



NEWS BRIEFS

European Union Approves Strict Labeling and Tracing Rules for Genetically Modified Foods

The European Union's Council of Ministers formally approved legislation on July 22 that imposes strict labeling and tracking requirements on genetically modified (GM) foods. All food and animal feed products with 0.9 percent or more GM content will need to bear labels stating that the items contain, or are produced from, approved GM organisms, and a new registry will trace GM products from their point of origin to supermarket shelves. Consumers can now have confidence that any GM product sold in Europe has been subject to the "most rigorous pre-marketing assessment in the world," health commissioner David Byrne stated (RAPID, July 2). The legislation must still be ratified by the 15 EU nations, several of which had prompted the existing moratorium by blocking approval of new GM crop varieties in 1998. According to media reports, the U.S. will still struggle to sell its corn and soybeans to Europe, since bulk exports do not currently separate GM from non-GM crops, and many European food retailers say they will not offer GM products until they are convinced their customers will buy them.

Monsanto's GM Wheat Poses Unacceptable Environmental Risk in Western Canada

Commercial release of Monsanto Company's genetically modified wheat variety, currently awaiting regulatory approval, poses an unacceptable level of environmental risk, according to a report authored by University of Manitoba scientists and funded by the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). The "unconfined release" of Roundup Ready wheat will lead to movement among wheat crops of the transgene that provides resistance to glyphosate herbicide, and will "limit farmers' ability to conserve natural resources in western Canada," the report said. Citing problems that have arisen with Roundup Ready canola, the study finds that the major concern would be interference with 'direct seeding' (reduced tillage) systems that rely on glyphosate for weed management. A key issue is that the environmental risks would be borne by farmers who choose to grow the GM wheat, as well as by those who don't. "An Environmental Safety Assessment of Roundup Ready Wheat" (33 pages) is online at www.cwb.ca, or contact CWB, (204) 983-0239.

Antibiotics in Dust from Livestock Confinement Buildings May Be New Source of Health Risk

Dust from livestock confinement buildings, in itself causing respiratory and other ailments in workers, may also contain antibiotics added to animal feed, a German study has found (*Science News*, July 5). The report, due to appear in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, is thought to be the first detailed work showing that antibiotics can be spread through air, a new source of unintended exposure in addition to waterways and foods. The research team looked for chemical evidence of 6 antibiotics added to pig feed at low doses to speed growth. Of samples gathered yearly between 1981 and 2000, 18 of 20 contained at least one of the 6 drugs. Tylosin, a drug related chemically to the medical antibiotic erythromycin, showed up in 16 samples. Besides posing a direct danger to workers (tylosin induces allergies and chloramphenicol, also found in dust, can damage DNA), the airborne dust may present a more general public health risk, since exposing bacteria in the human body to small, steady doses of antibiotics is considered an ideal way to promote drug resistance. Source information is online at www.sciencenews.org/20030705/fob6ref.asp.

USDA Study Shows Sufficient Grain Acreage to Feed Organic Livestock at Reasonable Cost

"Ample acreage is available to provide more than enough feed grains to meet the needs" of organic livestock and poultry producers, and at reasonable cost, says a report issued July 14 by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. The analysis relied on acreage and yield data from federal sources, and producer surveys conducted by Iowa State University, North Carolina State University, and Cornell University, to estimate organic feed availability into 2004. Although the costs varied substantially from state to state, in most cases the prices for organic feed grains were not more than twice the cost of conventional feed. Whether organically raised livestock should be fed with 100 percent certified organic feed was at the center of a controversy resolved last May when Congress restored the organic feed requirement. "Organic Feed for Poultry and Livestock: Availability and Prices" is available at www.ams.usda.gov/nop/TodaysNews.html.

