



**Opponents Win  
Two-Year Delay for  
Controversial Country-  
of-Origin Labeling**

Opponents of mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) for red meat and fruits and vegetables have won a two-year delay for the controversial USDA program due to take effect this September. The delay was implemented by an amendment inserted by Republican leaders in Congress into the omnibus spending bill approved last month; those on both sides of the labeling issue see the setback as “tantamount to slow death,” the *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 13) wrote. COOL has divided the cattle and hog industries, by regional and other interests, and is opposed by the Bush Administration and many large food processors and distributors who view mandatory labels as costly and cumbersome, impeding foreign trade, and doing little to improve food safety. Proponents among farm groups and consumer advocates believe labeling would provide a marketing advantage for independent farmers and ranchers, and help purchasers make informed choices regarding food safety and quality. “Polls have shown overwhelming consumer support for origin labeling,” according to a *New York Times* editorial (Jan. 23) that urges labeling as “[an] important step, at minimal cost, in helping educate Americans about their food supply.”

**American Public Health  
Association Urges  
Moratorium on  
Concentrated Livestock  
Operations**

The American Public Health Association (APHA) has called for federal, state, and local governments to impose a “precautionary moratorium” on all new concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) until more scientific data exist to gauge their health and environmental risks, especially in regard to the health consequences for infants and children. APHA’s policy statement, one of 23 announced on January 12 ([www.apha.org/legislative](http://www.apha.org/legislative)), cites problems associated with CAFOs including air and water pollution; increasing antibiotic resistance; respiratory illnesses among CAFO workers; health problems among neighboring residents; and negative economic and social impacts on communities. An estimated 54 percent of U.S. livestock, confined in just 5 percent of the largest livestock farms, produce 575 million pounds of waste annually, the resolution stated.

**Pennsylvania Governor  
Blocks Legislation  
Limiting Local Control of  
'Factory Farms'**

Pennsylvania Governor Edward Rendell has vetoed a bill containing language that would open municipalities to lawsuits when they act to regulate ‘factory farms’ and disposal of livestock waste. In his December 31 veto message, Gov. Rendell said that H.B. 1222 fails to address “complex nutrient management issues” in a “comprehensive and progressive way” that balances the agriculture sector’s business needs and legitimate concerns over environmental impacts. The bill’s offending rider was pushed by large agribusiness interests who say that local ordinances governing factory-scale livestock operations, passed by 60 townships, have overstepped their bounds in regulating agriculture. The amendment was opposed—for its content and the “political maneuvering” that won its prior approval, without public scrutiny, in the state legislature—by environmental, family farm, and citizens groups that want local authority to compensate for weak or non-existent state and federal oversight. Selected news items compiled by Penn State University’s “Nutrient & Water Policy Update” are online at <http://agenvpolicy.aers.psu.edu/NewsAndNotices/menu3.htm>.

**Decline in Farmland  
Birds in Europe Is  
Attributed to Intensive  
Farming**

Intensive farming practices in Europe have reduced the numbers of 24 common bird species by one-third since 1980, concludes a study by BirdLife International and UK’s Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BBC News, Jan. 19; London *Guardian*, Jan. 23, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)). The inventory shows the steepest declines in northwest Europe, in the regions of most intensive agriculture. In the UK between 1970 and 1999, for example, skylarks declined by over 52 percent and corn buntings by 88 percent. BirdLife criticized EU subsidies that encourage farmers to cultivate as much land as possible, destroying bird habitat and nesting areas, and blamed pesticide use (Greenwire, Jan. 26). A BirdLife official warned of “massive declines” of farmland birds in Czech Republic, Poland, and six other nations of Eastern Europe (where species driven from Western Europe continue to thrive), should these countries adopt intensive EU-style farming methods when they join the bloc in May.

