

THE CULTIVATOR

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News From [The Cornucopia Institute](#)

Dear {first_name_merged_here},

Here is the latest news from The Cornucopia Institute.

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Organic Dairy Scorecard Updated



Cornucopia staff have been busy updating our organic dairy scorecard. This resource, designed to primarily empower organic consumers and wholesale buyers, was first published in 2006. The original scorecard ranked 71 name brand and private-label organic dairies based on their ethical approach to milk production. Our primary goal was to separate out the heroes in this industry from the bad actors who are operating factory farms, or purchasing milk from them for their labels, while misleading consumers.

The updated scorecard now contains over 110 brands! As this industry grows more and more entrepreneurs have entered this market, both farmstead dairy producers and larger companies. We've also seen a substantial growth in the marketing of private-label, storebrand, organic milk.

Millions of dollars worth of market share has shifted because consumers and wholesale buyers have used Cornucopia's work. And we know of a number of farmers who have shifted their milk supply to highly-ranked and reputable firms. Knowledge is power! You can find the scorecard on our website by clicking on the [Organic Dairy Report and Scorecard](#).

News Flash!!

Cornucopia has filed two more legal complaints with the USDA regarding factory farms in the deserts of the Southwest masquerading as organic dairies. For photo galleries and more information about the Rockview Farms and Shamrock Farms complaints, [click here](#).



Almond Growers and Handlers File Federal Lawsuit Seeking to End "Adulteration" of Raw Nuts

Lawsuit Would Halt Treatment of Almonds with Toxic Fumigant or Steam Heat

A group of fifteen American almond growers and wholesale nut handlers have [filed a lawsuit](#) in the Washington, D.C., federal court seeking to repeal a controversial USDA-mandated treatment program for California-grown raw almonds.

The almond farmers and handlers contend that their businesses have been seriously damaged and their futures jeopardized by a requirement that raw almonds be treated with propylene oxide (a toxic fumigant recognized as a carcinogen by the EPA) or steam-heated before they can be sold to American consumers. Foreign-grown almonds are exempt from the treatment scheme and



are rapidly displacing raw domestic nuts in the marketplace.

“The USDA’s raw almond treatment mandate has been economically devastating to many family-scale and organic almond farmers in California,” notes Will Fantle, Cornucopia’s Codirector. Cornucopia has been working with almond farmers and handlers to address the negative impacts of the USDA rule, including the coordination of the lawsuit. Tens of thousands of angry consumers have contacted the USDA to protest the compulsory almond treatment since the agency’s new regulation went into effect one year ago. Some have expressed outrage that even though the nuts have been processed with a fumigant or heat, they are still labeled as “raw.”

For more information, click on the [Authentic Almond Project](#) link.

Cornucopia Institute Calls for Food Safety Rules That Don’t Discriminate Against Diverse, Family-Scale Fresh Market Farmers

The Cornucopia Institute [presented testimony](#) to the USDA’s Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee in Washington, D.C., last month urging them to carefully consider how new food safety regulations may burden the thousands of family-scale fresh market producers around the country.

Caralea Arnold, a Cornucopia Research Associate, noted that the vast majority of the recent food-borne disease outbreaks have been tied back to industrial-scale operations. She also called the committee’s attention to “a vibrant subset of vegetable and fruit growers that by their very nature create less risk—the truly local and/or organic producers.” Management practices already in place on organic farms greatly reduce contamination risks.

Arnold explained that the imposition of *post-harvest testing requirements* in California are harming family-scale farmers growing diverse crops.

Said Arnold: “It’s one thing to require testing of a giant field of spinach in California, harvested maybe once or twice a year. It’s another thing altogether to require the same of a fresh market grower, from Virginia, maybe managing 3 to 50 acres, who might be selling through a farmers market, or a CSA farm. Some of these growers harvest numerous crops 20 or more weeks a year. The cost for frequent testing and labor to implement a program of this nature could drive some of these hard-working families off the land.”

Got Fresh Spinach? Lettuce? Think again!

Radiation Treatment Lowers Nutrition and Raises Spoilage Issues

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), on August 22, published a new federal regulation permitting “but not requiring” the use of ionizing irradiation for the control of food-borne pathogens and extension of shelf life in fresh iceberg lettuce and fresh spinach.

In plain English this means that these greens, when conventionally grown, may now be zapped with high-energy gamma rays, or electron beams (the same technology as x-rays only much more powerful). Scientific literature suggests that irradiation destroys valuable



nutrients, weakens cellular structure, and leaves foods even more susceptible to spoilage. It may also, in some food cases, create dangerous chemical by-products. (More about the effects of irradiation on food can be found at <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org>.)

USDA Kills Pesticide-Testing Program

Data used to help gauge food safety

The Bush administration has abruptly halted a government program that tests the levels of pesticides in fruits, vegetables, and field crops, arguing that the \$8 million-a-year program is too expensive—a decision critics say could make it harder to protect consumers from toxins in their food.

Data from the 18-year-old Agricultural Chemical Usage Program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture were collected until this year, and the Environmental Protection Agency used the data to set safe levels of pesticides in food.

The decision came as a shock to researchers at the EPA and elsewhere who have come to rely on the data. The information was widely used by university and food industry researchers to help farmers reduce the amount of pesticides they use.

Source: [The Chicago Tribune](#)

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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 www.cornucopia.org for more detail about our activities and how you can become involved or email us at cultivate@cornucopia.org.

cultivate@cornucopia.org P.O. Box 126 Cornucopia, WI 54827 608-625-2042 ©2008