**Organic Research
Acreage Doubles Since
2001 in U.S. Land Grant
System, Though Gap
Remains**

The total number of organic research acres in the nation's land grant system has more than doubled between 2001 and 2003, according to a new study by the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF). Yet there is still a gap between actual acres farmed organically in the U.S. and the proportion of research acres dedicated to certified organic research. In 2003, organic research occupies only 1,160 acres, or 0.13 percent of the available research acres in the system, while 0.3 to 2.0 percent of all farmland (depending on crop type) is certified organic. The five states with the strongest organic programs in 2001—Iowa, Ohio, Minnesota, North Carolina, and West Virginia—continue to lead in 2003, and are joined by ambitious new programs in Washington and New York. A detailed profile of organic research, education, and extension in the publicly funded land grant institutions in 37 states is provided in "State of the States" (2nd edition), online at www.ofrf.org, or \$10 from OFRF, (831) 426-6606.

**Largest Livestock Farms
Will Incur Higher Costs
to Spread Manure on
Cropland, USDA
Analysis Finds**

A new analysis issued last month by USDA's Economic Research Service estimates the economic impacts of new rules governing manure runoff for the nation's largest livestock and poultry producers, and the broader regional and national impacts. Under the nutrient application standards enacted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency last February, concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) will need to "spread their manure over a much larger land base than they are currently using, and most will need to move their manure off-farm." At this time only 18 percent of large hog farms and 23 percent of large dairies are applying manure on enough cropland to meet a nitrogen-based standard to protect water quality. Higher production costs would primarily affect large operations, while cost increases for small and medium-sized operations, with less manure to move off-site, would generally be less than one percent. "Competition for land for spreading manure could be severe in regions with high [animal] concentrations," primarily states in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast, and California, the report stated. "Manure Management for Water Quality: Costs to Animal Feeding Operations of Applying Manure Nutrients to Land" is available online at www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aer824/, or \$29.50 (plus shipping) from USDA Order Desk, 1-800-553-6847.

**Ecolabels Showing
'Food Miles' and
Environmental Impact
Are Explored by Iowa
State Team**

Ecolabels that inform food buyers about the amount of fossil-fuel energy expended as food items travel to grocery stores and other food outlets are being explored by a team from Iowa State University (*Science News Online*, August 2, www.sciencenews.org/20030802/food.asp). The prototype labels include a mileage reading, plus a "transport environment impact" (or TEI) rating to show whether food items move by more fuel-efficient ships or trains, or by fuel-guzzling trucks or planes. Although 'buying local' (or regional) generally suggests more energy efficiency, the TEI distinctions show that the choice of transport influences overall energy use and the resulting carbon dioxide emissions; thus lower—and more favorable—TEI ratings may result even when foods have traveled farther. The team's most recent study, "Checking the Food Odometer: Comparing Food Miles for Local Versus Conventional Produce Sales to Iowa Institutions," is online at www.leopold.iastate.edu; for more information, contact research leader Rich Pirog, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, (515) 294-1854; rspirog@iastate.edu.

**Some Big-Name Food
Makers Reverse
Strategy, Add Brand to
Organic Products, Says
WSJ Article**

"In a risky reversal of marketing tactics, some of the world's best known packaged food companies have planted their brand names smack-dab onto organic versions of their products," the *Wall Street Journal* (July 29) reported last month. Until recently, the big-name food makers have "made it a point to keep their names and labels off [their] organic offerings," the rationale being that "consumers who try to avoid pesticides and additives may not trust big corporate brands"; for instance, when General Mills introduced Cascadian Farms organic cereals, the corporate logo was "conspicuously absent" from the packaging. Now, more large companies are "wielding the clout of their big brands to secure shelf space in the organic section of mainstream supermarkets," the article said. Some consumers interviewed for the story are indeed "turned off by efforts to give an organic product the imprimatur of a household name." Generally, organic-food stores, the small, independent shops as well as big retailers such as Whole Foods, aren't rushing to carry organic items from the big-name companies.

