

THE CULTIVATOR

NEWS FROM THE CORNUCOPIA INSTITUTE

SPRING 2016

Behind the Dazzling Smile

Toxic Chemicals in Your Toothpaste?

BY JEROME RIGOT, PHD

Toothpastes, even “natural” toothpastes, vary greatly in the ingredients they contain, some of which are questionable or potentially toxic. This is alarming when one considers that the mouth membrane is one of the most absorbent areas of the body, and that the average American will use about 20 gallons of toothpaste over her lifetime. Children are vulnerable to an even greater risk of exposure.

Help is needed to decode the hard-to-understand toothpaste ingredient labels, so Cornucopia is developing a new tool to do just that.

Cornucopia’s detailed report, slated for release this spring, will discuss specific ingredients to avoid - such as carrageenan - and will include a web-based buyer’s guide to help consumers make educated decisions when buying dental hygiene products.

Toothpastes are divided into two broad categories. One includes mass market brands, such as Crest®, Colgate®, Arm & Hammer®, Aquafresh®, Ultra Brite®, Sensodyne®, etc. The second contains the premium toothpastes, including those marketed as “natural.”

The use of “natural” ingredients in a toothpaste product does not necessarily imply that the highest-quality and healthiest ingredients were used across the entire brand, nor does it ensure the product is free from



DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

unnecessary or potentially dangerous additives. However, some excellent options exist that use organic ingredients and shun synthetic additives.

When it comes to choosing among the many natural toothpastes available, it is a challenge to wade through the list of difficult-to-pronounce ingredients and exaggerated health claims made by the industry.

A number of “Natural” toothpaste manufacturers use the same synthetic ingredients (usually petrochemicals) that are commonly used in mass-marketed toothpastes. These may include: sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS), sodium laureth sulfate (SLES), triclosan, formaldehyde-releasing preservatives, natural flavors, carrageenan, and fluoride, among others.

Toothpastes are considered

In the U.S. The FDA restricts or prohibits only 11 ingredients for use in cosmetics. While the European Union, comparatively, prohibits over 1,300, and restricts more than 250, ingredients in the same products.

cosmetics and, as such, are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA).

The cosmetics title of the FFDCA, which has not been amended significantly since it was enacted more than 75 years ago, provides virtually no power to perform even

TOOTHPASTE continued on page 8

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Organic Transparency - Commentary 2
- Watch Your Language! 4
- Organic Consumers Can Sue 5
- Inside the NOSB - Bondera Speaks 6
- Cornucopia Petitions NOSB 9
- Staff, Board, & Advisory Panel Changes . . 10
- Farmer Profile: Saddleback Orchard 11

Why Should Organics Be Different?

USDA Secrecy and Corporate Agribusiness Blowback

When Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, it created a unique public-private partnership of governance. It vested statutory power in the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The organic community originally lobbied Congress to create the NOSB to insulate organic regulatory oversight from the improper influence of corporate agribusiness/biotechnology lobbyists.

As Cornucopia members and engaged organic stakeholders know, the spirit and letter of the law have been grossly disrespected by current and previous administrations at the USDA.

Freedom of Information Act

They say that, “Sunshine is the best disinfectant.” In addition to the USDA monkey-wrenching the rulemaking process by delaying the

implementation of standards, until 2002, it has subsequently assisted Big Food by doing a yeoman’s job of maintaining a high degree of secrecy, in spite of their crowing about “transparency.”

In response to a pattern of withholding documents requested through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), The Cornucopia Institute has filed a series of lawsuits that would help us gauge the performance of the National Organic Program.

It’s not that we don’t receive any documents from the USDA through FOIA. Rather, it’s that they are violating the law in terms of timeliness and withholding documents that, we believe, they are not entitled to suppress (e.g. criterion allow withholding for personal material regarding employees, confidential business practices, or matters concerning internal deliberations).

The Cornucopia Institute has long been critical of the NOP’s penchant for secrecy.

In response to one FOIA request (we will be appealing improper withholding of documents), we sought details to investigate how some of the rules governing the NOSB meetings were changed without consulting the board or informing the public.

The Most Secret Administration in History?

Upon taking office, President Obama proclaimed, “A new era of openness.” However, the AP found that, under Obama, 17 major agencies were 50 percent more likely to deny FOIA requests than under Bush.

