

December 28th, 2010

WikiLeaks: U.S. Ambassador to France Plotted to Retaliate over Monsanto Corn Ban

In 2007, France banned Monsanto's MON-810 genetically engineered corn, which contains Bt, an insecticide that is in every cell of the corn plant and kills any insects that feed on the corn. This means, of course, that if you eat the corn, you're eating an insecticide, and several animal studies in the past few years have implicated Bt in possible harm to human health.

Now documents released by WikiLeaks show that former Ambassador Craig Stapleton tried to punish France for its ban, worrying that it could further the anti-GE food sentiment already present in Europe. Stapleton recommended that **"We calibrate a target retaliation list that causes some pain across the EU since this is a collective responsibility, but that also focuses in part on the worst culprits."** In other words, a sovereign nation actually had the gall (Gaul? – har, har, har) to prioritize the health of its citizens over corporate profits. How dare they?

For the full story, see Truthout's website [here](#).

More than Food, Another Important Story from WikiLeaks

In another WikiLeaks revelation, we now have evidence that the U.S. ambassador to Bangladesh, James Moriarty, pressured government officials there to re-consider a controversial coal mine that would have evicted nearly 130,000 people, mostly farmers and fishermen producing local food in Bangladesh's breadbasket region.

The mining company had 60% U.S. investment, primarily from one man, New York hedge fund manager Christian Leone. According to leading activist Anu Mohammad, **"We have seen for decades that the US Embassy works as lobby staff for corporations-and not for the people."**

This is especially disgusting because coal, besides all the pollution problems it causes, is a leading source of carbon dioxide production and subsequent global warming. Low-

lying Bangladesh is especially vulnerable to rising sea levels caused by global warming. Add it up: Destruction of prime farmland, displacement of hundreds of thousands of farmers, and an exacerbation of a problem that will displace millions more on Bangladesh's coastal areas.

Ambassador Moriarty's view of all this? **“Open-pit mining seemed the best way forward.”** Go [here](#) for the full story.

Finally – the FDA Reveals How Many Antibiotics are in Your Meat

As you know, I'm often critical of the FDA. Its approval of rBGH was unconscionable, its dependence on corporate testing for the safety of GMO's is absurd, and, on a personal note, they've continued to stonewall me on answering very simple questions following up their incomplete response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

OK, now that I have that off my chest, let's give the agency some credit. It just released a report on how many antibiotics are being pumped into animals used for meat in the U.S. The final total: 29 million pounds in 2009. This report is a major step toward legislation that will stop this shameless practice.

I don't have any problem with administering antibiotics to sick animals. I've got a BIG problem with factory farms routinely giving antibiotics to their animals in their food to try to counter-act the filthy, crowded conditions that produce so much disease. And so do you – these antibiotics can't help but increase antibiotic resistance in humans, an extremely serious public health problem.

Tom Philpott of Grist puts this into perspective in an excellent article [here](#).

Humane Society Exposes Smithfield Farms' Abuse of Pigs

How would you like to live nearly your entire life in a cage that barely allowed you to move? This is the fate of pigs in our “efficient” animal agriculture practiced by companies like Smithfield. Of course, these companies routinely refuse access to the

mainstream media or the public into these factory farms, because they know full well how people would be horrified at how these animals are treated.

God bless the Humane Society of the U.S. that managed to get an undercover reporter into one of Smithfield's facilities to film the abuse. Grist's Philpott has the video and accompanying text [here](#).

How can Smithfield and other meat companies like Tyson get away with this? Here are a few facts and figures that will surprise absolutely no one: Meat company individuals and political action committees gave \$1.6 million to federal candidates in 2008. They spent \$6.2 million in lobbying expenses in 2008. How much did the meat companies spend in the 2010 election? I don't know. Thanks to the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision, many of the campaign contributions were secret.

Connecting the Dots

Consider the four stories above. It's a tragic irony that while foreign individuals and corporations can now secretly pay for U.S. campaign contributions, U.S. individuals and corporations – working through the U.S. government – are similarly destroying democracy throughout the world. Of course, this last part has been going on for decades.

