

# THE CULTIVATOR

NEWS FROM THE CORNUCOPIA INSTITUTE

SPRING 2014

## Leaving a Sour Taste

Conventional “Yogurt” Masquerades as Health Food While Organic Keeps It Real

**Y**ogurt, made the traditional way, is one of nature’s many health foods. Milk from organic grass-fed cows, rich in calcium, protein, beneficial fats and other healthy nutrients, is fermented using live cultures, resulting in a wholesome, live food teeming with beneficial microorganisms.

Yet giant food corporations, led by General Mills (Yoplait) and Groupe Danone (Dannon), and now joined by others including Walmart and PepsiCo, have managed to turn this health food into junk food.

Many yogurt products on store shelves today are marketed as healthy, but a close inspection of the ingredients list and a look behind the scenes at how the ingredients are produced—the food’s “fine print”—paint a very different picture.

Conventional yogurt is produced with milk from cows that are nearly always confined and unable to graze on pasture, and given a feed containing genetically engineered grains. During the making of yogurt, chemical defoamers can legally be added to conventional milk. And with the addition of artificial sweeteners or high doses of sugar and high fructose corn syrup, artificial colors, synthetic preservatives and the gut-wrenching thickener carrageenan, many yogurt products are essentially junk food masquerading as health food.



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These products are marketed as healthy in part by displaying the “Live and Active Cultures” seal, which supposedly assures a high level of beneficial microorganisms, also known as probiotics.

The seal is found on nearly all conventional yogurt by popular brands owned by corporations such as General Mills and Groupe Danone. No organic yogurt uses the seal. However, testing by The Cornucopia Institute, performed by a food-processing center at a land grant university, revealed that many organic farmstead yogurt products without the Live and Active Cultures seal actually contained

**Is yogurt one of nature’s perfect foods? Not when it contains fake fruit, artificial colors, high fructose corn syrup, aspartame, synthetic preservatives, and milk from confined cows given GE grain and hormones. Cornucopia’s new report separates the truly healthy yogurt brands from junk food copycats.**

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# FDA Withdraws Controversial Food Safety Rules

**P**ressure from The Cornucopia Institute and other members of the *good food community* helped push the U.S. Food and Drug Administration into reconsideration of its proposed food safety rules for implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act. This is a big interim victory that you helped make possible!

In announcing the move, the FDA's Michael Taylor wrote on the agency's blog: "We believe that this decision to change these proposed rules—in response to the careful consideration of many people involved in supplying our food—is critical to fulfilling our commitment to getting them right."

The FDA plans to release revised food safety rules this summer. The agency's changes will encompass water quality standards and testing, standards for using raw manure and compost, certain provisions affecting mixed-use facilities, and procedures used to withdraw the qualified exemption to these requirements for certain farms. At that time all of us will have the opportunity to comment again.



Eleanor, the three-year-old daughter of staffer Jason Cole, was mighty impressed by the stacks of proxy letters delivered to the FDA. This pictures only one of them. Cornucopia proxies accounted for between 24% and 69% of all public comments on the various food safety issues.

These revisions include many of the key points raised by Cornucopia and the thousands of individuals who sent in their comments and proxy letters to the FDA with the help of Cornucopia. Looking at the two FDA food safety dockets related to produce production (farm production and processing) and the FDA draft *Salmonella* guidance (that could force organic farmers to keep their chickens indoors), it appears that Cornucopia proxies made up between 24% and 69% of all public comments made. And that's not counting citizens we helped go directly to the website and submit comments electronically. This is a phenomenal response. Thank you for your dedication to this movement.

When the revised rules are released Cornucopia will alert our members and the public, and provide meaningful analysis. Your ongoing involvement and comments will help defend organic/local farmers and protect your access to authentic, nutrient-dense food.

—WILL FANTLE

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# Gut-Wrenching

New Studies Reveal the Insidious Effects of Glyphosate

BY PAMELA COLEMAN, PhD

**G**lyphosate is the active ingredient in one of the most heavily used herbicides in the world: Monsanto's Roundup®. The industry claims that Roundup® is quite safe, but authors of a recent article in the scientific journal *Entropy* reach a very different conclusion:

“Contrary to the current widely held misconception that glyphosate is relatively harmless to humans, the available evidence shows that *glyphosate may rather be the most important factor in the development of multiple chronic diseases and conditions that have become prevalent in Westernized societies*” [emphasis added].

This is a bold assertion. Is it possible that we are only now realizing the harmful effects of this herbicide that has been in common use since the 1970s? How does glyphosate harm humans? How did we overlook these problems for decades? Read on.

## Acute vs. Chronic Toxicity

The acute toxicity of glyphosate is relatively low, meaning that accidentally ingesting it will likely not cause immediate harm. Chronic toxicity—the effects of continually ingesting glyphosate residues in food—is cause for concern. Glyphosate interferes with fundamental biochemical reactions and may predispose humans to obesity, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other health problems.

