



News Briefs

◆ Starbucks to Expand Sales of Shade-Grown and Organic Coffee

Coffee retailer Starbucks will expand its sales of shade-grown coffee and boost its financial support for organic coffee growers, according to MSNBC (August 16, 2000). Starbucks will spend \$600,000 during the next three years funding a project with Conservation International to help farmers grow coffee crops in the shade without destroying rapidly receding tropical forests. Production of sun-grown coffee destroys biologically rich tropical forests for fields, and increases the use of fertilizers and pesticides because trees are not replenishing the soil. Starbucks' program last year to sell high-quality shade-grown coffee from southern Mexico was a hit with consumers; the company will now extend the project to coffee grown in Africa and Asia. "Starbucks has committed to year-round sales of 'sustainable' coffee, including organic and 'fair trade' brands from growers guaranteed above average earnings," according to the story. "Coffee industry officials say organic coffee, most of which is shade-grown, is the fastest-growing segment of the \$5.4 billion U.S. specialty coffee industry."

◆ Rice Yields Are Doubled with No Pesticides or Increased Cost

Thousands of rice farmers in China have doubled their yields of rice, their most valuable crop, and nearly eliminated its most devastating disease, "without using chemical treatments or spending a single extra penny," according to *The New York Times* (August 22, 2000). In one of the largest agricultural experiments ever undertaken, rice farmers planted a mixture of two different rices, rather than plant large stands of a single type of rice. The change allowed the farmers to radically restrict the incidence of rice blast, the most significant disease of rice plants. "Within just two years, farmers were able to abandon the chemical fungicides previously widely used to fight the disease," the story said. "Scientists say that this latest study shows that such environmentally friendly methods can be highly effective, even more effective, in this case, than standard chemical pesticides."

◆ World Can Feed Its Future Population without GM Foods, Says United Nations Report

The world can produce enough food to meet global demands in 2030, according to a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization report that "specifically does not allow for any production improvements from genetically modified crops," according to the UN report. "These are not factored in by FAO due to the ongoing uncertainties regarding the technical performance, safety and consumer acceptance of GM crops." The world population in 2030 is expected to top eight billion, according to the report. "Although the annual rate of growth in global crop production is expected to reduce, the projected overall increment in world crop production to 2030 will exceed population growth," it said. While the report's projections "avoid the GM factor altogether, it is worth noting that such crops frequently perform worse for farmers than conventional crops." More information is available on the Internet at www.fao.org/es/ESD/at2015/toc-e.htm.

◆ Altered Salmon Raise Concerns within U.S. Government and Industry

"From the shores of Puget Sound to the California statehouse and from the Alaska governor's office to two streams on Vancouver Island, fishermen, government officials and environmentalists are increasingly wary" of the prospect of genetically altered salmon becoming the first genetically altered animals to be sold in supermarkets, according to an article in *The Tacoma (WA) News Tribune* (August 21, 2000). "The 'blue revolution'—like the green revolution in biotech agriculture—is on the verge of exploding," and "no one is quite sure what the long-term biological or environmental consequences might be if genetically altered salmon escaped from the fish farms, where they would be raised, and cross-bred or competed with wild, native stocks for food and spawning sites." A White House panel is trying to sort out which agency has jurisdiction over genetically altered salmon, with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all having a possible claim.

◆ **Opposition to “Super-Sizing” of Dairy Farms Increases in California**

After years of rapid expansion within the dairy business, “big has suddenly become a dirty word in the California dairy business,” according to *The Los Angeles Times* (August 20, 2000). “Expansion has hit a brick wall as neighborhood groups and environmentalists have banded together to block new projects.” As dairies have increased in size, the main concern is the millions of pounds of manure the large dairies produce and pump into waste lagoons—20,000 tons a day in Tulare County alone. “The proliferation of these waste-filled lagoons, which can be as large as several football fields lined up, pose a serious threat to air and water quality, critics say, and need to be strictly regulated,” the article said. Dairy farmers say they use the manure to fertilize crops, but critics argue that what they use is only a small percentage of the amounts of waste produced. In addition, “Environmentalists and sustainable farming advocates say that the concentration of cows in such a small area is bad for the environment and cruel to the animals.”

