



## NEWS BRIEFS

### **EPA Plans Temporary Amnesty for CAFOs from Clean Air Laws; Critics Say It Favors Livestock Industry**

Environmental groups have criticized a plan by the U.S. EPA to shield confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) from federal lawsuits if they take part in a program to monitor air emissions from feedlots and waste lagoons (*New York Times*; *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 25). If industry groups and the agency agree to the amnesty plan (first made public last spring and discussed last month by EPA officials after internal documents were leaked to the Sierra Club), the agency would collect \$3,000 per operation to finance air quality monitoring near industrial-sized farms. The deal would forgive emissions violations during the 2-year monitoring program, then the facilities would have to apply for permits from local governments and meet Clean Air Act standards. Critics object to the plan's secrecy and apparent leniency; a coalition of environmental groups has filed a lawsuit seeking to identify the industry groups engaging in the negotiations with EPA (Greenwire, Sept. 26).

### **University of California Budget Targets Sustainable Farming, Pest Management Programs**

In order to help balance the state's \$38 billion budget shortfall, the University of California proposes dismantling 22 statewide agriculture programs, including many that support environmental stewardship and organic farming (*Sacramento Bee*, Sept. 26, [www.sacbee.com](http://www.sacbee.com)). UC Cooperative Extension received a 25 percent (\$8 million) cut this year and the university needs to cut \$4 million more to meet its 2003–04 budget. The plan calls for consolidating or eliminating programs in integrated pest management (IPM), small-farm issues, wild lands, and renewable resources. Among those targeted is the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program or SAREP ([www.sarep.ucdavis.edu](http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu)), a multidisciplinary unit created by the California legislature in 1986 and widely viewed as a national model. Nine farming and environmental groups petitioned the state legislature last May to preserve programs including Cooperative Extension, SAREP, and the State-wide IPM Program, arguing they are "vitally important" in helping producers incorporate innovative, cost-effective practices that meet environmental goals.

### **Senator Grassley Proposes Legislation To Limit Vertical Integration in U.S. Pork Industry**

Legislation intended to put a ceiling on vertical integration in the U.S. pork industry and provide a more competitive environment for independent farmers was proposed last month by Iowa Senator Charles Grassley (Sept. 23, [www.grassley.senate.gov/](http://www.grassley.senate.gov/)). The bill (S. 1644) to amend the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921, if approved, would require that the largest pork packers go to the open market to buy at least half of the animals they slaughter in any calendar year. Grassley said the legislation "becomes even more critical" with the impending sale of Farmland Food's pork processing plants (Reuters, Sept. 23). The Senator said he was not backing away from a proposal to ban packer ownership of livestock, but thought it might be easier to surmount Congressional obstacles by using language to limit reliance on packer-held animals. He has previously sponsored bills to limit meatpackers from owning livestock prior to slaughter; two such "packer bans" were approved in the Senate's version of the 2002 Farm Bill, but opposed by the House of Representatives.

### **EPA Sued by Public Interest Groups and Four States for Failing To Protect Children from Pesticides**

The U.S. EPA was sued by 4 states and a coalition of 11 environmental, health, and farmworker groups last month for failing to protect children from unsafe levels of pesticides in foods (Reuters, Sept. 16, [www.planetark.org](http://www.planetark.org)). Plaintiffs in the two cases are seeking court orders forcing the agency to comply with the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act, which recognized that children are uniquely susceptible to harm from pesticides in food due to their rapid growth and different diets, and requires that EPA set residue standards 10 times stricter than adult safety levels. The suit brought by New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Jersey focuses on 5 pesticides widely used on crops consumed by children (Sept. 15, [www.oag.state.ny.us/press](http://www.oag.state.ny.us/press)). The second suit, led by the Natural Resources Defense Council, charges that the agency has failed to meet legal deadlines for setting child-protective safety levels for the most toxic pesticides, and failed to protect highly exposed groups, including farmworkers' children (Sept. 15, [www.nrdc.org/media](http://www.nrdc.org/media)).