Not only has the USDA failed to produce documents, they are

Continued on page 3

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Helen Kees, President

Organic Livestock
Producer
Durand, WI

Kevin Engelbert, Vice President

Organic Dairy Producer
Former NOSB Member
Nichols, NY

Barry Flamm, PhD, Secretary

Conservation Consultant
Former NOSB Member
Polson, MT

William Heart

Wildlife Conservationist
Ashland, WI

Goldie Caughlan

PCC Natural Markets (ret.)
Cooperative Retail Educator
Former NOSB Member
Seattle, WA

Dave Minar

Organic Dairy Producer
New Prague, MN

Mitch Blumenthal, Interim Treasurer

Organic Distributor
Sarasota, FL

POLICY ADVISORY PANEL

Michael James

Community Leader
Organic Restaurateur
Chicago, IL

Amanda Love

Natural Foods Chef
Nutrition Educator
Austin, TX

Tony Azevedo

Organic Dairy Producer (ret.)
San Joaquin Valley, CA

Tom Willey

Organic Vegetable Grower
Madera, CA

Jim Gerritsen

Organic Potato Grower
President, OSGATA
Bridgewater, ME

Cameron Molberg

Organic Livestock Producer
and Feed Mill Manager
Austin, TX

Steve Sprinkel

Organic Vegetable Producer
Organic Restaurateur
Ojai, CA

Jim Crawford

Organic Vegetable Producer
Wholesale Marketing
Cooperative Founder
Hustontown, PA

CONTACT US

P.O. Box 126
Cornucopia, WI 54827
www.cornucopia.org
608-625-2000
cultivate@cornucopia.org

STAFF

Mark Kastel, Codirector & Senior Farm Policy Analyst

Will Fantle, Codirector & Director of Research

Linley Dixon, PhD, Farm and Food Policy Analyst

Jérôme Rigot, PhD, Farm and Food Policy Analyst

Marie Burcham, JD, Farm and Food Policy Analyst

Gayle Nielsen, Membership Coordinator

Therese Laurdan, Membership Assistant

Rachel Zegerius, Communications &
Development Associate

Melody Morrell, Data Analyst and Research Specialist

Jason Cole, Research Associate

Zuri Allen, Social Media Specialist

Celeste Gibson, Accountant, HR Manager

Jeremy Vossman, Webmaster

THE CULTIVATOR

Rachel Zegerius, Editor

*Thanks to Melody Morrell for proofreading and
Tim Hill for design assistance.*

systematically withholding specifics about enforcement actions. Cloaked in secrecy, how do enforcement actions act as a deterrent if they aren't publicized?

If corporations are caught "willfully" violating the law, they should be vigorously prosecuted, fined, and/or banned from organic commerce.

Secret Scientists

What else is secret at the NOP? Since it is not a scientific body, but rather a diverse set of organic stakeholders, Congress gave the NOSB the ability to hire independent scientists to advise them. This law has been historically violated. The USDA, rather than the NOSB members, has selected the scientists.

When Cornucopia wrote the Organic Watergate Report, we found that the USDA was contracting with agribusiness executives and consultants. Whoa Nelly! Is it any surprise that the scientists were looking the other way when dangerous ingredients like carrageenan, a very cost-effective processing material for agribusiness, were reviewed for inclusion in organic foods?

How did the NOP solve this flagrant conflict of interest? They decided to make the identities of all the scientists preparing Technical Reviews for the NOSB secret! Not only does the public not know who they are, the NOSB members themselves don't know.

Corporate Lobbyist Crybabies

Corporate interests, including some NOSB members, have accused the Cornucopia Institute of bullying and intimidation. How are we doing that? We have the audacity to publicly tell the truth.

One partial FOIA response contained the copy of an email from the chief lobbyist of Hain Celestial, one of the largest public corporations controlling organic brands (Westbrae®, WestSoy®, Earth's Best®, Arrowhead Mills®, Spectrum Naturals®, Imagine Foods™, Rice Dream®, JASON®, Avalon Organics®, etc.).

In the email, Zareb Herman, Regulatory Affairs Director at Hain, said, "... Cornucopia took a photo of her [their corporate representative testifying at a NOSB meeting] and put it up on their website. They attacked our company on their website and on Facebook and twitter."

Attacked? First, we accurately reported that Hain Celestial had sided with the USDA's stripping the NOSB of part of its ability to remove synthetic materials from the National List of approved substances at Sunset. Next, we challenged their representative's mischaracterization of Hain Celestial as a modest organic business (Hain Celestial is currently worth \$3.57 billion).

Major corporations and the USDA, in gutting the strict provisions of organic governance and opening the



floodgates in the organic industry to production by giant factory farms and imports from countries like China, don't like being called out publicly on the duplicity that is undermining the organic label.

Advocating Secrecy Instead of Oversight

The FOIA response included a memo from Dr. Jean Richardson, former NOSB chair, to Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program.

Richardson wrote to McEvoy, inquiring: "I would like to consider using simple hand voting in October. Why do we do roll call? Are we required to have a record by individual name? Any legal reason not to do hand vote and just totals? Cornucopia won't be able to rate our voting record!"

To separate the hyperbole from actual voting records, Cornucopia has published a scorecard, rating each NOSB member's voting record (and their corporate affiliations). Employees of companies like Whole Foods, Driscoll's, and WhiteWave (Horizon® and Earthbound®) have abysmal scores when compared to policy recommendations of The Cornucopia Institute (and the majority of other nonprofits).

Richardson didn't criticize the accuracy of our scorecard. She only tried to shield the corporate NOSB members, and others with low voting records, from public scrutiny.

Congress designed the NOSB to actually appoint and oversee the staff director at the NOP, not conspire to impede the ability of civil society groups to watchdog the job the USDA is doing protecting the public and the integrity of the organic label.