◆ **Second Study Links Genetically Engineered Corn to Monarch Butterfly Deaths**

A study from researchers at Iowa State University found that genetically engineered corn “spreads enough pollen to nearby weeds to kill the monarch butterfly caterpillars that are feeding on them,” according to an Associated Press story about the research results published in *Oecologia* (August 22, 2000). Iowa State researchers Laura C. Hansen Jesse and John J. Obrycki wrote that theirs was the “first evidence that transgenic Bt corn pollen naturally deposited on common milkweed in a corn field causes significant mortality” of monarch butterfly larvae. A laboratory study at Cornell University last year found that genetically modified corn was toxic to monarch butterflies; the Iowa State study “was geared to approximate how pollen would affect butterflies who encountered it in the field,” the AP said. According to *The Washington Post* (August 22, 2000), “The finding reignites a heated scientific and regulatory debate over whether biotech crops in general, and the engineered corn in particular, pose heightened risks for the environment, and whether federal authorities have appropriately addressed those risks.”

◆ **Leopold Center, California Department of Pesticide Regulation Seek Grant Applications**

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation are both seeking applications for grants available next year. The Leopold Center is soliciting preproposals for FY 2002, which begins July 1, 2001. Information is available from the Center, (515) 294-3711, or on the Internet at www.leopold.iastate.edu. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation is accepting applications for \$1.4 million in grants for next year. Its priorities are finding alternatives to highly toxic pesticides, reducing worker exposure to pesticides, protecting surface and ground water quality, and promoting integrated pest management in public buildings. Pest Management Grant applications for demonstration projects are due October 6. Pest Management Alliances applications for pest management partnerships are due November 1. Information is available from Bob Elliott, (916) 324-4100, e-mail belliott@cdpr.ca.gov; or on the Internet, www.cdpr.ca.gov/dprgrants.htm.

◆ **EPA Seeks Public Review of Bt Cotton and Corn Registrations**

The EPA has extended the deadline for current registrations for Bt cotton and Bt corn until September 30, 2001, in order to allow ample time for a comprehensive scientific and public review. Information about registrations, the Scientific Advisory Panel’s risk assessment, and the public comment process is available on the Internet at www.epa.gov/scipoly/sap, www.epa.gov/pesticides/biopesticides, or on the Federal Register Internet page at www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-PEST/2000/August/Day-09/p20174.htm.

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◆ Agriculture Policy Project Develops Draft Recommendations for Seven Major Issues

The Wallace Center's Agriculture Policy Project, a five-year project started in 1997 and funded primarily by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has just completed its draft national policy recommendations. The recommendations were based on the results of 16 local, regional, and national policy sessions held throughout the United States and developed by a team of nine policy advisors who have been working with the project staff over the last six months. The recommendations cover seven major agricultural and food issues of concern to participants in the 16 sites, including: marketing; farmland preservation; contract markets; rural development; water and air quality; research, education and training in alternative farming systems; and access to capital and credit.

The draft recommendations have not yet been made public. They will first go through a "feedback loop" process in which they will be distributed to approximately 180 of the project's participants for comment. The recommendations will be finalized by March 2001, after a national meeting of participants. For more information, contact Lydia Oberholtzer, Henry A. Wallace Center for Agricultural and Environmental Policy, Winrock International, 1621 N. Kent St., Ste. 1200, Arlington, VA 22209; (703) 525-9430 Ext. 664; e-mail loberholtzer@winrock.org.

◆ Wallace Center Seeks Program Officer

The Henry A. Wallace Center for Agricultural & Environmental Policy is seeking a Program Officer to provide leadership and education in the development of a nationally recognized program that includes policy analysis and project work in the areas of managing nutrient water pollution, private and public roles in biotechnology, pesticide management, seed germplasm conservation, and carbon sequestration. Send resumé, cover letter, and salary requirements to HRM, Winrock International, 38 Winrock Dr., Morrilton, AR 72110; fax (501) 727-5643; e-mail jobs@winrock.org; full job description is on the Internet at www.winrock.org.

Resources

"Sustainable Agriculture in Print: Current Books (May 2000 Update)" is available from Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, USDA/ARS/NAL/AFSIC, 10301 Baltimore Ave., Beltsville, MD 20705-2351; (301) 504-6422; e-mail afsic@nal.usda.gov; on the Internet, www.nal.usda.gov/afsic.

"Available EPA Information on Assessing Exposure to Pesticides in Food—A User's Guide" is available on the Internet at www.epa.gov/pesticides.