**Bush Administration  
Lobbies to Weaken  
Chemical Policy Reform  
by European Union**

Bush Administration efforts to weaken chemical policy reform by the European Union were detailed last month in a report from the Boston-based Environmental Health Fund (EHF) and in the *Wall Street Journal* (Sept. 9). Both rely on a series of internal government documents showing a coordinated, 2-year effort by the State and Commerce Departments, U.S. Trade Representative, and EPA to undermine the European plan, on behalf of U.S. chemical manufacturers. Known as REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorization of Chemicals), the legislation would govern the testing of tens of thousands of chemicals currently on the European market for potential health and environmental hazards; shift the burden of providing safety data from government to industry; and provide a mechanism to restrict the most toxic chemicals and substitute safer alternatives. More than 70 public interest groups have petitioned President Bush to stop using federal funds to weaken “an important international initiative to protect public health.” The report from EHF, “US Intervention in EU Chemical Policy,” is online at [www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org), or phone (617) 524-6018.

**Comprehensive White  
House Review Finds  
Benefits of EPA Rules  
Far Exceed Costs**

Public health and environmental benefits from major U.S. EPA rules outweigh the costs imposed on industry and taxpayers by more than a 10-to-1 margin, concludes a review issued September 22 by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Societal benefits from EPA’s clean air regulations were 5 to 7 times greater in economic terms than were compliance costs, the *Washington Post* (Sept. 27) reported. The OMB’s analysis of 107 major rules approved during the past decade, from 9 federal agencies, is “the most comprehensive federal study ever of the costs and benefits of regulatory decision-making,” the *Post* wrote. On average, the rules cost \$192 million per year and provided annual benefits of \$1.3 to 4.8 billion (Greenwire, Sept. 24). Major rules from USDA also yielded significant net benefits: annual costs of \$1.6 to 1.7 billion, compared to annual benefits of \$3.1 to 6.2 billion. The findings overturn a similar report issued last year that found compliance costs for major rules were roughly comparable to public benefits; officials say the earlier study had underestimated the benefits of certain clean-air rules.

**“Unprecedented”  
Nationwide Debate  
Shows Most Oppose  
Genetically Modified  
Crops in UK**

Most Britons who took part in an “unprecedented” public debate last summer do not want genetically modified crops grown commercially in the UK. Among the key messages from the final report by an independent steering board: the public is generally uneasy about GM technology; finding out more simply deepens their concerns; few support early commercialization; there is widespread mistrust of government and multinationals involved in GM technology; and people want more research and information (BBC News, Sept. 24, <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk>). The findings “reflect the public unease over GM crops recorded in mainstream opinion polls but give more detail about the reasons,” including absence of consumer benefits, risk of contamination of organic and non-GM crops, and consequences for biodiversity (London *Financial Times*, Sept. 25). Many acknowledge possible benefits for poor nations with food shortages, but see fairer trade rules as more beneficial than GM crops. Over 37,000 people registered their views in the 6-week nationwide debate, through public meetings, focus group sessions, and written responses; only 2 percent had no reservations about GM crops or food. The full report on “GM Nation?” is online at [www.gmnation.org.uk](http://www.gmnation.org.uk).

**Emerging Power Bloc in  
Developing World Is Key  
Outcome of Collapsed  
Trade Talks**

Trade talks at the WTO’s 5th ministerial summit in Cancun last month, intended to address a development agenda in further liberalizing global trade, broke down when developing nations closed ranks and refused to tackle new issues until farm subsidies of wealthy nations and market access were dealt with. The 4-day meeting came to an abrupt halt when several groups (including one led by delegates from China, Brazil, and India) refused to continue talks that had sidelined the dialogue on agricultural reform and moved instead to cross-border investment, antitrust, and related issues, which were seen as intrusive and potentially damaging to their domestic economies. The impasse underscores the deep ideological rifts between rich and poor nations over the effects of free trade, while the emergence of a united front in the developing world is viewed as a potential counterbalance to U.S. and European Union interests, and seen as a critical juncture for the global trading system (*Washington Post*, Sept. 15; *National Journal*, Sept. 20; *Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 30). News and information from major media and other sources is compiled online by Eldis Gateway ([www.eldis.org/trade/wtocancun.htm](http://www.eldis.org/trade/wtocancun.htm)); ICTSD ([www.ictsd.org](http://www.ictsd.org)), and Evian Group, a free-trade think tank ([www.eviangroup.org](http://www.eviangroup.org)).

## RESOURCES

■ **Constructed Wetlands and Other Approaches to Protecting Water Quality**, 68-pg bibliography prepared for national workshop held in June 2003 in Wilmington, NC, is free from Water Quality Information Center, National Agricultural Library, (301) 504-6077; [sgagnon@nal.usda.gov](mailto:sgagnon@nal.usda.gov).