As Harry Truman once said, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." Maybe I will say, in 2016, if the disinfecting rays of sunshine are too scorching for comfort, you are involved in the wrong industry. Because, as organic farmers, ethical business people, and consumers, we consider this to be a values-based industry, of which transparency is one of the foundational precepts.

- MARK KASTEL

Watch Your Language!

Good Food Words Coopted by Big Ag

BY MELODY MORRELL

Words rise up to describe the work of a farmer caring for her land, her herd, her community. These words multiply, interbreed, compete, and converge: the ecology of language.

Just as a word becomes recognizable to consumers, it's often quickly snatched up by corporations and rendered meaningless. The word "green", which arose in response to toxic chemicals and environmental degradation, was co-opted by Big Business and is now most often used as part of the phrase "green-washing."

"Sustainable" has likewise been absorbed. Oxymoronicly, even Monsanto has entered the conversation. Monsanto claims:

"Our vision for sustainable agriculture strives to meet the needs of a growing population, to protect and preserve this planet we all call home, and to help improve lives everywhere. In 2008 Monsanto made a commitment to sustainable agriculture - pledging to produce more, conserve more, and improve farmers' lives by 2030."

Terms like "natural" and "farm fresh" lack an agreed-upon definition and intentionally plaster food packaging with meaningless innuendo. Consumers without degrees in biology and chemistry are, many times, left struggling to understand what has been added to their meals.

A small number of claims on food packaging have an agreed-upon, sometimes legally restricted, definition, including organic, free-range, grass-fed, cage-free, pasture-raised, non-GMO, Certified Humane, Animal Welfare Approved, and American Humane Certified.

Just as a word becomes recognizable to consumers, it's often quickly snatched up by corporations and rendered meaningless.

Those definitions are critical.

"Free-range," for example, only means that the chicken had access to the outdoors, perhaps referring to one chicken-sized door in a barn housing 20,000 birds. Given airflow in large barns, that door may be sucking air in at a hurricane-like velocity, so that a chicken would never be willing to pass through it. But, in theory, those chickens could choose to go outside.

Cornucopia advocates for independent and transparent audits by third parties. Consumers should still be aware of precisely what has been investigated and what production methods are used.

Certified Humane and American Humane Certified labels offer no

assurance of outdoor access for chickens. Similarly, the USDA grass-fed label now means only that cattle have access to pasture during the growing season (they could still be administered antibiotics, growth hormones, and feed other than grass).

The American Grassfed Association label offers a higher level of assurance that animals are raised on pasture without growth hormones or antibiotics.

Cornucopia stands behind organics, advocating for those who believe in the spirit of organics to take back our movement from those who use its rhetoric to increase "organic" agribusiness-as-usual.

Although the standards have been weakened or circumvented, in some cases, by corporations, there are clear guidelines written into law to ensure that consumers are getting what they pay for.

Visit www.cornucopia.org for scorecards and news on how to find food worthy of your family's table.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEXANDER ECO-DAIRY

Citizens Can Sue for Mislabeling

Precedent Set for New Organic Enforcement Pathway

BY JASON COLE

Late last year, the California Supreme Court found that citizens have the right to sue food marketers for mislabeling their products as “organic.” The ruling allows for a new pathway to enforce federal organic regulations in California, a job that was heretofore the province of the USDA, and specifically the National Organic Program (NOP).

Previously, consumers could only file a complaint with the USDA and wait for a response. Because the NOP does not make its enforcement actions public, The Cornucopia Institute had to file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to determine the scope of the NOP’s activities in this area. The results showed very limited enforcement actions.

For a period of two years (2012—2014), the NOP only levied 28 fines averaging \$7,000 each (that, in a \$39 billion industry). Most of these actions were taken against producers selling organic products without a certificate, or with a suspended or revoked certificate. None of them appeared to be based on improprieties discovered by certifiers.

The Cornucopia Institute has long been critical of the NOP’s handling of fraud allegations. In October of 2008, Cornucopia submitted a complaint against Shamrock Farms, an industrial-scale “organic” dairy located in Arizona. The NOP took over three years to conduct an investigation and propose a

DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB



suspension. It then took another three years to rule on Shamrock’s appeal of that action. Their products are still being sold as “organic.”

In a similar case, Cornucopia submitted a complaint against another industrial dairy that received organic certification, Aurora Dairy of Colorado (private label milk for Walmart, Costco, Target, and others).

Aurora ultimately paid around \$8 million in a settlement in a consumer lawsuit, but the USDA did not levy one cent in terms of a fine. Based on the new CA Supreme Court ruling, giving citizens more power to bring scofflaws to justice, fines could have been more significant.

More recently, complaints submitted by Cornucopia in 2015 against 14 industrial organic farm operations and their certifiers for failing to grant meaningful outdoor access to cows and chickens – complaints accompanied by photographic evidence – were initially rejected without so much as an investigation by the USDA.