Not Food Genes, But What You Should Know About Human Genes

There has been a growing movement to connect most or all human diseases to particular genes we may or may not have. This movement has been promoted by genetic scientists who are often financially connected to genetic testing for individuals. And to be sure, there are a few diseases, such as cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia, Huntington's Disease and certain kinds of breast cancer that have been linked to particular genes.

But as a very well-researched article by Jonathan Latham and Allison Wilson points out, most of the major diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, obesity, autism, depression, etc., have little or nothing to do with specific genes. The fact is, we're giving ourselves these diseases through creating environmentally dangerous conditions (think

coal-burning power plants and pesticides) or by personal lifestyle choices, such as eating meat and highly processed foods laced with hormones and GMO's, and too many of them. For the full article, go [here](#).

Pictures on Food and the Environment

I was contacted by Shelly Salter, a reader who had been fooled by Haagen-Dazs' claim of being "All Natural," and how she was contacting them to let them know she wasn't happy with their allowing rBGH. She is also a professional artist and has several pictures on food and the environment. To check them out, go [here](#).

To all of you, best wishes for a New Year that's full of health, happiness and hope. And if you're in the 20% of Americans looking for a job, best of luck for landing one.

December 6th, 2010

Oregon PSR rBGH Harm to Cow Report Now Available

The new Oregon PSR Fact Sheet on the physical harm that rBGH (rBST) causes dairy cows is now available. The front-and-back sheet, attached to this update, highlights the overwhelming evidence that rBGH increases the risks to cows. A few sample quotes:

"From 1994 to 2005, the FDA received **2,408** adverse drug reaction reports from farmers that described harmful effects to cows injected with rBGH."

"Health Canada . . . had to reject the request for approval to use rBST in Canada, as it presents a sufficient and unacceptable threat to the safety of dairy cows."

" 'It's (rBGH) like steroids for athletes,' said Stephen H. Taylor, New Hampshire's Commissioner of Agriculture Markets and Food and a dairy farmer himself."

Virtually all major animal protection agencies oppose rBGH. Elanco, current manufacturer of rBGH, continues to either ignore, deny or downplay the harmful effects of rBGH on cows.

Debate on GMO's on TV Tomorrow

Dr. Michael Hansen, senior scientist at Consumers Union, and Jeffrey Smith, Director of the Institute for Responsible Technology, are featured on a debate on GMO's tomorrow, Tuesday, Dec. 7 on the Dr. Oz show. They're debating Dr. Pam Ronald, who's very pro-GMO. This should be almost as much fun as the Ducks-Beavers Civil War game.

In the Portland area, the show will be aired at 3:00 pm on KATU, Channel 2. For local listings outside this area, go [here](#).

GE Sugar Beet Battle Rages On

On November 30, federal district judge Jeffrey White ruled that GE sugar beet seedlings planted in September must be destroyed. These would have been planted to produce seed containing Monsanto's Roundup Ready sugar beets.

The ruling resulted from a lawsuit filed by Earthjustice and the Center for Food Safety. White had previously ruled that these seedlings couldn't be planted until the USDA had conducted an environmental impact study. But then the USDA, defying the court order, allowed the seedlings to be planted. For further details, go [here](#).

WikiLeaks Uncovers U.S. Promotion of GE Crops in Africa

Tom Laskawy of Grist Magazine did some digging in the Wikileaks information on the current activities of our State Department personnel. Besides now being asked to become spies (and I find this truly disturbing), this is what they are being asked to promote in the sub-Saharan nations of Burundi, Republic of Congo and Rwanda:

“Government acceptance of genetically modified food and propagation of genetically modified crops.”

Unfortunately, this shouldn't come as a total surprise. The State Department's main scientific food advisor is Dr. Nina Federoff, who was appointed by the Bush

Administration and kept on by the Obama administration. She is a rabid pro-GE food supporter but even goes beyond that – she thinks organic food is a “romantic agri-myth” and dismisses it as a trivial farming method. For the full story, go [here](#).

Coming Events

Friends of Family Farmers will be holding a special InFARMatIon session Tuesday, Dec. 14 from 6-8 pm at Holocene at SE 10th and Morrison in Portland that will include representatives of all kinds of organizations promoting sustainable agriculture, plus a silent auction for FOFF. For more details, go [here](#).

