the front lines of efforts to protect consumers and ethical farmers from fraud. “The immediate and serious tone from CCOF should not be surprising as they have been one of the most highly respected certifier in organics since their founding in the early 1970s, said Fantle.

USDA Rejects Almond Pasteurization Compromise Court Challenge Looming

After going all the way to the USDA Secretary's office, the agency has rejected a compromise proposal from The Cornucopia Institute that would have modified the almond pasteurization mandate. In late May, USDA officials informed Cornucopia that they would not support any changes.

Cornucopia had proposed that raw almonds carry a warning label alerting consumers to the fact that they were not pasteurized, much like the label that appears on containers of some raw fruit juices sold in many states. Cornucopia also requested an exemption for organic almond producers, due to their range of their management practices that appear to reduce the threat of Salmonella contamination and the fact that organic almond growers have never been implicated in any case of food contamination.

Cornucopia's Co-directors held a phone conference with representatives from the Almond Board of California in late February regarding the proposal to resume sale of untreated raw almonds. USDA officials had requested the Almond Board to meet with Cornucopia about a compromise plan.

"We believe we offered a reasonable proposal, but Almond Board members seemed more interested in convincing us of the soundness of their decision to fumigate raw almonds with a toxic gas or steam-treat raw almonds," noted Will Fantle. "Furthermore, we were both surprised and disappointed that no one from the Almond Board or its staff expressed any concern or compassion for the family farmers suffering severe economic distress from the pasteurization rule or for consumers deprived of their choice in the marketplace," Fantle added.

Cornucopia is now preparing a legal challenge to the almond treatment plan. "We have assembled a team of lawyers and we are nailing down the legal strategies and arguments needed for overturning the treatment mandate," Fantle explained.

"We intend to tap the widespread opposition and concern over the unpopular rule, that has been expressed by consumers, farmers, product manufacturers and retailers, as we head into court," added Fantle. "We believe we have a strong case. Family farmers and handlers have been economically injured by the rule, they have lost markets to untreated imports, and they have been exposed to unexpected processing costs and problems. We are going to fight for their right to produce a product that consumers are demanding in the marketplace."

For more information and updates, visit Cornucopia's web page and the Authentic Almond Project.

Cornucopia Files Legal Complaint with USDA over Infant Formula Ingredients

The Cornucopia Institute filed a legal complaint with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) demanding that the agency enforce the organic regulations prohibiting toxic solvents from being used in the production of organic food. Cornucopia found that baby formula and other food manufacturers are using hexane-extracted omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids (DHA/ARA) derived from algae and soil fungus.

Perhaps more startling, through a Freedom of Information request at the FDA, Cornucopia found algal- and fungal-based DHA/ARA have been linked to serious side effects such as virulent diarrhea and vomiting in infants consuming infant formula, many of whom required medical treatment and hospitalization.

"The federal organic regulations very clearly prohibit these oils in organic foods. What we're seeing is the latest in a long string of USDA actions blatantly catering to industry interests at the expense of consumer safety," said Mark Kastel, Codirector of The Cornucopia Institute. "USDA officials are simply allowing these companies to freely break the organic rules in their pursuit of profit."

Organic products with the prohibited fatty acid supplements include Horizon Organic milk with DHA (Dean Foods) and organic infant formulas, including Similac Organic (Abbott Laboratories), Earth's Best (Hain Celestial), and Bright Beginnings Organic (PBM Products).

Martek Biosciences Corporation produces these DHA and ARA supplements. They are extracted from fermented algae and soil fungus with the use of a highly explosive neurotoxic petrochemical solvent, hexane. The National Organic Program strictly prohibits its use in the processing of organic foods and ingredients.

"Only a change in the regulations would make these oils legal in organic foods, and a regulation change requires citizen input," said David Cox, a lawyer with the Columbus, Ohio law firm of Lane, Alton, and Horst.

The addition of DHA and ARA to organic infant formula is especially troublesome considering that they are linked to serious illness in some infants.

"From our FDA request, we discovered that scores of parents have notified the FDA that their infants experienced symptoms such as serious cases of diarrhea, vomiting, and extreme gassiness from consuming DHA/ARA formula. These symptoms commonly disappeared as soon as the infants were given regular formula without these supplements," said Charlotte Vallaey, author of Cornucopia's comprehensive report *Replacing Mother—Imitating Human Breast Milk in the Laboratory*.

Staff Addition

The Cornucopia Institute has a new staff addition. Lynn Christianson will be supporting our co-directors, Mark and Will, as an administrator and associate researcher.



Lynn has a B.A. in philosophy from Luther College, where she focused on environmental philosophy, ethics, and metaphysics. She also studied theatre/dance there, with which she has gained professional experience in marketing, grant writing, and business.

She has several years of experience in administration. Working for an international engineering firm exposed her to project planning, local politics, and deepened her marketing and administrative skills. She also started a “green” team in this office and introduced sustainable concepts to the corporate office.

Lynn lived in Seattle, WA for a few years and was deeply affected by the Pacific NW’s connection with the land, value in community, and local food politics; but it has been her return to her homeland, rural Wisconsin, that has integrated these values and given them meaning.

“I am excited to be a part of this awesome organization,” says Lynn. “It was a real honor to be contacted by Mark and also now to have this opportunity to share my skills in support of their mission. I look forward to crossing paths with the local farmers who we fight for and our board members who are such an essential part of our team.”

Fight Global Warming – with Farms

According to Tim LaSalle, the new director of the Rodale Institute, organic farming is “the brightest hope for our planet.” Thirty years of research at Rodale indicates that organic farming can have an immense impact.