Thanks to the California Supreme Court there is now reason to hope for a new chapter of organic enforcement – one led by citizens instead of the USDA.

NOSB 2016 APPOINTEES

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack recently appointed six new members to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). Terms for the following individuals, filling positions designated by Congress in the Organic Foods Production Act, began on January 24, 2016:

Harriet Behar - *Expert in Environmental Protection and Resource Conservation*
Harriet has served the organic industry for 27 years.

Jesse Buie - *Organic Farmer*
President/Farmer of Ole Brook Organics, Inc. and President and CEO of Total Care Solutions.

Emily Oakley - *Organic Farmer*
Co-owner of 20-acre, organic Three Springs Farm in Oaks, Oklahoma.

Scott Rice - *Certifying Agent*
WA State Dept. of Agriculture’s Organic Program, Organic Accreditation and Quality Manager.

Vena A-Dae Romero-Briones - *Public/Consumer Interest*
Food & Agricultural Consultant for the First Nations Development Institute and Executive Director of Cochiti Youth Experience.

Daniel Seitz, J.D. - *Public/Consumer Interest*
Executive Director for the Council of Naturopathic Medical Education and non-profit consultant. Member of the Board of Directors at Berkshire Co-op Market.



A Changing NOSB

Will the Voice of the 'Minority' Small-Scale Farmer Persist?

BY LINLEY DIXON, PHD

At the beginning of 2016, five members completed their 5-year terms on the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), a 15-member board created by Congress to make recommendations on policies that regulate organic food.

The five are Colehour Bondera and Nick Maravell (farmer seats), Calvin Walker and Jennifer Taylor (consumer seats), and Mac Stone (certifier seat). Six new NOSB members have recently been appointed by Secretary Vilsack to replace them and Paula Daniels, who resigned eight months into her term (See page 5). No doubt, this many new faces on the NOSB, all at once, will bring change to the organic community.

At the end of his last NOSB meeting, Colehour Bondera confessed to me his gravest concern for the future of organics. As one of the few small farmers in the history of the NOSB making a living entirely from his farm, he did not see how others like him would be able to accomplish what he had just done—serve as a volunteer, without pay, for five years on the board with its very ambitious work load. “I’m here to not make money as a farmer,” he said. “How will the perspectives of the small-scale, hands-on farmers be heard under the defaulting concept of ‘bigger is better’ that dominates at the meetings?”

Having had the opportunity to watch Bondera skillfully and passionately voice minority opinions at the NOSB meetings over the last few years, these are legitimate concerns. Who will fill the shoes that he so graciously put on when Jay Feldman, Executive Director of Beyond Pesticides, retired? Who will be the courageous voice that



Colehour Bondera turning organic matter on his small, diverse organic coffee farm in Honaunau, Hawaii.

questions authority and errs on the side of precaution when it comes to votes on synthetic materials?

While on the board, Bondera tried to keep the bigger picture in mind by always remembering that corporate control is not what the Organic Foods Production Act is about, and that economic interests must be contained. He believed that, ultimately, organics should not continue to be dependent on synthetics and other non-organic inputs and ingredients. “The law was written so that synthetics should only be permitted as temporary ‘bandaids’, which are required to be Sunset as quickly as possible through a healthy whole-system approach to organic integrity,” he said. “And though the growth of organics is vital, the growth has to be healthy.”

Exposure to a broad range of perspectives in his life has helped Colehour achieve this wisdom and to swim upstream in the face of many obstacles. As the International

Projects Manager with the Rodale Institute, Bondera traveled to Argentina with Jeff Moyer, a former NOSB member who now directs the Rodale Institute. He also credits Liana Hoodes (National Organic Coalition), Mark Kastel (Cornucopia), Lisa Bunin (Center for Food Safety), Terry Shistar (Beyond Pesticides), and Urvashi Rangan (Consumers Union) for shaping his thinking.

Bondera grew up with ten siblings on a farm in Oregon, milking cows. Having eight sisters taught him to understand and respect the minority opinion. “The farm that I grew up on was not organic; we were organic only because we couldn’t afford pesticides,” said Bondera.

“Making a living farming isn’t easy on its own, and organic farming can be even harder,” he added. “Many small producers have difficulty even pursuing organic certification. Small-scale farms have to work together against the onslaught by corporate agribusinesses to eliminate the small family farm and the growing of healthy food.”

While on the NOSB, Bondera often worked with the other retiring members, especially Jennifer Taylor, Nick Maravall, and Calvin Walker, to acknowledge consumer preferences and give voice to the minority opinion.

“The NOSB is a public advisory group and it’s the public input that I wanted to represent. This isn’t about

Continued on page 7

Cornucopia supporters have a chance to meet our board and staff on March 19 in Beloit, WI. For more information, visit: tinyurl.com/CornucopiaEvent2016



a single company or one person, it's about representing the bigger picture," Bondera said.