It's easy to overlook these effects. Toxicity studies on laboratory animals are typically short term, often only a few months. The harm from low-level, chronic exposure can only be seen after a long period of time,



Photo by Tim McCabe, NRCS

often years, or even decades. The real guinea pigs in this case are humans.

From a scientific perspective, it is impossible to prove that a chemical ingested on food can harm a person's health decades later. However, it is possible to study the specific biochemical action of the pesticide, and then examine the diseases that have been related to malfunction of that biochemical pathway.

## Indirect Evidence of Harm: Glyphosate Interferes with Biochemistry of Bacteria

Describing the effects of glyphosate, the *Entropy* article states: “Negative impact on the body is insidious and manifests slowly over time.” The authors cite several ways glyphosate may contribute to the chronic diseases that have occurred with increasing frequency as use of the herbicide has increased.

Roundup® kills plants by interfering with a biochemical pathway involved with synthesis of amino acids, called the shikimate pathway. This pathway is not found in humans, therefore it was assumed that glyphosate does not harm humans. The pathway is found in bacteria, however, and humans depend on bacteria in

**Monsanto's Roundup does a lot more than kill weeds. The world's most widely used herbicide also may interfere with GI tract bacteria and predispose humans to obesity, autism, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other serious health problems.**

the gastrointestinal (GI) tract to synthesize the essential amino acids.

By interfering with the biochemistry of bacteria in our GI tract, consumption of glyphosate depletes essential amino acids and predisposes humans to a host of chronic health problems. Specifically, glyphosate depletes the amino acids tyrosine, tryptophan, and phenylalanine, which can then contribute to obesity, depression, autism, inflammatory bowel disease, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's.

There is also evidence that Roundup® inhibits cytochrome P450 (CYP) enzymes that help to detoxify foreign chemicals (such as pesticides), regulate levels of vitamin D, and control cholesterol.

GUT-WRENCHING continued on page 4

## GUT-WRENCHING

Continued from page 3

The combination of ingredients in Roundup® may be even more toxic than glyphosate alone. The surfactants in Roundup® make it an effective herbicide, but also increase its toxicity to animal cells and bacteria.

### Direct Evidence of Harm: Glyphosate Kills Beneficial Bacteria

A study examining the effect of glyphosate on bacteria that grow in the GI tract of chickens found that beneficial bacteria were susceptible, and harmful bacteria were resistant, to glyphosate. The growth of four types of beneficial bacteria—*Lactobacillus*, *Bacillus*, *Bifidobacterium*, and *Enterococcus*—was reduced at low concentrations of glyphosate. The same types of beneficial bacteria inhabit the human GI tract, and they are sold over the counter as a probiot-



StockPhoto.com

### The combination of ingredients in Roundup may be even more toxic than glyphosate alone.

ic supplement. Some strains are also found in yogurt.

When exposed to the same levels of glyphosate that harmed the beneficial bacteria, several harmful bacteria, including *Salmonella*, grew successfully. The authors concluded that ingestion of glyphosate can disturb the normal microbial community and predispose

chickens to carrying high levels of *Salmonella* or other harmful bacteria.

A similar study found that glyphosate was toxic to beneficial bacteria in cattle, and hypothesized that glyphosate residues on cattle feed may predispose cattle to infection by *Clostridium botulinum*, the bacterium that causes botulism.

### Conclusion

This article highlights only a few of the scientific studies that show how glyphosate interferes with fundamental biochemical reactions and inhibits the growth of beneficial bacteria. As glyphosate use increases (see sidebar below), there is increasing urgency for additional studies to determine the effects of glyphosate consumption over a human life span.

A version of this article with citations is available at [www.cornucopia.org](http://www.cornucopia.org).

## EPA Raises Allowed Levels as Roundup Use Skyrockets

When Roundup® was first introduced in the 1970s, its use was limited to weeds, because the active ingredient glyphosate kills all plants. That changed with the introduction of crops genetically engineered (GE) to tolerate glyphosate. Glyphosate use has been increasing exponentially. From 2001 to 2007, glyphosate use doubled, reaching 180 to 185 million pounds in the U.S. in 2007. One reason for the increase in herbicide use is the increase in corn acreage to produce the ethanol that is added to gasoline.

Herbicide use is also increasing on crops grown for food. First, glyphosate can now be sprayed over the GE crop itself, whereas previously only the weeds were sprayed. Second, herbicides are now sprayed on crops to kill the foliage just before harvest, particularly potatoes, beans, and grains. These practices increase not only the amount of herbicide sprayed into the environment, but also the amount directly absorbed by the plants that are eaten by humans and livestock.

