

# THE CULTIVATOR

News From The Cornucopia Ins

April 2011

## Cornucopia Challenging Approval of GE Alfalfa

On January 27, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the complete deregulation of Monsanto's controversial genetically engineered (GE) [Roundup Ready Alfalfa](#). Although more than 200,000 public comments were received by the USDA and the White House opposing deregulation of GE alfalfa, Vilsack and the White House wilted in the face of the raw political power of the biotech industry.

The Cornucopia Institute is going into federal court to block the action. Lawyers from

the Center for Food Safety are spearheading the lawsuit, which was filed on March 18. Other plaintiffs that are part of the lawsuit include independent alfalfa seed farmers, the California Farmers Union, and organizations such as Beyond Pesticides and the Sierra Club.

Nearly 20 million acres of land across the U.S. are in alfalfa production, making it the fourth most widely grown crop. It is a fundamental protein source for foraging livestock. Alfalfa is also a perennial, meaning that the GE alfalfa's seeds are subject to transport by animals, water, farm equipment, hay bales or other mechanisms and will spring to life in their new environments. Designed to be resistant to Roundup herbicide, GE alfalfa will be much more difficult to eradicate. And with a pollination radius of approximately five miles, bees and other insects will likely carry Monsanto's patented DNA past fence rows and onto neighboring fields, contaminating crops raised for forage and seed.

Jim Munsch, a Cornucopia member and organic beef producer from Coon Valley, Wisconsin,



Image courtesy of JoeMohrToons

says: "We rely on alfalfa in pasture mix and for winter feed. GE alfalfa means contamination of all alfalfa seeds within a few years. When that happens we will no longer be able to get North American produced alfalfa seed. Our options include giving up organic production at great revenue loss or finding another forage at great cost increase."

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## FDA to Investigate Infant Formula Health Claims

The FDA announced on March 3 that it plans to conduct a study assessing the effects of certain health claims by infant formula makers on mothers' feeding choices. The agency specifically mentioned the claim, "supports brain and eye development," which The Cornucopia Institute, along with numerous breastfeeding advocacy groups, has argued for years to be false and misleading, and discourages breastfeeding to the detriment of public health.

In our 2008 report on the additives DHA and ARA in infant formula, "[Replacing Mother](#)," we wrote: "These [DHA and ARA] oils are produced by Martek Biosciences Corporation and appear to be added to infant formula primarily as a marketing tool designed to convince parents that formula is now 'as close as ever to breast milk.'"

We went on to say: "Given the universal acceptance of the multiple and very significant benefits of breastfeeding over formula feeding, any advertisements or labeling claims that undermine breastfeeding are a detriment to public health."

We filed a petition with the FDA, and a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), alleging these claims constitute false and misleading advertising. Scientific review studies and meta-analysis studies show that the additives DHA and ARA in fact have no benefit to infant development. According to Dr. Katherine Kennedy, the lead researcher for the longest-term follow-up study of these additives to infant formula, "This field of research has been driven to an extent by enthusiasm and vested interest." She also notes, "The scientific evidence base for their addition is recognized by most investigators and Key Opinion Leaders in the field to be weak."

More distressing are reports from parents and health care professionals suggesting that some infants react with diarrhea, vomiting, and other gastrointestinal symptoms to this synthetic additive which has already been added to most organic infant formula. This should not be tolerated in organics!

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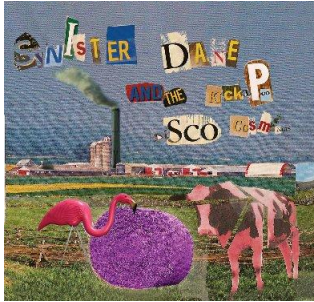


Image and song courtesy of Synister Dane Productions

## Musical Interlude: [The Monsanto Rag](#)

Turn up the volume and enjoy this creative and amusing tune from Sinister Dane Productions.

## Systemic Problems with Organic Labeling and Signage: Widespread Market Place Misrepresentation

An investigation by The Cornucopia Institute found numerous stores in several states that carried "organic" signs on shelves of non-organic breakfast cereal, and bulk bins with non-organic granola that had "organic" bin labels.

One specific company, Golden Temple, which manufactures bulk granola under their trade name, and packaged products under the Peace Cereal brand, was responsible for widespread, national labeling problems based on Cornucopia's research.

Similar problems with mislabeled in-store signs and advertisements of conventional Silk soymilk represented as "organic" had previously been traced to the same cause: the manufacturers of these

products changed their products from organic to conventional without changing the product's barcode. As a result, many retailers were unaware of the change from organic to conventional and continued to label these products as before.

Silk is manufactured and distributed by the WhiteWave division of the dairy giant Dean Foods. To prevent future problems with mislabeling of conventional or "natural" food as organic, and to protect consumers from false in-store signage, The Cornucopia Institute today [filed a formal request](#) with the National Organic Standards Board, the expert panel



Mislabeled bulk Golden Temple product

that advises the Secretary of Agriculture on organic rulemaking, for a rule change in the federal organic standards.

For more, [click here](#).

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## In Memorium: Bill Welsh



This March a beloved pioneer in the organic movement, and Cornucopia board member emeritus, William P. Welsh, passed away at the age of 81.

Bill, a lifelong farmer, who hailed from Lansing, Iowa, left behind his beloved wife Esther (Essie), eight children and 24 grandchildren.

His eulogy highlighted his leadership, both nationally and internationally, in the organic movement including recognizing his service on the National

Organic Standards Board and his involvement early on in the Organic Valley Cooperative and his help in launching its sister meat co-op, Organic Prairie.

I can vividly remember Bill telling me, when we first met over 20 years ago, the story of why he first decided to switch to organic production.

Due to feed contamination, he lost most of his livestock. When he did research into the chemical that killed his cattle, he discovered it was one of the same materials he studied in biological warfare school during the Korean War. He swore that no poisonous chemicals of that nature would ever be on his farm again!

Bill's personality was giant, and his passion was legendary, but he influenced others with a gentle hand.

The staff and Board of Directors of The Cornucopia Institute will miss Bill's wisdom, humor and friendship.

- Mark A. Kastel



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I N S T I T U T E

The Cornucopia Institute is a non-profit group based in Wisconsin and working on food and farm policy issues concerning sustainable and organic agriculture. We depend upon our members and readers like you for support. Please visit our website at <http://www.cornucopia.org/> for more details about our activities and how you can become involved or email us at [cultivate@cornucopia.org](mailto:cultivate@cornucopia.org).

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