**USDA Considers  
Revamping Oversight of  
Gene-Altered Crops and  
Insects, Seeks Public  
Comment**

The USDA announced on January 23 proposed regulatory changes governing genetically modified crops and insects, including tougher rules for some organisms and more relaxed rules for others (*New York Times*, Greenwire; Jan. 23). The agency's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will prepare an environmental impact statement in connection with possible changes to include: revising the field testing permit system; expanding oversight to cover more insects intended to control pests, and to extend beyond living plants to their "downstream" products (such as corn pollen that flows from crop fields); and expanding authority to oversee crops once they have been approved for the market. The agency also proposes a multi-tiered system for biotech products that would allow faster approval for those unlikely to cause harm, while setting tougher rules for more risky technologies such as biopharmaceuticals. Information on submitting public comments, due by March 23, is online at [www.usda.gov/Newsroom/0033.04.html](http://www.usda.gov/Newsroom/0033.04.html), or contact S. Stephens, APHIS-PPD-Environmental Services, (301) 734-4836.

**U.S. Government Lacks  
"Comprehensive Policy"  
to Review Safety of  
Engineered Insects,  
Says Pew Report**

The federal government lacks a "comprehensive policy" for reviewing environmental safety and other issues surrounding gene-altered insects, according to the Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology. While a number of laws could apply to transgenic insects, federal regulators have not indicated whether and how a regulatory review would be conducted, which agencies would be involved, or how they would coordinate. Current research projects in U.S. government and academic labs include mosquitos unable to transmit malaria, honeybees altered to resist pesticides and diseases, and silkworms designed to produce stronger silk. The Pew report warns that insects provide unique safety concerns since they are highly mobile and have critical functions within ecosystems, and some projects seek to replace wild insect populations with engineered strains, or target insects in other nations. "Bugs in the System?: Issues in the Science and Regulation of Genetically Modified Insects" (119 pages) is online at [www.pewagbiotech.org](http://www.pewagbiotech.org), or phone (202) 347-9044.

**National Research  
Council Reports on  
'Bioconfinement' of  
Genetically Engineered  
Organisms**

"For the fourth time in recent years, a committee of the US National Research Council has warned regulators and developers of genetically modified organisms that science knows too little about how the organisms will behave in the real world" (Jan. 21, [www.the-scientist.com](http://www.the-scientist.com)). The latest study was commissioned by USDA to assess biological methods to contain engineered organisms, including induced sterility or "suicide genes" to kill escapees. Current efforts to confine potentially hazardous species and their transgenes have relied mostly on physical barriers such as growing fish in tanks or altering crop planting times to limit cross-pollination. The NRC panel found that most organisms would pose little threat, but those needing confinement would require multiple layers of control to lower the chance of failure; it also urged the use of non-food crops to make drugs or industrial chemicals. "The current lack of quality data and science is the single most significant factor limiting our ability to assess effective bioconfinement methods," the authors concluded. "Biological Confinement of Genetically Engineered Organisms" (220 pages) is online along with ordering information at <http://books.nap.edu>, or phone (202) 334-3313.

**Large Study of  
Pollutants in Farmed  
Salmon Renews Debate  
on Health Risks,  
Environmental Impacts**

Release of the largest survey to-date of persistent pollutants in farm-raised salmon has renewed debate on the health risks of consuming the farmed product, and the resulting media coverage has invited wider scrutiny also of the environmental impacts of intensive 'fish farming,' the fastest growing sector of the world food economy. Reporting in the January 9 issue of *Science*, a U.S. and Canadian team analyzed 14 different contaminants in 700 farmed and wild salmon collected from the world's major production regions and retail markets in large North American and European cities. Compared to wild salmon, the farmed fish contained "consistently and significantly" higher levels of total PCBs, dioxins, and two organochlorine pesticides, which concentrate in the farmed salmon from their steady diet of smaller, unmarketable wild fish, often harvested from polluted waters. Based on U.S. EPA cancer risk guidelines, the levels of several pollutants were high enough to detract from the nutritional benefits of salmon consumption, the researchers concluded. They urged more limited consumption of farmed salmon (accounting for 60 percent of salmon consumed in the U.S.), achieved by clear product labels that identify 'farmed' and 'wild' salmon and country-of-origin. The *Science* article and supplemental information is linked online from [www.albany.edu/ihe/salmonstudy/summary.html](http://www.albany.edu/ihe/salmonstudy/summary.html).