In response to this scenario, the agricultural industry requested increases in the tolerance levels for glyphosate, that is, the residues allowed in food and feed. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) complied, raising the tolerance levels of glyphosate residue in many crops. For example, the levels for soybean have been doubled, from 20 parts per million (ppm) to 40 ppm.

This means that the genetically engineered Roundup Ready® crops will have higher levels of glyphosate, even as scientists learn more about the insidious long-term effects of ingesting it.



Photo by Lynn Betts, NRCS

The EPA has doubled glyphosate tolerance levels for soybean.

—PAMELA COLEMAN

# My Road to Organics

## From Idaho Family Farm to Urban Co-op

*Many of us have had an aha! moment or moments that sparked our decision to farm, garden or eat organically. In this issue, veteran Cornucopia board member Goldie Caughlan tells how she heard the call and came to devote herself to environmentalism and nutrition education.*

**A**s with many highly scheduled urban families, our life was pretty frenetic when the kids were young. My husband and I worked full time, he as a lawyer, I as a paralegal. We also tended to the frequent health issues of our aging mothers and—not busy enough, I guess!—in 1973 I began classes at the University of Washington.

Rushed and stressed, we had fallen into the habit of going out for fast food two or three times a week. Happy Meals at McDonald's and greasy, finger-lickin' Kentucky Fried Chicken were big hits with the kids. It all tasted pretty much the same, but it was so easy, we rationalized. Besides, it really *was* cheap...or so it seemed.

My wake-up call? It came on the first day of the only class I'd signed up for that fall quarter: Introduction to Physical Anthropology. There I sat, in an auditorium with more than 600 students, as an elderly professor mounted the podium. "Surprise!" he boomed. This section was NOT going to be physical anthropology, he explained, but rather "an experiment" during his last year of teaching. We would be studying numerous aspects of changes in land use, global agricultural and processed food systems, and especially how farming practices, food, nutrition and health had been impacted since 1900.

Stunned silence followed—then a near stampede as over 500 students accepted his invitation to escape!

Me? I was hooked—and remained so for that quarter and the two more that were added for the 40 or so of us who remained thoroughly engaged.

Thus began the reawakening within this family-farm child from rural Idaho of the late 1940s. As flashes of memories returned, I became increasingly shocked and incensed with each new revelation of the losses of land, of family farmers, and of whole communities that had long supported, and been supported by, those farm families. As a class we also discussed the presence of ever more toxic poisons in our food and water that accompanied corporatized consolidation of agriculture.

But the most compelling moment, the inspiration, the "life direction changer" came for me in a thin little book I read the first week of the first quarter of this remarkable journey. The loudest call to action I heard came from Frances Moore Lappe's *Diet for a Small Planet* (see [www.](http://www.)



Cornucopia  
board member  
Goldie Caughlan  
lives in Seattle.

[foodfirst.org](http://foodfirst.org)). She lit the flame of passion for right livelihood in agriculture, food and nutrition by exposing the invalidity of feeding grains, particularly corn and soy, to animals and argued in favor of eating less (or no) animal products raised on such methods, which would free up more protein for the world.

That one concept stunned and intrigued me, and sent me scurrying within the first week to find, and join, the then-tiny Puget Consumers Co-op. (Now PCC Natural Markets, today the 60-year-old co-op has more than 50,000 members, 1,200 staff, and a tenth store opening this spring.)

In those first weeks I asked so many questions of their very small staff and volunteers, that within a month they talked me into joining their board of trustees, where I served three two-year terms. The co-op, too, opened me and my family to the joys of discovering all that was right and timely, community-building, empowering and delicious in the world of cooperatives and farming systems. And we never revisited the likes of McDonald's again! In fact, for the next 20 years we were mostly vegetarian, with an occasional roast beast during winter holidays—and plenty of fresh salmon and clams. After all, we live in Puget Sound!

In 1983, I joined the PCC staff as Health Educator. A month later I founded the co-op's cooking school and added food training sessions for all staff, and free introductory lectures weekly for all members and non-members, firmly believing that Americans needed to cease relying on over-processed foods and relearn how to shop and prepare whole foods. From the start, all cooking classes and training sessions stressed discovering the taste, beauty, nutritional advantages and flavors of whole foods, produced with chemical-free farming and production methods.

The term "organic," as we use it today, simply meant "whole" or "natural" in the '70s and early '80s. How ironic that the term "natural" has now, through misuse, all but lost its meaning. We must NOT let the same thing happen to "organic."

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**GOLDIE CAUGHLAN** was Nutrition Educator for over 30 years for PCC Natural Markets in Seattle, the largest cooperative grocer in the U.S. She served on the USDA National Organic Standards Board from 2001 to 2006.