He continued, "I'm not striking out to make friends or allies to get things done. Instead, I'm looking for other perspectives outside of my tunnel as a producer. I'm not an employee of the USDA, private company, or a nonprofit organization. I'm an actual farmer who wants us all to work together and look at the bigger picture: that organics should not be controlled by corporate interests. I learned pretty quickly to not waste time focusing on single opinions or single materials, but rather to work together with one another to seek positive improvements to the process. Because, without a healthy process, organics will not be healthy."

At his last NOSB meeting, Bondera took a strong stand against the relisting of several synthetic or non-organic materials, and against fundamental changes to the Sunset process as well. One material that he was particularly vocal about not relisting was ethylene, despite multiple testimonies from corporate-affiliated Costa Rican pineapple growers defending its continued use as a ripening agent.

"I know these farmers who depend on ethylene for a living are here in this room listening to me object to this material," Bondera stated at the meeting, "but don't forget this is monoculture farming that we are allowing to be organic."

"Day-to-day choices as an organic farmer," says Bondera, "are about looking at the environmental impact of those choices and paying attention to consumers and how they're making decisions. It was really Barry Flamm that helped me understand that the environmental component was so critical, that we are looking to a higher goal and a broader picture to uphold OFPA and to carry out our responsibilities." Dr. Flamm, now a member of The Cornucopia

"Making a living farming isn't easy," says retired NOSB member Colehour Bondera. "Small-scale farmers have to work together against the onslaught by corporate agribusiness to eliminate the small family farm and the growing of healthy food."

Institute Board of Directors, had held the conservationist seat as a member of the NOSB.

"As an undergraduate student in the 1980s," said Bondera, "I studied the lists of inert ingredients permitted by the EPA to be used in pesticide formulations. So, I came into organics with the understanding that there should not be unknowns in formulations but, rather, that we should look at the whole, which is what organics means!"

Other impressive accomplishments in his tenure on the NOSB, along with his allies, include the coauthoring of the "minority report" for animal welfare with departing NOSB members Walker and Maravell, which was passed by the NOSB in 2012, resulting in specifying a minimum square footage and vegetation cover for birds.

Bondera, Walker, and Maravell also cooperated in 2015 to pass a resolution to "phase out synthetic methionine" and find ways to come up with alternatives (methionine is a feed additive for poultry which can also be obtained from foraging pastures). The full 15-to-0 board vote in support of their resolution came after a vote allowing the continued use of synthetic methionine, which many in the organic community felt was not in line with previous NOSB decisions.

Incoming NOSB chair and chair of the livestock subcommittee, Tracy Favre (who sits on the NOSB in an environmentalist seat), prevented

Walker from presenting his well-researched minority opinion on the use of synthetic methionine prior to the board's vote.

When asked about this particular incident, former board member Walker stated, "Preventing Colehour and I from expressing the 'minority position,' despite the public written comment favoring our stance, was not surprising, but yet still unjust, albeit politically normal. The diversity of views need to be expressed and vetted."

Bondera's one wish for the NOSB is to have a staff scientist or a staff lawyer as an executive director to operate as the spokesperson and liaison between the NOSB and NOP for enhanced effectiveness and functionality. "I would feel very differently if the NOP hadn't changed the structure of the Sunset voting in 2013," said Bondera. "The fact that the voting has been flipped around from the way it was has really left me sad. I watched quite a number of items remain on the List that would have been removed in the previous system."

The result of the USDA's unilateral change in voting methods for synthetic materials, which Congress intended to Sunset every five years, means that they stay on the List of approved substances, in perpetuity, unless a super majority of the NOSB votes to remove them. A number of organic stakeholder groups, including Cornucopia, are currently suing the agency in federal court to overturn what has been described as a "power grab", favoring corporate agribusiness interests.

The retirement of Bondera, Walker, Maravell, and Taylor has left many in the organic community hoping that the newly appointed NOSB members will step up to speak for the "minority opinion" as the outgoing members have done in the past in an effort to seek continuous improvements to the organic standards.

the most rudimentary functions to ensure the safety of the estimated \$71 billion cosmetic industry.

The FDA lacks authority to make sure cosmetic products and ingredients are safe; thus, regulatory weakness and loopholes allow for the use of questionable ingredients in personal care products that could negatively impact the health of users.

In fact, according to the FDA, "Cosmetics products and ingredients do not need FDA approval before they go on the market. The one exception is color additives, which must be approved for their intended use."

The FDA restricts or prohibits only 11 ingredients for use in cosmetics. In stark contrast, the European Union prohibits over 1,300 and restricts more than 250.

In effect, cosmetics are regulated by the free market. If enough concerns are expressed by consumers, accompanied by decreased sales and, perhaps, the initiation of legal actions, a company may move to modify or remove an ingredient from its products.

The mouth membrane, or mucosa, is extremely effective at absorbing chemicals, allowing direct access to the bloodstream and making it extremely important to eliminate harmful chemicals from our toothpastes.

Though most such problematic ingredients are found only in small quantities in toothpastes, consider the following:

- *The mouth mucosa is extremely effective at absorbing chemicals; that is why some medications are administered sublingually (under the tongue), where they directly enter the blood, by-passing the gastro-intestinal tract and initial liver metabolism.*
- *We are continuously exposed to a mixture of potentially toxic chemicals everyday via the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the*



DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

food we eat. Do we really want to add to our overall exposure by using toothpastes that contain potentially dangerous chemicals?