## RESOURCES

■ **Beyond Food: Towards a Multi-functional Agriculture** (21 pgs), working paper from Norwegian Agricultural Economics Institute, [www.nilf.no/Publikasjoner/Notater/En/2003/N200319Hele.pdf](http://www.nilf.no/Publikasjoner/Notater/En/2003/N200319Hele.pdf); or contact co-author Desmond Jolly, UC-Davis Small Farm Center, (530) 752-8136; [sfcenter@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sfcenter@ucdavis.edu).

■ **Breaking the Pesticide Chain: The Alternatives to Pesticides Coming Off the European Market** (32 pgs) from Friends of the Earth and Pesticide Action Network UK, [www.pan-uk.org/briefing/Chain.pdf](http://www.pan-uk.org/briefing/Chain.pdf); or contact co-author D. Buffin, [davidbuffin@pan-uk.org](mailto:davidbuffin@pan-uk.org).

■ **Building Capacity for Local and Organic Proud Foods for Retail and Restaurant Distribution in Ohio** (63 pgs) from Ohio State University and Innovative Farmers of Ohio, [www.ifoh.org](http://www.ifoh.org); print copy is \$4 from (330) 202-3527; [inwood.2@osu.edu](mailto:inwood.2@osu.edu).

■ **Conservation Security Program: Significance and Impact to Northeast Farms** (54 pgs), from survey sponsored by NE Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, [www.wildfarmmaple.com/csp/CSPsurvey\\_12.23.03.pdf](http://www.wildfarmmaple.com/csp/CSPsurvey_12.23.03.pdf); or contact NE-SAWG, (413) 323-4531, or co-author Clem Clay, UM-Amherst Study Team, [clem@som.umass.edu](mailto:clem@som.umass.edu).

■ **CSA Across the Nation**, 26-pg report from collaborative survey on community supported agriculture in U.S., [www.wisc.edu/cias/pubs/csa\\_across.pdf](http://www.wisc.edu/cias/pubs/csa_across.pdf); print copy is \$3 from Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, Univ. of Wisconsin, (608) 262-5200.

■ **Cuba Sustainable Agriculture Study Tour**, 40-pg summary from May

2003 field study tour, <http://csanr.wsu.edu/Cuba/CubaTripReport2003-09-09.pdf>; or contact Center for Sustaining Agriculture & Natural Resources, Washington State Univ., 7612 Pioneer Way E., Puyallup, WA 98371-4998.

■ **Direct Marketing Meat: A Resource for Direct Market Meat Producers in Wisconsin** (134 pgs), from Univ. of Wisconsin Extension and Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, linked from [www.savorwisconsin.com/find\\_out\\_more/educ\\_info.aspx](http://www.savorwisconsin.com/find_out_more/educ_info.aspx); or contact Savor Wisconsin, (608) 224-5117.

■ **Farm Locator**, online searchable guide to connect producers with wholesale and retail customers, and tool for creating farm/ranch webpages, from Rodale Institute's New Farm website, [www.newfarm.org/farmlocator](http://www.newfarm.org/farmlocator).

■ **Food for Thought: Food with the Farmer's Face on It**, 52-pg media briefing paper on emerging community-based food systems, from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, [www.wkkfweb.org/FSRDFullGuide.pdf](http://www.wkkfweb.org/FSRDFullGuide.pdf); or contact author Ken Meter, Crossroads Reference Center, (612) 869-8664; [kmeter@crcworks.org](mailto:kmeter@crcworks.org).