# How Colonel Sanders Won the Chicken Vote

## Lessons Learned from GMO Labeling Losses at the State Ballot Box

COMMENTARY BY MARK A. KASTEL

**W**hat can we learn from the narrow defeats of citizen initiatives in California, in 2012, and Washington, in 2013?

First, before being exposed to an onslaught of misleading advertising, underwritten by an investment of over \$66 million by corporate agribusiness and biotechnology interests, strong majorities in each state favored consumers gaining the “right to know” in the marketplace.

Vested interests knew exactly what was at stake. In markets where consumers have the right to choose, like Europe, food companies react with sensitivity to consumer sentiment. Few follow the law’s requirement to label GMO content. That’s because, based on market research, these brands decided not to include GMO ingredients in their product formulations at all. Why would astute marketers want to force-feed their customers food they reject?

Yet here in America agribusiness decided to fight like hell, led by biotech interests like Monsanto, DuPont and Syngenta, along with well-capitalized Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) lobbyists.

Although the right-to-know movement has had some successes (legislative initiatives moving towards GMO labeling in Connecticut, Maine and other Eastern states) and has heightened awareness nationally, why did the citizen ballot initiatives lose in the two most populous and politically influential states on the West Coast?

An eater voting with Monsanto is like a chicken voting for Colonel Sanders.

### Timing Is Everything

There is a world of difference, in both



quantity and makeup, between presidential election years, “off years” and “off, off years.”

Nowhere was this truer than in Washington State last fall, when there was a record low voter turnout when GMOs were on the ballot. Off-year elections, historically, see much lower turnout and skew to voters who are white, elderly and vote more conservatively. Sadly, if Washington had only had an “average” low turnout, analysis shows the initiative would likely have won.

When exit polling was examined in Washington, GMO labeling was supported by almost every other demographic. No matter how you sliced and diced the data—by age, race, ethnicity, income, education level—the majority voted for labeling. But in the narrow loss the disproportionately high turnout by senior citizens skewed the results.

**Lesson:** Ballot initiatives should be run in presidential years or when there is another race on the ballot that will command a high turnout.

### Tactics Matter

In this post-*Citizens United* political environment, where corporations and corporate kingpins can pump

an unlimited amount of money into elections, candidates and initiatives that are not backed by corporate money are always going to be underdogs. Tactics need to be developed to leverage a smaller amount of funding—and in most elections almost everything boils down to electronic advertising. In a state

like California, with massively large and multiple media markets, that’s a tough row to hoe.

The campaign in California spent a lot of money up front on personnel and consultants. Some political observers would have recommended doing everything possible to conserve funds to funnel into an ad campaign.

The anti-labeling crowd, spending more than \$45 million in California, was able to get on the airways first. Their storyline was based almost totally on BS. They told voters that labeling would hurt farmers, cause food shortages, result in price spikes, and create a fertile field for trial lawyers who would sue all participants in the food industry. These were specious arguments.

The pro-labeling crowd finally got ads in front of voters but it wasn’t un-

Cornucopia’s infographics expose the companies that fought to defeat GMO labeling initiatives in CA and WA, and also spotlight the organic heroes that supported them. Download the posters at [www.cornucopia.org](http://www.cornucopia.org).



til late in the election cycle. When exit polling was conducted it appeared that the initiative actually won ... on election day!

What happened? Citizens who chose “early voting” disproportionately rejected the proposition. They were exposed to a massive disinformation campaign before pro-labeling forces could afford to correct the record. Also, just like in Washington, early voters tend to be older, more conservative and more dedicated voters.

**Lesson:** Conserve resources and get on the airways quickly.

### Size Matters

Although many exemplary corporate citizens (along with a few nonprofits in the organic movement) came forward to help fund the campaign in California (and to a lesser degree in Washington), we just didn’t have enough fuel. Although about \$17 million was raised to support the two campaigns, some major players sat the fight out. Their participation might have made all the difference.

The largest AWOL corporate player, by far, was Whole Foods Market. In California, after months of pleading by operatives in the campaign and leaders in the organic food industry, Whole Foods steadfastly refused to contribute even a nickel saying that *they didn’t get involved in*

*political campaigns* (although it should be noted that citizen initiatives are nonpartisan).

After receiving pressure from their customers they finally relented, contributing just four days before the election—too late to have a material impact on the advertising campaign. And their contribution? A paltry \$25,000. (Whole Foods CEO Walter Robb also gave \$25,000 to Prop 37, and Robb and COO A.C. Gallo gave \$30,000 to I-522.)

Let’s put that into perspective. With annual sales in the \$12-\$13 billion range (about the same as Monsanto’s) and a market capitalization of nearly \$20 billion (the most valuable grocery chain in the nation at the time), there is no doubt that Whole Foods could have done much more.