Ecumenical Ministries' Interfaith Network of Earth Concerns will host the Earth Care Summit Monday, Jan. 31 from 6 to 8:45 p.m. at Neveh Shalom at 2900 SW Peaceful Lane in Portland. This year's theme is “Food and Faith” and will feature a locally grown dinner, inspirational speakers and examples of projects of local congregations that have promoted sustainable food and environmental stewardship. For more information, go [here](#).

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving holiday.

November 22nd, 2010

USDA to Public: You Don't Need to Know About GE Bentgrass Contamination

Bentgrass is the kind of grass used for golf course greens. The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, working with Monsanto, tested a genetically engineered Roundup Ready variety in central Oregon and southwest Idaho from 2003 to 2005. Bentgrass is considered a weed in wild areas and is often killed by Roundup or its aquatic equivalent, Rodeo. It hasn't been approved for commercial sale.

Carol Mallory-Smith, a scientist at Oregon State, discovered that the GE bentgrass escaped its test plots and contaminated natural bentgrass, both in central Oregon and now, in eastern Oregon. She reported the latest incident to Scott's, the USDA and the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture and asked them to notify the public. All refused.

The USDA said they're still looking at the incident. “When the investigation is complete, we will notify the public of our findings.” Katy Coba, Director of the Oregon Dept. of

Agriculture, said “It’s not an Oregon Dept. of Agriculture issue . . . This is strictly a federal issue.” Mallory-Smith, to her credit, wasn’t amused with the responses and went public with the contamination incident. She thought that the data should be made available to both sides in the current GE sugar beet controversy.

For the full story, go [here](#).

And Speaking of GE Sugar Beets . . . Please Take Action!

A federal court has already ruled that GE sugar beets are illegal because the USDA failed (have you ever noticed how many times I use that phrase “the USDA failed”?) to conduct a proper analysis of their environmental effects and the financial harm their contamination of non-GE sugar beets could do to farmers. Consequently, the court ruled that the commercialization of the GE sugar beets was illegal and planting must stop.

Now the USDA is trying to do an end run by allowing the “partial” planting of GE sugar beets. To easily send an electronic note to the USDA protesting their actions, just go [here](#) and use the Center For Food Safety’s direct link to just . . . say . . . no. Thank you!

Thank You to Volunteer Researchers

For the past month, a group of volunteers has been doing research for Oregon PSR and I wanted to acknowledge their efforts. A big THANK YOU to Celia Murray, David Young, Diane Benya, Erin Freyer, Garry Kelly, James Hagar, Pwyll Lalouken and William Dettwyler! Their work has already led to a better understanding of the physical harm that rBGH does to cows.

Opposition to GE Salmon Mounts

Most people really, really hate the idea of GE salmon and are letting the FDA know about it. Working with Health Care Without Harm, I recently sent a sign-on letter to the FDA from six Oregon hospitals expressing concern with human health risks and saying that if the FDA approves the “Frankenfish” it must be labeled. A big THANK YOU to Good Samaritan (Corvallis), Good Shepherd (Hermiston), Legacy Good Samaritan (Portland), OHSU (Portland), Oregon State (Salem) and St. Charles (Bend).

Also, MANY THANKS to Barbara Sha Cox, Judy Heumann, Kathy Syrstad, Nancy Gledhill and Pwyll Lalouken for their help in getting the postcards to the FDA opposing GE salmon out to their friends and family.

Off Topic But Hopefully On Target

This is personal and not specifically about food nor officially part of Oregon PSR's Campaign For Safe Food. As you know, I've been very concerned about what I see as the corporate take-over of our government, especially since the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision last January, which opened the floodgates of secret corporate money into the political campaigns. Of course, this corporate influence IS very much connected to our work on GE food, rBGH and the industrial meat system.

I was so upset about the current state of affairs that I wrote an open letter to President Obama and the Democratic Party that was posted by the Oregonian's website [here](#). I hope each of you will take a look at it, and whether you agree or disagree, take a minute to comment on it. I'd be very interested in your thoughts. Thank you.