RESOURCES

- **Antibiotics, Agriculture & Resistance** (12 pgs), reprinted from recent *Land Stewardship Letter*, www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdg/anti_bio_reprint.pdf, or \$5 from Land Stewardship Project, (651) 653-0618.
- **Approaching Foodservice Establishments with Locally Grown Products**, 78-page report prepared for North Central Initiative for Small Farm Profitability, is available from Food Marketing and Processing (FoodMAP) clearinghouse, www.farmprofitability.org, or contact UNL Food Processing Center, (402) 472-2832.
- **Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses** (280 pgs), developed by Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and co-published by Sustainable Agriculture Network, www.misa.umn.edu/publications/bizplan.html; print copy is \$14 plus \$3.95 S/H from MISA, 1-800-909-6472; misamail@umn.edu.
- **Commodity System Challenges: Moving Sustainability into the Mainstream of Natural Resource Economies** (63 pgs), www.sustainer.org/resources.html, or contact Sustainability Institute, 3 Linden Rd., Hartland, VT 05048; (802) 436-1277.
- **Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity**, a collection of field-based experiences in 3 volumes, is US\$15 plus S/H from CIP-UPWARD, DAPO Box 777, Metro Manila, Philippines; cip-manila@cgiar.org; content also online at www.seap.cipotato.org/upward/Abstract/Agrobio-sourcebook.htm.
- **Establishing Integrated Pest Management Policies and Programs: A Guide for Public Agencies** (13 pgs, 2003 update), <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8093.pdf>; or contact University of California Statewide IPM Program, (530) 752-8350; ipmig@ucdavis.edu.
- **Greenbook 2003: Caring for the Land** (14th edition, 168 pgs), from Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture's Sustainable Agriculture On-Farm Demonstration Grant Program, www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/greenbook2003/; print copy is free from MDA Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program, 90 West Plato Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55107; (651) 296-7673.
- **Identifying Barriers to Participation in Agri-Environmental Programs in Ontario**, a report to the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, www.christianfarmers.org; or contact CFFO, (519) 837-1620; cffo-mail@christianfarmers.org.
- **Minnesota Food Systems: Forging the Links in the Value Chain**, 20-pg full-color brochure, www.mnproject.org/pdf/Food%20publication.pdf; single print copy is free from Minnesota Project, 1885 University Ave., Suite 315, St. Paul, MN 55104; (651) 645-6159.
- **Organic Agriculture: Sustainability, Markets and Policies** (408 pgs), from OECD workshop held in September 2002 in Arlington, Virginia, is \$75 plus S/H (or \$60 as PDF e-book) from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Turpin North America, 1-800-456-6323; bookscus.comer@turpinna.com.
- **2003 Northwest Direct Seed Conference Proceedings** (120 pgs), from January 2003 conference organized by Pacific Northwest STEEP program and Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association, is \$8 from NW Direct Seed Conference, P.O. Box 2002, Pasco, WA 99302; (509) 547-5538; wpeay@mcmgt.com; presentations and additional information are online at <http://pnwsteep.wsu.edu/directseed>.
- **Small Farm Quarterly**, a new Northeast regional publication, from Cornell University's Small Farms Program and other cooperators, is \$5/yr from Country Folks, 1-888-596-5329; subscriptions@leepub.com; for more information, contact Joanna Green, Cornell Small Farms Program, (607) 255-9227; jg16@cornell.edu.
- **Tilth Producers Directory: A Washington Guide to Organic and Sustainable Growers, Food and Farm Suppliers and Resources** (2003-2004 edition, 56 pgs) is \$3 from Tilth Producers, P.O. Box 85056, Seattle, WA 98145; (206) 442-7620.
- **U.S. vs. EU: An Examination of the Trade Issues Surrounding Genetically Modified Food** (35 pgs), http://pewagbiotech.org/resources/issue_briefs/europe.pdf, or contact Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology, (202) 347-9044.
- **Wendell Berry and the Agrarian Tradition: A Common Grace** (288 pgs), by Kimberly K. Smith, is \$34.95 plus \$3 S/H from University Press of Kansas, (785) 864-4155; www.kansaspress.ku.edu/smiwen.html, or other book sellers.