- *Many of these compounds have not been thoroughly tested, or have only been tested individually. Synergistically, these compounds may be more toxic than they are individually.*

Keep an eye on Cornucopia's website (cornucopia.org) for the release of this important tool designed to help you decode your toothpaste and make the most informed decisions about your daily brushing routine.

Why Would a Farm Policy Group Research Toothpaste?

At The Cornucopia Institute, we work at the unique intersection of the environment, humane animal husbandry, economic justice for our country's best farmers, and human health.

Every five years, as mandated by Congress, the National Organic Standards Board reviews every synthetic/non-organic material approved for use in organics. Five years ago, when carrageenan was up for review, we published a report, based on the preponderance of independent, peer-reviewed scientific studies, indicating this seaweed-based material is a potent inflammatory agent and is associated with cancer. Corporate interests on the NOSB didn't take the concerns seriously.

Many food producers, pet food manufacturers, and now even toothpaste brands have since removed carrageenan from their formulations due to the increased public awareness fostered by Cornucopia. It's embarrassing that companies are more proactive than

organic policymakers. Carrageenan returns to the NOSB agenda to review this spring.

In addition to carrageenan, many toothpastes – even "natural" brands – may contain toxic chemicals, carcinogens, and endocrine disruptors, including the antimicrobial triclosan.

Some of the very best brands not only exclude these problematic materials, but also use certified organic agricultural ingredients, like coconut oil, to make their products.

Anything you put on your body, any fragrances you breathe in, and any cleaning materials you bring into your home are going to end up in your bloodstream. Don't undermine the good you are doing for yourself and your family, in terms of eating an organic diet, by dosing yourself with toxic chemicals if you can avoid them. The best toothpastes will clean your teeth, keep your breath fresh, and will not poison you.

- MARK KASTEL

Cornucopia Petitions NOP

Amending the National List to Improve Organics

BY LINLEY DIXON, PHD

The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (commonly known as the National List) is composed of synthetic and non-organic substances that have been reviewed and approved for use in organic crop and livestock production. It includes natural substances that are prohibited, as well as non-organic (conventionally farmed) substances that may be used in processed organic products.

The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) allows any individual or organization to submit a petition to add, remove, or amend the listing of a substance on the National List.

This means you, as a farmer and/or consumer, can improve the organic standards by petitioning to amend the National List, and we may be able to help you succeed. The Cornucopia Institute regularly reviews materials on the National List, and provides detailed comments for the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) on the latest research into the safety and essentiality of materials.

This spring, among our many detailed comments on existing materials, we are petitioning for the addition of phosphorous acid to the National List for the control of oomycete (water mold) diseases, such as late blight of potato and tomato.

Phosphorous acid would be used as an effective alternative to copper-based disease control in an effort to reduce the dependence on multiple copper applications throughout a growing season and the build up of heavy metals in the soil.

Our goal is to push the NOSB, and the National List, towards the least-toxic alternatives for pest control.

We are also petitioning for the

Cornucopia's goal is to push the NOSB, and the National List, towards inclusion of the least-toxic alternatives. These efforts are vital to the health and integrity of the organic industry.



addition of natural tocopherols (Vitamin E), fat-soluble antioxidants that are added to products as preservatives. The natural tocopherols would be used in place of synthetic tocopherols (currently on the National List).

The petition specifies that the natural tocopherols must be derived from vegetable oil or other non-synthetic sources and must not be produced using synthetic solvents, or derived from genetically engineered crops. Any natural tocopherols derived from conventionally farmed sources can be used only when the product is not commercially available in organic form.

Our ultimate goal is to remove synthetic tocopherols from the National List and, in the meantime, create demand for organically produced ingredients by requiring that they be used first.

Cornucopia, in collaboration with researchers at the University of Illinois, will also provide comments recommending Sunset (removal) of the food-additive carrageenan. We

are presenting new evidence for the mechanism by which food-grade carrageenan causes inflammation and potentially cancer, and demonstrating its non-essentiality (many companies have already voluntarily removed it from their organic products).

These efforts to continuously improve the organic standards are vital to the health and integrity of the organic industry. After acceptance of a petition by the National Organic Program (NOP), the material is reviewed by the appropriate NOSB sub-committee (crops, livestock, or handling) for its essentiality in organics and its effects on human health and the environment. Petitions are then posted on the NOP website for public viewing.

After considering any additional information, and potentially receiving a Technical Report, the sub-committee then publishes a proposal that outlines their recommended response to the petition. Public comments (both written and in-person) are then presented to the NOSB, prior to their discussion and vote on the petition at the NOSB meeting. After the meeting the NOSB finalizes its recommendation to reflect the final vote and submits it to the USDA's National Organic Program, which initiates federal rulemaking.