I fully realize that some of you may be dropping this update after reading my letter. That's ok. We all need to do what we feel is necessary. But if you have similar concerns, I recommend you see author Chris Hedges. He'll be talking about his new book "The Death of the Liberal Class" at Powell's on Burnside Wednesday, Dec. 1 at 7:30 p.m.

Happy Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday of the year. No consumerism, just getting together with family and friends and having an incredibly delicious (non-GE!) meal. It's also my opportunity to thank you, my friends, for your interest and efforts in promoting safe food. The progress we've made simply could not have been accomplished without you.

November 12th, 2010

Take Action - Comments on GE Salmon Labeling Due Nov. 22

No way, no how do we want genetically engineered salmon. If the FDA approves this "Frankenfish," it's giving the green light to a fish that has NOT been tested adequately

for effects on human health and could very well decimate non-GE salmon if it escapes into a natural environment.

While the debate goes on within the FDA over whether to approve GE salmon, the agency is asking for public comments on whether it should be labeled if it is approved. If this seems like a bit of cart-before-the-horse (fish?) to you, it does to me too, but that's what we're dealing with, so let's make the best of it.

It's easy to support labeling by contacting the FDA through e-mail. You can go through our partners at the [Center for Food Safety](#) or [Credo Action](#). For a great rationale of labeling, see Consumer Union's Michael Hansen's remarks [here](#).

There's more – if you want postcards opposing the approval of GE salmon in the first place, we're working with the Center for Food Safety, who has pre-printed and pre-addressed them. Just contact me and let me know your address and how many you want. I'll send them to you directly.

Indy Billboard Companies to Breast Cancer Action: GET LOST

Eli Lilly is the Indianapolis-based parent company of Elanco, its animal drug division that produces and sells rBGH. Breast Cancer Action, a member of our anti-rBGH coalition, tried to rent billboards in the Indianapolis area with the message **“Eli Lilly is making us sick. Tell them to stop.”**

Guess what? All 10 billboard companies that Breast Cancer Action approached refused to take their money and put the billboard up. If ever you wanted an example of raw corporate power to censor a message that needs to get out, this is it. For the full story, go [here](#). Also, Breast Cancer Action, in response, has launched a “Be the Billboard” campaign, asking people to circulate pictures of its billboard virally. We encourage you to take part – just go [here](#).

Facebook Ice Cream Campaign Off and Running

Congratulations to Lydia Garcia, a recent graduate of Portland State University, who has initiated a Facebook campaign focused on college students and people in their 20's (you know, people that live and breathe through social marketing, as opposed to fossils like me).

The campaign is aimed at our old friends at Breyer's and Dreyers and their associated brands, who continue to allow the use of rBGH in their ice cream products.

Indian States Moving Forward

Two states in India, Kerala in the south and Sikkim in the north, have started converting farmland to **ALL certified organic**. Kerala's goal is to be 100% organic by 2020 and Sikkim's goal is to be fully converted by 2015. This is fantastic news and another example of progressive farmers turning their back on GE crops and the entire industrial pesticide-based agriculture system.

And more than that, the new enlightened policy is providing interest-free loans to small and poor farmers. This is the progressive, positive future of agriculture, not the industrial model that is so consistently promoted by Big Ag.

More Wisdom from India

Vandana Shiva is an Indian physicist, feminist and environmental and food activist. She is the founder/director of Navdanya Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Ecology. I've seen her talks on several occasions and even had the privilege of sitting at her table at lunch at a conference and discussing various aspects of agriculture. She is a human dynamo.

She wrote an article in The Age (Australian) "Time to End War Against the Earth" that I thought was, as usual, right on target.

French Supermarket Chain Starts Labeling

According to Meatingplace.com, the giant French grocery chain Carrefour has begun labeling many of its animal food products as "fed without GMO's" (genetically modified organisms). The items will include pork, poultry, eggs, farmed fish, and eventually milk products. This marks the first time that a supermarket chain has used such labels, as opposed to identifying if the food itself contained GMO's.

Eye-Opening Video on Differences Between GMO's and Other Breeding

Biotech companies love to tout GMO's as "predictable," "proven safe," etc. That's baloney. There is a new video available that does a very good job illustrating the differences between GMO's and other breeding. It's from Cibus, a San Diego-based company that has recently developed non-GMO herbicide-resistant crops. The video is available [here](#).