CALENDAR

September

7–9: “Challenges in Agricultural Health and Safety,” a conference coordinated by Western Center for Agricultural Health & Safety at UC Davis, co-sponsored by UC Statewide IPM Program, in San Francisco, CA; contact Patrick O’Connor-Marer, IPM Education and Publications, University of California, (530) 752-7694; <http://agcenter.ucdavis.edu/Announce/AgChallenges2003.php>.

15, 16, 22, 23, and 25: Whole Farm Planning Workshops, half-day events for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural professionals, in Oklahoma; contact Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, (918) 647-9123; www.kerrcenter.com/kerrweb/HTML/events.html.

19–20 (or March 5–6, 2004): Passive Solar Greenhouse Workshop: Design, Construction & Year-Round Production, in Spring Grove, PA; contact Steve Moore, (717) 225-2489; sandcmoore@juno.com.

20–21: 2003 Northeast Small Farm and Rural Living Expo, in Harmony, NJ; details are online at www.smallfarmexpo.org.

25–27: Washington/Idaho Partnership 2020: Innovations in Food Systems Education Conference, co-hosted by Washington State University’s College of Agriculture and Home Economics, in Pullman, WA; contact Margy Hall, pellhall@povn.com; or Colette DePhelps Brown, (208) 883-3462; http://academic.cahe.wsu.edu/foodsystems_registration/.

26–28: “A Celebration of Holistic Management,” Rendezvous 2003, sponsored by Holistic Resource Management of Texas, near Fort Worth, TX; contact Judy Reed, (903) 872-6836; msjudy@reedfamilyranch.com; www.hrm-texas.org.

October

1: Proposal submission deadline for 2003–2004 Farmer Rancher, Marketing Systems, and Organic Systems grants, and Agricultural Professional Plus Producer grants, from USDA’s Western Region Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education program; contact WSARE, (435) 797-2257; wsare@mendel.usu.edu.

1: Paper submission deadline for “Human Dimensions of Family and Farm Forestry” symposium, presented by Washington State University with International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), to be held March 29–April 1, 2004, in Pullman, WA; contact (509) 335-2963; familyforestry@wsu.edu; for registration, (509) 335-2811; or www.familyforestrysymposium.wsu.edu/conference/papers.html.

2–5: “To Market, To Market, To Sell a Rare Breed,” American Livestock Breeds Conservancy’s 26th Annual Members Meeting and Conference, in Wichita, KS; contact ALBC, (919) 542-5704; albc@albc-usa.org; <http://www.albc-usa.org>.

6–9: “Survival Strategies for Small and Limited-Resource Farmers and Ranchers: A National Outreach Conference,” in San Diego, CA; contact USDA Risk Management Agency, Stop 0801, Rm. 3053-South, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250; (202) 690-2803; www.rma.usda.gov/calendar/2003.october.html.

15: Abstract submission deadline for presentations to “Eating As a Moral Act: Ethics and Power from Agrarianism to Consumerism,” interdisciplinary symposium to be held April 25–27, 2004, in Durham, NH; contact Office of Sustainability Programs, Univ. of New Hampshire, (603) 862-4088; www.sustainableunh.unh.edu.

16–18: “Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling,” ANBP 2003 Conference & General Annual Meeting, in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada; contact Association of Natural Biocontrol Producers, phone/fax (714) 544-8295; www.anbp.org.

18–27: Sustainable Agriculture and Fair Trade delegation, in Havana, Cuba; contact Global Exchange, (415) 255-7296; www.globalexchange.org/tours/451.html.

27–31: Maine Compost School training in medium- and large-scale composting operations, in Monmouth, ME; contact Bill Seekins, Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Food & Rural Resources, (207) 287-7531; bill.seekins@state.me.us.



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