As a farmer or researcher, do you have evidence that a material should or should not be on the National List? If so, we can potentially collaborate on a petition to amend the National List and help strengthen organic standards.

Cornucopia's formal comments to the NOSB and summaries of public comments at meetings are available at cornucopia.org under the "Projects" tab.



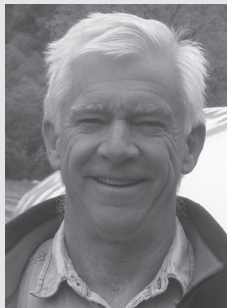
The Only Constant

Board, Staff, and Policy Advisor Changes at The Cornucopia Institute

NEW ADVISORS

Jim Crawford and Moie

Kimball Crawford own and operate New Morning Farm, a 95-acre certified organic vegetable farm in South Central Pennsylvania. The Crawfords have farmed organically for over 40 years, and have built a multi-faceted, successful direct marketing system.



In the late 1980s, the Crawfords and neighboring organic farmers founded a wholesale marketing cooperative, Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative (TOG). TOG coordinates organic farms and growers in central Pennsylvania to serve restaurants, groceries, and markets throughout the state and Washington, DC region.

The Crawfords and the Tuscarora co-op have both been longtime members of Cornucopia, and Jim has recently been working quite closely with Mark Kastel and Tom Willey on the labeling controversy at Whole Foods Market.

Jim believes, "Cornucopia is our last, best hope for saving the organic label and concept from the big-food-greed-machine." Favorites: Vegetable - kohlrabi; Book - Anything by William James; Film - Oh Brother Where Art Thou.

Steve Sprinkel returns to Cornucopia on the Advisory Board. Steve has been an adherent of organic farming since the 1960s. Using his 12-acre (CCOF certified) farm in Ojai, CA, Steve trains farmers and educates consumers. Steve is the former president of the Cornucopia Board of Directors and is currently the president of the Ojai Center for Regenerative Agriculture. After attending Harvard for one year, he earned a degree in Literature from The University of California at Santa Barbara.

Steve has been active in organic certification and public interest policy in Carpinteria at CCOF, as a Santa Barbara farmers market officer, board member at the Texas Department of Agriculture, founder of the Organic Farmers Marketing Association, Associate Editor at ACRES, USA (1998-2007), organic administrator and inspector for many private organizations in the Midwest, and even an FDA delegate to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization! Favorites: Vegetable - Cucumber; Book - *All Quiet on the Western Front*; Film - *Dr. Strangelove*

Roger Featherstone has retired from Cornucopia's Board of Directors. Roger was one of the original board members of Cornucopia, joining the organization's leadership in 2004. He grew up on a small family dairy farm in southern Wisconsin that has been continuously operated by his family since 1847. Despite his Wisconsin roots, Roger has been living and working in the Southwestern U.S. for most of the past three decades, with a current long-term residence in Tucson, AZ.

His rural background has been a decided advantage in helping him relate to, and successfully work with, many rural constituencies in his political activism and professional activities. His passion has been protecting wildlife and wildlands for future generations. It's that passion and rural perspective that he brought to Cornucopia's board, where he also served as the board's treasurer for eleven years.

We wish Roger well in his future activities and personal endeavors including, hopefully, more white-water adventures. We are grateful for the early and ongoing oversight he provided that helped lay a solid foundation for the success of The Cornucopia Institute.

Elizabeth Wolf has left as Cornucopia's Development and Communications Director. Elizabeth joined Cornucopia in early 2011. Her strong professional background in publishing and editing helped greatly improve the public presentation and quality of Cornucopia's body of work, including printed reports and materials, news releases, and electronic communications.

Elizabeth's other prime responsibility was the managing of our grant and foundation work, and she was intimately involved with the execution of all other aspects of the Cornucopia's fundraising. She leaves with the organization on secure financial footing. Cornucopia's virtually based office model facilitated Elizabeth's work from her home in Lincoln, NB, where she was also able to interface with Nebraskans involved in organic and sustainable agriculture.

She and her husband Steven McFadden are moving back to New Mexico, the state where they initially met. Elizabeth has taken a position as the Chief Development Officer for Animal Protection of New Mexico, a statewide nonprofit organization. We wish her well.



A Complex Nut to Crack

BY RACHEL ZEGERIUS

“Resilience,” says unlikely farmer Bill Barrackman of his 26-year journey growing pistachios, “is one of the most important parts of farming.” He continues, “Sometimes you think you’ve done everything right, and the market doesn’t respond.” It’s those times, he says, that call on a farmer’s ability to adapt and keep the faith.

“Every process is a challenge, a learning opportunity,” says Barrackman. And, farming in Amargosa Valley, Nevada certainly presents its own unique set of provocations. Water rights issues, alkaline soils, and the absence of a private organic certification company in the state, as the Nevada Dept. of Agriculture plans to end its program in June of 2016, are just a few.

“It requires systems thinking, really,” observes Barrackman. Understanding how the parts of a whole influence one another means seeing the entire orchard, and associated operations, as one organism. Seemingly skilled at applying this holistic approach, he likens this characteristic of his job as an organic pistachio farmer with his previous career as a systems analyst and programmer.