■ **Genetically Engineered (GE) Wheat**, 93-pg transcript from "GE Wheat: Is America Ready?," Second Annual Science Policy Forum on Emerging Technologies held Dec. 2003, <http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/wheat.trans1.pdf>; or contact Center for Science in the Public Interest, (202) 332-9110.

■ **A National Survey of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Participants on Environmental Effects, Wildlife Issues, and Vegetation Management**

**on Program Lands** (60 pgs), from U.S. Geological Survey, [www.fort.usgs.gov/products/publications/21075/21075-A.pdf](http://www.fort.usgs.gov/products/publications/21075/21075-A.pdf); for print copy, phone NTIS, 1-800-553-6847.

■ **Obstacles in the Agritourism Regulatory Process: Perspectives of Operators and Officials in Ten California Counties** (6 pgs), issues brief from UC Agricultural Issues Center, [www.aic.ucdavis.edu](http://www.aic.ucdavis.edu); or contact AIC, (530) 752-5451; [agissues@ucdavis.edu](mailto:agissues@ucdavis.edu).

■ **Purdue Forage Field Guide** (ID-317), 264-pg reference manual on 20 forage crops, \$8 from Purdue Univ. Extension, 1-888-398-4636; [media.order@purdue.edu](mailto:media.order@purdue.edu); preview sample pages are online at [www.agry.purdue.edu/dtc/forage\\_guide.html](http://www.agry.purdue.edu/dtc/forage_guide.html).

■ **Seeds That Give: Participatory Plant Breeding** (93 pgs) from International Development Research Centre (Canada) is \$12.95 from Stylus Publishing, 1-800-232-0223; or linked online from IDRC's thematic website on participatory plant breeding and agrobiodiversity, [www.idrc.ca/seeds](http://www.idrc.ca/seeds).

■ **Socio-economic Aspects of Animal Health and Food Safety in Organic Farming Systems** (289 pgs), proceedings from Sept. 2003 in Florence, Italy, [www.safonetwork.org/publications](http://www.safonetwork.org/publications), or contact co-editor Susanne Padel, Institute of Rural Studies, University of Wales, [sxp@aber.ac.uk](mailto:sxp@aber.ac.uk).

■ **Strategies to Revitalize Rural America** (25 pgs), compiling series of recent newsletter articles, [www.cfra.org/pdf/revitalization\\_strategies.pdf](http://www.cfra.org/pdf/revitalization_strategies.pdf); print copy is \$5 from Center for Rural Affairs, (402) 687-2100; [info@cfra.org](mailto:info@cfra.org).

## CALENDAR

### March 2004

3-4: National Forum on Agricultural Environmental Management Systems (EMS), organized by Partnerships for Livestock Environmental Management Assessment Systems Project, in Arlington, VA; contact CALS Outreach, (608) 263-1672; or UW Extension, Farm & Home Environmental Management Programs, (608) 262-0024; [www.uwex.edu/AgEMS](http://www.uwex.edu/AgEMS).

3-4: "Agriculture and the Environment," annual water quality conference, in Ames, IA; contact Gerald Miller, Iowa State Univ. Extension, (515) 294-4333; [soil@iastate.edu](mailto:soil@iastate.edu); [http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/aged/water\\_quality/MainWQ/wqm.htm](http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/aged/water_quality/MainWQ/wqm.htm).

5-6: American Grassfed Association First Annual Conference, in Topeka, KS; contact AGA, PO Box 400, Kiowa, CO 80117; (877) 774-7277; [www.americangrassfed.org](http://www.americangrassfed.org).

5-6 and Sept. 24-25: "Passive Solar Greenhouse Workshop: Design, Construction and Year-Round Production," 2-day workshops, in Spring Grove, PA; contact Steve and Carolyn Moore, Harmony Essentials, (717) 225-2489; [sandcmoore@juno.com](mailto:sandcmoore@juno.com).