■ **Economic and Environmental Impacts of First-Generation GMOs: Lessons from the U.S.** (34 pgs), Trade Knowledge Network paper by Chuck Benbrook, online at [www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org); or contact International Institute for Sustainable Development, 161 Portage Ave. East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3B 0Y4; (204) 958-7700.

■ **Essentials of Producing Organic, Certified Seed** (30-minute video) is \$20; **Raising Organic Seed: A Handbook for Growers** (60-pg companion book) is \$10 from Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society, 9824 79th St. SE, Fullerton, ND 58441; (701) 883-4304; [trhaigh@itctel.com](mailto:trhaigh@itctel.com).

■ **Food Sovereignty: Constructing an Alternative to the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture**, working draft (Sept. 7) of joint declaration from 30 farm, rural, labor, environmental and consumer groups, [www.farmaid.org](http://www.farmaid.org); or [www.iatptradeobservatory.org](http://www.iatptradeobservatory.org), phone (612) 870-0453.

■ **Funding Opportunities** (for education, research, demonstration, and development initiatives) from private, state, and federal sources, a comprehensive listing from ATTRA's National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, <http://attra.ncat.org/management/financl.html>, or 1-800-346-9140.

■ **International Society of Organic Agriculture Research (ISO FAR)**, new interdisciplinary organization founded in June 2003, [www.iol.uni-bonn.de/index2\\_e.htm](http://www.iol.uni-bonn.de/index2_e.htm); contact Ulrich Köpke, Institute for Organic Agriculture, University of Bonn, Katzenburgweg 3, D-53115 Bonn, Germany; [iol@uni-bonn.de](mailto:iol@uni-bonn.de); or Urs Niggli, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Switzerland; [admin@fibl.ch](mailto:admin@fibl.ch).

■ **IPM Online Homestudy Courses** on variety of integrated pest management topics, including new offerings in pest identification, [www.hort.uconn.edu/IPM/homecourse/coursinfo.htm](http://www.hort.uconn.edu/IPM/homecourse/coursinfo.htm), or contact University of Connecticut IPM Program, [ipm@canr.cag.uconn.edu](mailto:ipm@canr.cag.uconn.edu).

■ **Permaculture: Principles & Pathways Beyond Sustainability** (320 pgs) is \$30 plus S/H from Chelsea Green, 1-800-639-4099, [www.chelsea.green.com](http://www.chelsea.green.com).

■ **Proceedings from Fourth National Integrated Pest Management Symposium** held April 2003 in Indianapolis, Indiana, including presentations on bio-based IPM, online at <http://cipm.ncsu.edu/symposium>.

■ **Proceedings: Symposium on Swine Housing and Well-Being** (92 pgs), from June 2002 workshop in Des Moines, Iowa, is free from Animal Welfare Information Center, National Agricultural Library, (301) 504-6212; [awic@nal.usda.gov](mailto:awic@nal.usda.gov).

■ **Rethinking U.S. Agricultural Policy: Changing Course to Secure Farmer Livelihoods Worldwide** (59 pgs), [www.agpolicy.org/blueprint.html](http://www.agpolicy.org/blueprint.html); print copy is free from Agricultural Policy Center, University of Tennessee,

(865) 974-7407; [jgbrown@utk.edu](mailto:jgbrown@utk.edu).

■ **Sharing the Cost: Creating a Working Land Conservation Trust Fund Through a Tax on Agricultural Inputs?** (42 pgs), [www.swcs.org/t\\_advocacy\\_action.htm](http://www.swcs.org/t_advocacy_action.htm); or contact Soil and Water Conservation Society, (515) 289-2331.

■ **Sustainable Soils: The Place of Organic Matter in Sustaining Soils and Their Productivity** (352 pgs) is \$37.46 (online price, Code HEC25) plus S/H from Haworth Press, 1-800-429-6784; [www.HaworthPress.com](http://www.HaworthPress.com).

■ **Swept Away: Chronic Hardship and Fresh Promise on the Rural Great Plains**, 50-pg report updating economic conditions in agriculturally based communities in 6 states, [www.cfra.org](http://www.cfra.org); print copy is \$10 from Center for Rural Affairs, P.O. Box 406, Walthill, NE 68067; (402) 846-5420.