Explains LaSalle, if all 434 million acres of American cropland were converted to organic practices, it would be the equivalent of eliminating 217 million cars – nearly 88 percent of all cars in the country today and more than a third of all the automobiles in the world.

Rodale recently launched a new website, www.hero-farmers.org, where people can learn practical steps to fight global warming by the way they shop, eat, garden and support our nation’s farmers.

Tell Us Your Story

If you are a farmer involved with sustainable and/or organic production, we would like to hear from you. Send us a note about your operation and we may call you for a profile in a future issue of Cornucopia’s newsletter. Also, if you have any great photos of your organic farm, we want to display them on our website as a demonstration of how family farmers with integrity manage their operations.

Finally, if you see interesting local news on sustainable and/or organic production in your community, send us the newspaper clipping or email us at cultivate@cornucopia.org.

Are Organic Crops as Productive as Conventional?

The answer is an unqualified, “Yes” for alfalfa or wheat, and a qualified “Yes, most of the time” for corn and soybeans according to research reported by scientists at the UW-Madison and agricultural consulting firm AGSTAT.

Researchers based their answer primarily on results from the Wisconsin Integrated Cropping Systems Trials, conducted for 13 years (1990-2002) at Arlington, WI and 8 years (1990-1997) at Elkhorn, WI. Although researchers found that diverse, low-input/organic cropping systems were as productive most of the time, there is a need for further research, according to the study’s author Dr. Joshua L. Posner, University of WI.

Source: *Agronomy Journal*, March-April, 2008

Organic Valley Halts Milk Purchases with Texas Dairy 7200-Cow Dairy Not Part of Cooperative’s Plan

After weeks of controversy in the dairy community, Organic Valley’s Board of Directors has reaffirmed the decision to end its controversial milk purchasing arrangement with a 7200-head, industrial-scale dairy in Texas.

The producer-owned co-op, renowned for helping build the booming organic dairy market with family farms, has had its business practices placed under the microscope. The issue came to a head when Cornucopia revealed that the cooperative had been quietly buying milk from a massive factory farm, the Natural Prairie Dairy near Dalhart, TX.

Conflicting signals emerged from Organic Valley after the year-long relationship became public. Co-op Management, referring to the purchases as “temporary,” said they would continue buying milk from the massive Texas dairy while the co-op worked to grow its farmer base in the Texas market.

“Frankly, after this controversy became public, we were surprised by management’s statements that would continue to buy milk from the Texas factory farm,” said Mark Kastel, Senior Farm Policy Analyst for Cornucopia. “But the cooperative is a democracy, and its farmer-owners have made it clear that they are ending the purchases and are taking a different path toward building a Texas market.”

“I am so pleased that our Board of Directors and management heard the concerns of rank-and-file co-op members and reversed the decision to purchase this questionable milk,” said Darlene Coehoorn, president of the Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Alliance and long-time Organic Valley member. “Nothing is more important than maintaining the trust we have earned from so many dedicated organic consumers around the country.”

When Cornucopia first learned that Organic Valley was buying milk from the Texas factory farm, they initiated a dialogue with its management seeking to convince them that their popular “family farm” and “farmer-owned” cooperative

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brand was at risk due to their association with milk from Natural Prairie, the largest industrial-scale "organic" dairy in the nation, covering 9000 acres and managing upward of 10,000 total head of cattle (milk cows plus young stock).

Farmers, and their member-leaders at the co-op, had no idea milk was being purchased from so massive an agribusiness. "This incident should serve as a learning opportunity," added Coehoorn, who serves on Organic Valley's elected Dairy Executive Committee. "We must work closer with management on policies of this nature in the future."

Cornucopia has strongly criticized other dairy processors and marketers who rely on factory farms for producing organic milk. The organic watchdog has filed a series of formal legal complaints with the USDA spotlighting alleged violations of federal organic law at a number of factory farms. The complaints, several of which led to USDA enforcement actions and sanctions, have involved companies such as Dean Foods, the \$12 billion dairy giant and owner of the Horizon Organic label, and the Aurora Organic Dairy.

"We have held Organic Valley in high regard," noted Kastel. "But once we discovered that Organic Valley was cutting some of the same corners as Dean Foods, we had the ethical responsibility to treat both organizations the same way," Kastel added. After negotiations with Organic Valley's management broke down, the organization brought the situation to the attention of key farmer-owners with management oversight.

Donors Remember Their Loved Ones with a Memorial Gift to Cornucopia

Several donations were made to The Cornucopia Institute in the past few months by families and friends wishing to acknowledge the passing of someone important in their life with a memorial gift. We wish to recognize the following for their gifts:

- **Austin Bleakney in memory of Jane E. Holmes**
- **Marilyn Cass in memory of Albert V. Krebs**
- **Mary Ross in memory of Martha Setter**
- **Rick Weinstein in memory of Lois Phillips**
- **Carla Borelli (anonymous)**
- **Nina Kuper (anonymous)**

"The difference between Dean Foods and Organic Valley is that Organic Valley is actually controlled by the farmers themselves, rather than by wealthy investors," explained Kastel. "The farmers were able to turn this thing around. We are once again very pleased to be able to endorse the practices of Organic Valley."

Tony Azevedo, of Stevinson, CA, another long-time Organic Valley member and president of the Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, said: "This incident should be very reassuring to our many loyal Organic Valley customers. Unlike most business we are not strictly governed by the bottom line."



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