As a comparison, let’s use the \$25,000 donation from Good Earth Natural Foods, an independent grocer in Fairfax, California. If Whole Foods had matched that, based on their 320+ stores, they would have contributed \$8 million! That’s the amount Monsanto spent to crush Prop 37.

Whole Foods wasn’t the only major corporation sitting on the sidelines. United Natural Foods Incorporated (UNFI), at \$6 billion in annual sales, was also a Prop 37 holdout (although co-founder Michael Funk gave \$75,000). Washington-based UNFI’s

contribution to I-522 was \$50,000—paling in comparison to the millions given by the top YES donor, Dr. Bronner’s Magic Soaps.

While giant agribusinesses—including Dean Foods/WhiteWave (Silk, Horizon), General Mills (Muir Glen, Cascadian Farms, Lärabar), and Smuckers (R.W. Knudsen, Santa Cruz Organics)—sold out the interests of their customers, organic movement heroes dug deep to finance a campaign based on truth, justice and the precautionary principle. These included Nutiva, Nature’s Path and Lundberg Family Farms, who were joined by Dr. Joseph Mercola, Organic Consumers Association, Food Democracy Now and others. They came *oh so close* to beating Big Food.

**Lesson:** Big-dollar players must *walk their talk* and get in the game early. Adequate funding for the YES campaign is imperative.

### Moving Forward

Check out Cornucopia’s infographics on the food industry donors who gave to the YES or NO votes. Just like voting, you can prevent your dollars from going to Monsanto and their henchmen at the GMA. These battles will be fought again and again. Let’s hope that we’ve learned something through our failures—or rather, our near-successes.



## A Washingtonian’s View from the Trenches

In the weeks leading up to the election, residents of Washington State were bombarded with false claims about the labeling initiative, I-522. Experiencing the barrage first-hand caused me to think deeply about the meaning of democracy and the effect of corporate influence. I donated \$100 to the YES on 522 campaign, but my contribution was dwarfed by the \$21 million donated by corporations that opposed the measure. With consumers pitted against giant corporations, I

took heart that we, members of the *good food movement*, continued to spread the truth and facilitate the democratic process. The contributions of individual activists, both in time and money, cannot be overstated. In the wake of the battle, I’m grateful to the many people who worked to increase transparency about our food. I’m thankful as well to the food co-ops and businesses who demonstrated their commitment to support the consumer’s right to know about GMOs.

**PAMELA COLEMAN**, a Cornucopia Institute policy analyst, lives in East Wenatchee, Washington.

## YOGURT

Continued from page 1

higher levels of probiotics than conventional yogurt with the seal.

Consumers tempted to choose products that display the Live and Active Cultures seal over products without it would be wise to reconsider that option.

Cornucopia's analysis of yogurt also found that many conventional yo-

gurt products on store shelves are not really yogurt at all. The FDA has a "standard of identity" for yogurt that specifies which types of ingredients can and cannot be added to a product labeled and sold as "yogurt." Artificial sweeteners, preservatives and artificial nutrients other than vitamins A and D do not appear on this FDA list. It is puzzling how any product containing these ingredients can be marketed and sold as "yogurt." This

includes most of the Yoplait, Dannon and other conventional brands, as well as most store label brands, including Walmart's Great Value.

The addition of these ingredients is not simply a question of legality; it also raises an important question about the healthfulness of the food. Many ingredients found in yogurt may cause adverse health impacts.

For example, research has linked the artificial sweetener aspartame to brain tumors and neurological disease in laboratory animals. Carrageenan, a food thickener, has been shown to promote colon tumors and cause inflammation and digestive disease in laboratory animals. Artificial colors have been linked to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children. These ingredients and others commonly found in yogurt have no place in a food marketed as healthy.

Cornucopia's forthcoming report outlines the various reasons why people should choose organic yogurt over conventional. The USDA Organic seal on a yogurt product is much more important, in terms of healthfulness, than the Live and Active Cultures seal, the "Greek" label or any other marketing claim or label. In essence, all that is required for making healthy yogurt is organic milk and live cultures.

The Cornucopia Institute encourages eaters and food retailers who buy yogurt to purchase minimally processed, organic brands. By doing so you will be supporting organic farmers, sound environmental stewardship, humane animal husbandry, and good health for our families and communities.

## Yo! Guess Which Costs More?

**B**ecause it costs more to produce, organic yogurt must be pricier at the check-out, right? Not always. General Mills' Yoplait Go-Gurt costs more per ounce than many organic brands, despite containing milk from conventional, confined cows fed GE corn and soybeans, rather than milk from grass-fed cows. Go-Gurt, a "fruity" drinkable yogurt in a tube marketed to children, has no actual fruit but tastes and looks like it does due to artificial flavors and colors that require a warning label in other countries. The sweet snack also contains carrageenan, a known gastrointestinal irritant, along with artificial preservatives and synthetic nutrients.