Bill Barrackman and his wife Rita came to organic farming almost by accident. In search of a piece of land 100 miles outside of Las Vegas as a place to build a garage in which to upgrade an antique automobile, they instead decided to invest in an

DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB



ailing pistachio orchard.

Since purchasing the 37-acre property in 1990, they have planted 5,000 trees, installed a completely new irrigation system, and obtained organic certification (1996), a process which took 3 years. And, like most crops, growing pistachios organically is no easy task.

He has learned that “You have to think ahead and consider variables beyond your control.” Organic agriculture, he finds, often requires deep learning and high-level thinking.

The process of observation, diagnosis, action, and evaluation is applied on so many levels by farmers today. “It’s kind of like playing chess,” Barrackman notes. “You have to think 3-4 moves ahead during any decision-making process. Farming is a lot like that.”

For example, he mentions “We had no intention of building our own processing facility.” But, in 2000, when he ran into timing and batch restrictions imposed by his processor, the Nevada grower found himself hands-on designing and engineering equipment for the construction of their own processing plant.

And, it’s not only production concerns that farmers have to watch. They need to stay attuned to weather

variability, erratic pollination, insect damage, economic flux, and assorted marketing pressures.

“Marketing is a big part of the success of any operation,” says Barrackman. The initial impulse of an organic farmer to sell their product to a large retailer, even a health food store chain, may not always work.

“The prices these stores are willing to pay keep getting pushed down to the point where you, as a farmer, are barely making enough money to sustain your operation,” he explains. “Then, the retailer inflates the price and makes the majority of the profit.”

Today, the Barrackmans direct market pistachios through their website at organicpistachios.com. But, he notes, most of their pistachios are ultimately sold directly to distributors, typically between 30,000 and 35,000 pounds annually.

Last year, however, Saddleback Orchard’s production fell to only 10,000 pounds. It was not a good crop year for many pistachio farmers throughout California and Nevada. While pistachios thrive in dry climates, early spring weather patterns may have had an impact.

Finding ways to predict and plan for the impacts brought by our changing climate is another challenge suited for systems thinking. How do we view a complex network of inter-related activities, where the whole is not equal to the sum of its parts?

Many anti-reductionists see agriculture sitting at the intersection of natural and social systems - applied ecology meets agrarian society.

When asked if he’d do it all over again, Barrackman repeats the question. “No,” he says with an enlightened laugh, and adds with amusement, “If I would’ve invested a fraction of the money I invested into the orchard into private golf lessons, I’d be on the Senior PGA Tour right now.”



Saddleback Orchard
Amargosa Valley, Nevada
www.organicpistachios.com
(775) 372-5259





C O R N U C O P I A
I N S T I T U T E

Don't Frack with Organics



DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

Responding to concerns
Cornucopia raised about using treated frack water for irrigation of organic crops, Miles McEvoy asserts the National Organic Program is "not aware" of fracking wastewater being used on organic farms. Yet, reports from thirsty California indicate that treated "produced water", wastewater from oil and gas exploration, is being used to irrigate crops, including organic. Research reveals that toxic chemicals, heavy metals, and radioactive materials are among substances found in treated wastewater, whether frack water or produced water. Visit "Action Alerts" at cornucopia.org to sign a petition to ban this practice.

P.O. Box 126
Cornucopia, WI 54827

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 322

Address Return Service Requested

GMO Alfalfa Spreading Wildly



DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB

Cornucopia, and other opponents of the USDA's controversial deregulation of GMO alfalfa, predicted that there would be no "coexistence" in the real world with Monsanto's new crop. Now a new, disturbing USDA report indicates that the GMO version has truly gone wild —

with more than a quarter of sites tested in western states showing transgenetic contamination. The perennial plant has a pollination radius of up to five miles.

Dubbed the "queen of legumes," alfalfa is grown on over 21 million acres in the US and is worth \$8 billion per year. It's the country's third most valuable, and fourth most widely grown, crop. Primarily used as feed and forage for dairy cows and beef cattle, alfalfa also greatly contributes to pork, lamb, sheep, and honey production and is used for sprouts in salads and other foods.

The USDA revelation is particularly bitter for organic producers. Beef farmer and Cornucopia member Jim Munsch says he intimately understands "the basic biology of the alfalfa plant and how seed is produced in North America." Munsch was Cornucopia's farmer expert in the lawsuit against Monsanto's GMO alfalfa. "I predicted this, and predicted that it would be irreversible," said Munsch. "Monsanto and its collaborators knew exactly how it would play out...a strategy to monopolize all alfalfa seed production and sales."

If there's an answer, Munsch thinks organic farmers may have to import (genetically uncontaminated) alfalfa seed from a country where GMOs are totally outlawed. "Of course this will add cost," he says. Adds Munsch, "This is the price we farmers pay when an input supplier is allowed by the USDA and other government agencies to assume a monopoly position on a product."

- WILL FANTLE