Of course, bear in mind this is from another corporation that has still bought into certain aspects of industrial agriculture. And there may be other problems with their specific techniques that we don't know about. But I give Cibus credit for being upfront about some of the risks of GMO's and making it public.

Slightly Off-Topic, But You Need to Know About Hershey's

Since I was a little kid, I've enjoyed Hershey's chocolate. My favorites were regular old Hershey Bars, both plain and almond, and Hershey's Kisses, especially around days like Christmas, Halloween and Easter. No more – I won't be buying any more Hershey's chocolate until they change their ways.

Author John Robbins has written a blockbuster article in [Huffington Post](#) on the horrible conditions of people, typically young children, providing the chocolate for Hershey. Here's an excerpt:

According to an [investigative report](#) by the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), hundreds of thousands of children are being purchased from their parents for a pittance, or in some cases outright stolen, and then shipped to Ivory Coast, where they are enslaved on cocoa farms. These children typically come from countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Togo. Destitute parents in these poverty-stricken lands sell their children to traffickers believing that they will find honest work once they arrive in Ivory Coast and then send some of their earnings home. But that's not what happens. These children, usually 11-to-16-years-old but sometimes younger, are forced to do hard manual labor 80 to 100 hours a week. They are paid nothing, receive no education, are barely fed, are beaten regularly, and are often viciously beaten if they try to escape. Most will never see their families again.

Hershey has gone from being one of the most progressive companies in the country to one of the worst. What's more, many other chocolate companies are now sourcing chocolate from fair trade companies that actually treat and pay their workers well. Please read this article [here](#) and find out how to contact Hershey directly and tell them to stop their inexcusable practices.

October 15th, 2010

Ohio rBGH Decision Update

Ohio Dept. of Agriculture lawyers asked for, and received, an extension until Oct. 28 to decide whether they will appeal the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals decision that overturned most of their proposed rules restricting rBGH-free labeling on dairy products. To be granted an appeal, they have to show that the issue is very important and that there was a serious legal error in the decision. It can be argued that this is a very important issue, but we don't see where any legal error at all has been made, much less a serious one. At this point, we simply don't know what they will do.

October is Non-GMO Month

Everyone should be aware of the [Non-GMO Project](#). This is a “non-profit collaboration of manufacturers, retailers, processors, distributors, farmers, seed companies and consumers.” Their “shared belief is that everyone deserves an informed choice about whether or not to consumer genetically modified products, and our common mission is to ensure the sustained availability of non-GMO choices.”

This is the first program to require third-party verification that a particular food is non-GMO, and they are labeled accordingly. Hundreds of food items have already been verified. It requires at least one post-harvest test of each batch, setting a threshold of 0.9%. Unfortunately, with foods such as corn, soybeans, canola and cotton (cottonseed oil), there has been so much contamination that it's often difficult to find completely GMO-free plants. Fortunately, at least so far, the vast majority of fruits and vegetables grown don't have any GMO varieties.

This is Non-GMO Month, and you can do your part by buying non-GMO foods, supporting everyone that is working so hard to protect our food supply.

Tough Times for Monsanto

My, how the mighty have fallen.

Late last year, Forbes Magazine declared Monsanto “company of the year.” A few weeks ago, a television stock market analyst said Monsanto “may be the worst stock of 2010.” Their stock price has nose-dived 42% since the beginning of the year.

What happened? One big reason is that more and more farmers are ordering the Chinese equivalent of Roundup, which is much cheaper. Another is that Roundup itself, as previously reported here, has generated all kinds of resistant weeds, which virtually anyone in the anti-GMO movement saw coming years ago. And oh yes, the Justice Department is investigating the biotech behemoth for antitrust violations.

Then there's the news that Monsanto's new SmartStax corn, which has eight inserted genes, isn't producing any more yield than their older varieties. Now they have to discount the huge premium they were charging farmers. For more details, see the New York Times article [here](#).

I have another thought. This is truly one of the most hated corporations on earth. Even though numerous farmers have bought Monsanto's products, many of them know how they have taken non-GMO seeds off the market, bullied farmers and threatened and sued those who oppose them. It's not surprising that if farmers get the chance to avoid doing business with a company they despise, they'll take it.