■ **Towards Sustainable Agriculture for Developing Countries: Options from Life Sciences & Biotechnologies** (32 pgs), covering key issues from January 2003 conference in Brussels, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2003/sadc/>; for print copy contact M. Parel, Research Directorate-General, European Commission, SDME 09-21, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium; [marianne.parel@cec.edu.int](mailto:marianne.parel@cec.edu.int).

■ **What's Your Poison? Health Threats by Pesticides in Developing Countries** (25 pgs), [www.ejfoundation.org](http://www.ejfoundation.org); or contact Environmental Justice Foundation, 5 St. Peter's St., London N1 8JD UK, phone +44 (0) 20 7359 0440; [info@ejfoundation.org](mailto:info@ejfoundation.org).

## CALENDAR

### November

1: Application deadline for Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food System's Farm & Garden Apprenticeship, a 6-month course, in Santa Cruz, CA; contact CASFS, University of California, (831) 459-4140; apprenticeship@ucsc.edu; www.ucsc.edu/casfs/training.

1-2: Alternative Energy Resources Organization Annual Meeting, in Chico, MT; contact Jonda Crosby, Sustainable Agriculture Program Mgr., AERO, (406) 443-7272; jcrosby@aeromt.org.

7-8: "Rural Life: Change and Challenge," National Catholic Rural Life Conference 80th Anniversary & Annual Gathering, in Albany, NY; contact NCRLC, (515) 270-2634; nrcrc@mchsi.com.

8-9: 11th Annual Urban-Rural Food Systems Conference, in East Troy, WI; contact Gail Kahovic, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, (262) 642-3303; mfai@michaelfieldsaginst.org.

14-15: 5th Annual Low-Impact Forestry Workshop, in Unity, ME; contact Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, (207) 568-4142; www.mofga.org/news20031001.html.

14-15: "New Movements in New England Food and Farming," Third Annual 'Soul of Agriculture' Conference, with Northeast SAWG's Annual Resource Harvest, Northeast Regional Conference, in Durham, NH; contact Office of Sustainability Programs, University of New Hampshire, (603) 862-4088; www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/fas/soul\_agri/save\_date\_2003.htm.

14-16: "Place-based Agriculture: The Economics, Ecology, & Community Ethics Behind Self-Sufficient Farms," 2003 National Biodynamic Conference, in Ames, IA; contact Biodynamic Farming & Gardening Assoc., (415) 561-7797; biodynamic@aol.com.

14-16: "Ecological Vineyard Management" workshop, in Leesburg, VA; contact Allan Balliett, igg@igg.com, or Jason Murray, Loudoun County Cooperative Extension, (703) 737-8978.

17-18: Organic Winegrowing Short Course, co-sponsored by

University of California Cooperative Extension, UC SAREP, and others, in Hopland, CA; contact Glenn McGourty, (707) 463-4495, gtmcgourty@ucdavis.edu; for registration, (707) 463-4495; http://cemendocino.ucdavis.edu.

17-19: 3rd Annual "Renewable Energy from Organics Recycling" Conference, co-sponsored by Environmental & Energy Study Institute, Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, and others, in Minneapolis, MN; contact Josh Alban, jalban@eesi.org; for registration, BioCycle magazine, (610) 967-4135; www.biocycle.net.

### December

1: "Building Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems: Philanthropy's Role in Informing Public Policy," second annual forum sponsored by Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders, in San Francisco, CA; contact Virginia Clarke-Laskin, (805) 687-0551; vclarke@ega.org; www.fundersnetwork.org.

4-5: "Exploring Environmental Links to Disease: A Look at Parkinson's Disease and Non-Hodgkins' Lymphoma," conference sponsored by Community Alliances of Interdependent Agriculture, Minnesota Public Health Assoc., Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society, and others, in Sioux Falls, SD; contact Jackie Hunt-Christensen, (612) 870-3424; jchristensen@iatp.org.

4-5: "Future of Our Food and Farms Summit," in Wilmington, DE; contact Maria van Hekken, Mid-Atlantic Food & Farm Coalition, (610) 530-2584; mariavHM@aol.com.

5: Proposal submission deadline for On-Farm Research Grants and Producer Grants from USDA Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program; for eligibility and details, contact Southern SARE, (770) 412-4786; groland@gaes.griffin.peachnet.edu; www.griffin.uga.edu/sare.

11-13: Eco-Farming '03, annual Acres U.S.A. Conference, with pre-conference workshops (Dec. 8-10), in Indianapolis, IN; 1-800-355-5313; info@acresusa.com.



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