In another example, Chobani, a conventional "Greek" yogurt, was priced higher than five different organic brands at a Boston-area Whole Foods Market. (This was before Whole Foods dropped the brand reportedly for using milk from GE-grain-fed cows while marketing itself as "natural.")

Yogurt is big business. Consumers spend \$73 billion on this food staple globally and \$6 billion in the U.S., where individuals eat an average of 13 pounds of the creamy stuff each year. No wonder Big Food dominates this market; corporate players include General Mills (Yoplait), Group Danone (Dannon, Brown Cow, 85% of Stonyfield Farm), PepsiCo (Muller), Dean Foods (Alta Dena, Berkeley Farms, Meadow Gold), WhiteWave (Horizon, Silk), and the Hain Celestial Group (The Greek Gods, Healthy Valley, Earth's Best).

Consult Cornucopia's forthcoming Yogurt Scorecard to see how these corporate brands stack up against independents such as Nancy's, Organic Valley, Kalona, Wallaby Organic and Clover Stornetta, and regional brands such as Butterworks Farm, Seven Stars, Straus, Hawthorne Valley Farm and Cedar Summit.

**Scorecard teaser: Cedar Summit Farm, a 100% grass-fed dairy in Minnesota, produces yogurt with more omega-3 fatty acids and 20 times as much of the healthy fat CLA as Chobani, according to independent lab tests.**



This article is based on Cornucopia's forthcoming yogurt report and scorecard. Find both this spring at [www.cornucopia.org](http://www.cornucopia.org).



# WhiteWave Watch (Horizon and Silk)

## Food Giant Blurs Line Between Organic and Non-organic Products

Since the recent spin-off of the WhiteWave division on Wall Street by Dean Foods, Cornucopia has been critically examining developments by this organic business heavyweight. Farmers and consumers are probably most familiar with WhiteWave's Silk and Horizon product lines.

This February, WhiteWave formally introduced a new line of macaroni and cheese dinners aimed at families with kids. Sold under the Horizon brand—the largest organic label in the marketplace—only two of the six new mac and cheese offerings are certified organic. Yet the non-organic offerings are sold in familiar packaging that is very similar to Horizon's organic products.

"WhiteWave/Horizon," notes Cornucopia's Mark Kastel, "has joined a long line of corporate agribusinesses that have intentionally blurred the line between organic and non-organic products."

When Dean/WhiteWave purchased Silk in 2002, the popular soy beverage maker was a well-known organic pioneer with a 100% organic product line. Although Silk remains the leading producer of plant-based beverages, their offering of certified organic products has shriveled to just 6% of their product line. In doing so, they first abandoned American farmers who had been supplying Silk, then switched to cheaper "organic" beans from China.

WhiteWave's president Blaine McPeak justifies selling similar products with non-organic ingredients in a recent interview with *Food Business News*. By targeting young families, McPeak explains the company has to ask, "can we be successful ... can we go there with the organic status and can we win on a niche scale **and meet**

**financial expectations?**" [emphasis added].

One ingredient WhiteWave adds to their non-organic mac and cheese is milk protein concentrate (MPC), a controversial product that substitutes for fresh milk. John Peck, executive director of Family Farm Defenders, says that MPCs are "basically a way to drive down dairy prices received by farmers—they are the cheapest way to make dairy products."

Peck also mentions that MPCs are imported into the U.S. to make glue, then somehow "magically transformed into a food product." There is no FDA GRAS status (generally regarded as safe) for MPCs.



istockphoto.com

WhiteWave garnered more attention in February when Cornucopia filed a formal legal complaint with the USDA alleging violations of organic regulations at a factory farm in Idaho. The dairy was owned and operated by DeanFoods/WhiteWave until its recent sale to a private party in late 2013.

Originally managing over 8,000 cattle and thousands of acres in arid Southern Idaho, Dean/WhiteWave's dairy was accused by Cornucopia, starting in 2005, of confining cattle in pens and buildings instead of providing access to pasture and grazing as federal organic law requires. Cornucopia's Kastel visited the operation in 2006, with an invite from management at Dean Foods. That visit helped document claims that their use of these allegedly illegal techniques created millions of dollars of "ill-gotten gains," helping catapult the Horizon label into the largest-dollar-volume brand in the entire organic industry.

New inside information sources indicates that, to promote extremely high levels of milk production, the Horizon farm management increased the number of times the cows were being milked from twice a day to three and even four times a day. Furthermore, they prevented the cows from being put out on pasture between some of the milkings, and when they were out, made sure their bellies were already full of high-production rations (TMR feed) eaten in the barn. And a select group of "fresh, high producing cows," being milked four times a day, were entirely confined until production levels dropped.