"Hooked on Poison: Pesticide Use in California, 1991-1998" is available from Pesticide Action Network, 49 Powell St., # 500, San Francisco, CA 94102; (415) 981-1771; e-mail panna@panna.org; or on the Internet at www.panna.org.

"The Small Dairy Resource Book" is \$8 plus \$3.95 shipping/handling from Sustainable Agriculture Publications, Hills Bldg. Rm. 12, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405-0082; (802) 656-0484; on the Internet, www.sare.org/san/htdocs/pubs/.

"Organic Apple Production Manual" is \$18 plus \$3.50 shipping/handling from University of California, 6701 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, CA 94608; 1-800-994-8849; e-mail danrcs@ucdavis.edu.

Positions

National Center for Appropriate Technology seeks a program specialist for its Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA) program; for application materials, contact Marlene Breese, (501) 442-9824; e-mail marleneb@ncatark.uark.edu.

Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy seeks a person to teach a course on "Environment and Food Supply" in Spring 2001; send letter, C.V., and three references to Beatrice Lorge Rogers, Ph.D., Dean for Academic Affairs, School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155; more information is on the Internet at www.nutrition.tufts.edu.

Cropchoice.com, a Web site and news service about biotechnology in agriculture, seeks a newswriter/editor; contact Cropchoice.com, 4649 Sunnyside Ave. N, Ste. 328, Seattle, WA 98103; (206) 632-6122; e-mail Editor@CropChoice.com; on the Internet, www.cropchoice.com.

Upcoming Events

September 30, Seventh Annual Country Living Field Day will be held at Kenwood Farms, Carroll County, Ohio; contact Ohio State University Extension and the Small Scale Agriculture Committee, (330) 627-4310.

October 4-6, Third Annual AgFiber Technology Showcase will be held in Memphis, TN; contact AgroTech Communications, 7777 Walnut Grove Rd., # LLB4, Box 50, Memphis, TN 38120; (901) 309-1668; e-mail fiber@netten.net; on the Internet, www.agfibertechnology.com.

November 3, "Genetically Modified Food: Risks, Rewards, and Realities" will be held in Madison, WI; contact Michael Goodman, Conference Director, Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, 1922 University Ave., Madison, WI 53705-4099; (608) 263-1692; on the Internet, www.wisconsinacademy.org.

November 3-5, "Sustainability, Rooted in Diversity," the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association's 15th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference, will be held in Wilmington, NC; contact CFSA, P.O. Box 448, Pittsboro, NC 27312; (919) 541-2402; e-mail cfsa@carolinafarmstewards.org.

November 17-19, "Healthy Farms—Healthy Communities: Ingredients for Success," the 16th Annual California Farm Conference, will be held in Santa Rosa, CA; contact the Conference, (530) 888-9206; e-mail fullcircle@jps.net; on the Internet, www.CaliforniaFarmConference.com.

November 17-26, "Cuba: Sustainable Agriculture," a Global Exchange Reality Tour, will take place in Cuba; contact Global Exchange, 2017 Mission # 303, San Francisco, CA 94110; (415) 255-7296; e-mail janet@globalexchange.org.

November 30-December 1, "The Future of Our Food and Farms," a regional summit for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware, will be held in Philadelphia, PA; contact Meredith Stone, Farmers' Market Trust, 1201 Chestnut St., 4th Fl., Philadelphia, PA 19107; (215) 568-0830; e-mail fmtrust@libertynet.org.

December 7-9, "Blueprint for Eco-Farming," the 26th Annual Acres USA Conference, will be held in Minneapolis, MN; contact Acres USA, 1-800-355-5313; e-mail info@acresusa.com; on the Internet, www.acresusa.com.

January 24-27, 2001, 21st Annual Ecological Farming Conference will be held in Pacific Grove, CA; contact Ecological Farming Association, 406 Main St., # 313, Watsonville, CA 95076; (831) 763-2111; on the Internet, www.eco-farm.org.

February 5-7, 2001, "Growing Your Profits," the New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference, will be held in Owego, NY; contact Ben Vitale, NYS Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, (315) 422-8647.

May 17-19, 2001, "All Things Organic," the Organic Trade Association's Conference and Trade Show, will be held in Austin, TX; contact OTA, 74 Fairview St., P.O. Box 547, Greenfield, MA 01302; (413) 774-7511; e-mail info@ota.com; on the Internet, www.ota.com.



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