5-7: "Exploring Our Part in the Plight of the Honeybee & Finding Solutions," 2nd Intl. Organic Beekeeping Conference, in Chestnut Ridge, NY; contact Pfeiffer Center, [info@pfeiffercenter.org](mailto:info@pfeiffercenter.org); [www.pfeiffercenter.org/workshops/index.asp](http://www.pfeiffercenter.org/workshops/index.asp).

11 and 18: "Introduction to Organic Farming," 2-day course covering soil science, crop nutrition, composting, cover crops, and pest control, in Unity, ME; contact MOFGA, (207) 568-4142; for content details, Eric Sideman, (207) 946-4402; [esideman@mofga.org](mailto:esideman@mofga.org).

14-16: Southwest Marketing Network Conference, in Flagstaff, AZ; contact SWMN c/o Pam Roy, Farm to Table, (505) 473-1004; [pamelaroy@aol.com](mailto:pamelaroy@aol.com); [www.swmarketing.ncat.org](http://www.swmarketing.ncat.org).

15-17: BioCycle West Coast Conference 2004, in Portland, OR; contact BioCycle magazine, [biocycle@jgpress.com](mailto:biocycle@jgpress.com); [www.jgpress.com/Conferences/wc2004/main.html](http://www.jgpress.com/Conferences/wc2004/main.html).

18-20 (also April 9-10, Oct. 16-18, Nov. 10-11, and Nov. 15-16): 2-day workshops on Soil Foodweb, Compost, and Compost Tea, in Corvallis, OR; for schedule and details, contact Soil FoodWeb Inc., (541) 752-5066; [www.soilfoodweb.com](http://www.soilfoodweb.com).

20-21: 25th Annual Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association Conference, in Johnstown, OH; contact Gwen Uetrecht, OEFFA, (614) 421-2022; [oeffa@oeffa.com](mailto:oeffa@oeffa.com); [www.oeffa.com/events.html](http://www.oeffa.com/events.html).

24: Proposal submission deadline for 2004 Producer Grants from USDA's North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program; for eligibility/details, contact NCR SARE, Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln, (402) 472-7081; [ncrsare@unl.edu](mailto:ncrsare@unl.edu).

25-28: "Growing Organic Opportunities," ACORN 4th Annual Organic Agri-Food Conference & Trade Show, including Organic Potato Symposium (March 25), in Cornwall, PEI; contact Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network, (902) 632-2523; [admin@acornorganic.org](mailto:admin@acornorganic.org); [www.acornorganic.org](http://www.acornorganic.org).

27: "Realities & Opportunities: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Conference," sponsored by Center for Rural Affairs, Land Stewardship Project, Univ. of Nebraska, and USDA Risk Management Agency, in Kearney, NE; contact Heidi Busse, (507) 523-3366, or Joy Johnson, (402) 846-5428.

29 (public event) and 30-31 (scientific workshop): "Environmental Health Impacts of CAFOs: Anticipating Hazards, Searching for Solutions," sponsored by Univ. of Iowa Environmental Health Sciences Research Center, in Iowa City, IA; contact Michal Hampton, EHSRC, (319) 335-4418; [michal-hampton@uiowa.edu](mailto:michal-hampton@uiowa.edu); [www.ehsre.org](http://www.ehsre.org).

29-April 1: "Human Dimensions of Family and Farm Forestry," symposium co-organized by Washington State Univ. and Intl. Union of Forest Research Organizations, in Pullman, WA; for program information, (509) 335-2963; [familyforestry@wsu.edu](mailto:familyforestry@wsu.edu); to register, (509) 335-2811; [ceeps@wsu.edu](mailto:ceeps@wsu.edu); or [www.family-forestrysymposium.wsu.edu/conference/papers.html](http://www.family-forestrysymposium.wsu.edu/conference/papers.html).



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