"Properly managing an organic dairy farm by moving the herd to fresh pasture after each twice-per-day milking becomes more and more difficult as herd size gets larger," observes Kevin Engelbert, a certified organic dairy farmer from Nichols, New York, and a Cornucopia board member. "If a farm gets to the point of milking thousands of cows, 24 hours a day, the logistics of getting the herd from the milking facility to fresh grass, legitimately grazing—as required by law—becomes impossible."

"Small organic dairies nationwide have struggled with drought, flooding and oppressive heat. Still, we have pastured our cattle as required by the National Organic Program (NOP)," says Jim Goodman, who milks 45 cows near Wonewoc, Wisconsin.

"If factory farm organic dairies are unwilling or unable to meet the NOP's pasture provisions," Goodman adds, "then perhaps it is time they are notified that their continued noncompliance to the National Organic Standards has gone on too long and they should seek a non-organic market for their milk."

—WILL FANTLE

# Cornucopia Welcomes New Policy Staff

**W**ith increasing challenges to organic integrity, economic justice for family farmers, and citizens' right to know if foods are genetically engineered, The Cornucopia Institute is pleased to announce the expansion of our policy staff to address these and other issues critical to the *good food movement*. This winter Cornucopia welcomed Linley Dixon and Rebecca Thistlethwaite as Farm and Food Policy Analysts.

Linley and Rebecca join Mark A. Kastel, Cornucopia Codirector and Senior Policy Analyst, Co-director and Research Director Will Fantle, and Policy Analyst Pamela Coleman, PhD, on the policy team.



Linley Dixon

**Linley Dixon, PhD**, a farmer and plant disease and soil scientist, owns a vegetable farm in Durango, Colorado, with her husband Peter. Now in its fourth growing season, Adobe House Farm markets its produce through a CSA, a farm

to school program, and a farmers market. Linley also has experience farming in Maine, Florida, Maryland, West Virginia and Guam.

Prior to farming, Linley spent 15 years studying the impact of farm diversity on plant disease levels. Collecting and studying plant diseases on farms throughout the world provided her with perspective on the various inputs required depending on production practices.

Linley earned a doctorate in Plant Pathology from the University of Florida and a master's degree in Plant and Soil Science from West Virginia University's Organic Farm Project, with a focus on organic agriculture. She also held a two-year post-doctorate with the USDA's Systematic Botany and Mycology Laboratory, where she used DNA sequencing and cloning techniques to identify plant diseases around the world.

Linley and Peter are parents of a four-year-old daughter, Raina. The family is actively involved in supporting the local farm movement in Durango.

**Rebecca Thistlethwaite** is a farmer, an author and a sustainability consultant with 17 years of experience in sustainable agriculture. She has been involved in all facets of sustainable agriculture and the food chain including as a farmworker, food retailer, researcher, educator, business

owner, non-profit manager, and consultant to farms of all sizes.

Rebecca holds a B.S. in Natural Resources Management from Colorado State University and an M.S. in International Agricultural Development and Agroecology from the University of California–Davis.



Rebecca Thistlethwaite

Fluent in Spanish, Rebecca served as director of programs for seven years at the farm incubator

ALBA in California's Salinas Valley, where she developed bilingual programs for beginning and more experienced growers. She also operated a profitable pastured livestock and poultry farm business, TLC Ranch, for six years with her family near Watsonville, California.

The author of *Farms with a Future: Creating and Growing a Sustainable Farm Business* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2012), a business guide for new and experienced farmers, Rebecca is currently working on her second book, *The New Meat Market*.

Rebecca lives near Oregon's beautiful Columbia River Gorge with her family of three. In her free time, she enjoys volunteering at her daughter's school, trail running, gardening, fermenting foods, and raising pigs.

—MARK KASTEL



## Where's My Cornucopia E-newsletter?

If you use Gmail, you've probably already noticed it has a few new features. With the new rules, emails from Cornucopia may be automatically sent to the tab that says "promotions" instead of "primary."

To make sure you don't miss any of Cornucopia's e-newsletters, action alerts or news releases, all you need to do is check your "promotions" tab and drag a Cornucopia email to the primary tab. A little alert will pop up. Click "yes" and you're all set.

If you use another email program, simply label Cornucopia messages as "safe" to keep them out of the junk folder.



# THE CORNUCOPIA FARMER PROFILE

## No Fences

**W**hen Nancy Coonridge says she lives with her goat herd in the “wilds of New Mexico,” she’s not exaggerating. Coonridge Organic Goat Cheese Dairy perches at 8,000 feet elevation in the dry, rim rock country of western New Mexico, near the Continental Divide. The mailbox is two hours away by dirt road. The year’s water comes from rain and snow captured from the roof, electricity from solar panels. Cell phones don’t work here.

“When we say our goats are ‘free range’ we do not mean they have a pasture, however large. We mean there are no fences and no human neighbors for miles and miles,” Coonridge explains.

Raised in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1960s, Nancy Coonridge suddenly realized at age 19 “I had to get a goat.” She got involved with several dairy goat cheese co-ops in California in the ’70s and taught herself the art of cheese making with the help of Mediterranean-trained cheese maestros living in the U.S. In the early ’80s, she and her then-husband bought 40 remote acres in New Mexico for the dairy, since expanded to over 300.

The herd—about 50 Alpine, Nubian, La Mancha and Oberhasli dairy goats—is free to roam it all. Each morning after milking, the goats go off to spend the day ranging in the stark high desert country. Maremma guardian dogs, bred for 2,000 years in the Italian Alps for wolf control, protect the herd from predators such as mountain lion, bear and coyote. At dusk the animals return to their barn and barnyard for the night. “Goats are homebodies and have a real homing instinct,” says Coonridge.

Browsing on brush, nettles, thistles, dandelions and other vegetation, the goats produce milk that is very high in fat and protein. Coonridge never feeds them grain, which upsets the animals’ ruminant function. During the winter or heavy rains the goats are given organic alfalfa hay in the barn to supplement their browse. Hormones, antibiotics and chemical wormers are absent on this dairy.

Certified organic since 1998, Coonridge Dairy sources most of the flavoring ingredients in the goat cheese, such as garlic, basil, herbs and green chile, from local, organic farmers. Their artisanal varieties include Herbs de Provence, Flame Roasted Green Chile, New Mexican



Photo by Coonridge Organic Goat Dairy

Protected by Maremma sheepdogs, Coonridge’s dairy goats freely roam over 300+ acres of New Mexico wilderness.

Raspberry Jam, Hot Curry Delight, and Scarborough Fair with (you’ll know if you’re old enough) parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme.

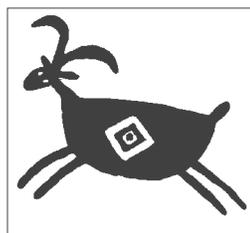
Coonridge makes the cheese using traditional long set methods. The soft-spreading cheese, which comes in a glass jar, is covered with organic sunflower seed oil and herbs. “Watching that alchemy, that transformation of milk into curd into cheese is wonderful,” says Coonridge.

Hours from any urban area, the dairy ships product to a food hub distribution center in Albuquerque operated by La Montanita Co-op and distributes to co-op grocers. Coonridge also sells at festivals and farmers markets throughout the greater Southwest and partners with New Mexico’s 17 wineries. Online customers make up about 10% of sales.

The operation may be in the wilds of New Mexico but it attracts volunteers from around the world. In addition to Nancy and her husband, Paul Owen, “there are always two or three other people here,” says Coonridge. “In the last five years we’ve had an upswing of WWOOFers and interns. It’s wonderful to be around that young, idealistic energy.” (WWOOF is Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, [www.woofusa.org](http://www.woofusa.org).)

Coonridge and her crew are building a new structure on the property to expand their cheese-making capacity and offer classes. “There’s a real sense of place here,” she says. “It’s the culmination of so many different things coming together: the goats, the cheese, living in harmony with nature. For me personally, I can’t think of anything else that would be as deeply satisfying.”

—ELIZABETH WOLF



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## 10 YEARS: Happy Birthday Cornucopia!



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In 2004, The Cornucopia Institute started with little more than the cofounders' fierce desire to protect true organic farming and the righteous livelihood of its stewards.

Ten years later, Cornucopia amplifies the voices of thousands of organic and local farmers, CSAs, food citizens, ethical food companies, co-ops and independent grocers, and other stakeholders in the *good food movement*.

**Cornucopia is YOU. Together, we've made a huge difference the past 10 years. Together, we'll rock the next decade even more. Thank you for standing up for organics! (Stay tuned for festivities...)**

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## WhiteWave Boycotted at Confab

**C**ornucopia volunteers braved subzero temperatures at the nation's largest organic farming conference, in La Crosse, Wisconsin, to protest the inclusion of a WhiteWave marketing executive among the presenters. The Cornucopia Institute has long challenged WhiteWave, a recent spin-off of the corporate giant Dean Foods, for suspect organic practices. These



Photo by The Cornucopia Institute

include abandoning American family farmers for cheap "organic" substitutes from China, sourcing milk from "organic" factory farms, and blurring the line between organic and non-organic packaging. WhiteWave recently released mac and cheese packaged dinners under their Horizon label with ingredients that include milk protein concentrate (MPC) — used to make glue. MPCs have no GRAS status (generally recognized as safe) for food but are nevertheless a common substitute for fluid milk in processed food. See related story on page 9.