More Damning Scientific Evidence Against Roundup

For over five years, there have been disturbing reports that babies born to women in Argentina exposed to the large-scale applications of Roundup have higher rates of birth defects. Now comes a study showing that glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, caused malformations in chicken and frog embryos at doses far lower than levels allowed in the U.S. and European Union.

The findings were published in *Chemical Research and Toxicology*. Lead researcher Andres Carrasco of the University of Buenos Aires Medical School said that “The findings in the lab are compatible with malformations observed in humans exposed to glyphosate during pregnancy.”

Senators Protest GE Salmon

Hats off to eleven U.S. senators who were signed on to a letter to FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg asking her to stop approval of GE salmon “to protect consumers, fishing and coastal communities and the environment.”

The letter didn’t pull any punches. As we outlined in a previous update, the science that supposedly ensured the safety of this salmon for human health was abysmal. The senators said it “recklessly and needlessly endangers consumer health.”

I’d especially like to congratulate the two senators from Oregon, Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden. On behalf of all of us in the public health community, thank you for standing up for what’s right.

Ice Cream Action Alert in Spanish

Our action alert asking Breyers (including Good Humor, Klondike bars and Popsicle) and Dreyer’s (including Nestle, Edy’s and Haagen Dazs) to go rBGH-free will be available in Spanish next week on our website. A big thanks to Francisco Gadea for again translating for us!

Thank You to Consumers Union and Ben & Jerry’s

Finally, another thank you to Consumers Union (publisher of *Consumer Reports*), who invited me to present on our rBGH campaign two weeks ago in Yonkers, NY, and Ben & Jerry’s, who invited me to present at their office in Burlington, VT. The presentations and ensuing discussions were very enjoyable and hopefully, informative.

Which reminds me to remind you, if you’d like a speaker on GMO’s, rBGH and/or the industrial meat system for your group, just e-mail or call me. The programs are very simple to set up.

Blockbuster rBGH Decision

Everyone – Last Thursday, the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals over-ruled almost all decisions of the U.S. District Court allowing the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture's rules restricting dairies from labeling their products rBGH-free (rBST-free). The lower court's decision was appealed by the Organic Trade Association and International Dairy Foods Association, which had brought the original suit.

Here's a summary of the main points of what the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture had tried to do, spurred on by their friends at Monsanto and the Ohio Farm Bureau, and what the Court of Appeals said:

Ohio: Said that claims relating to the composition of milk such as "rBGH-free," "rBST-free" or "No artificial hormones" labels were misleading and illegal.

Court: Over-ruled – There was little evidence of consumers being misled. The labels are legal.

Ohio: Said that the FDA disclaimer asserting there is no significant difference between rBGH and rBGH-free is required to be put on the label of any dairy saying that the production didn't allow rBGH.

Court: Allowed the requiring of the disclaimer to stand, BUT

Ohio: Said the disclaimer had to be contiguous to the claim on the label (which would have made it impossible for many national dairies to comply, since there wasn't enough room on the front of the label)

Court: Over-ruled – Said there was no legitimate reason to force this, saying an asterisk and putting the disclaimer somewhere else on the label was perfectly adequate

But it gets even better than that. The court ruled that "a compositional difference does exist" between rBGH and rBGH-free milk. The court cited the scientific arguments laid out in an amici curiae (friends of the court) statement submitted by the Center for Food Safety. It provided scientific information provided by Consumers Union and signed by Oregon PSR and several other organizations. Oregon PSR provided information and reviewed the amici statement as it was being drafted.

This is highly significant. This is the first time since the FDA approved rBGH in 1993 that a federal government jurisdiction actually took the scientific research on milk composition from rBGH-injected cows seriously and challenged the FDA.

There are still details to be worked out which have been sent back to the lower court. Also, Ohio could also ask that this be taken to the U.S. Supreme Court. Things can be sticky and we're working closely with our colleagues to monitor the situation. But for right now, there are many reasons to celebrate.

To put this in context, Monsanto and their allies had led attempts in eight states from 2007 to 2009 to either ban or restrict rBGH-free labeling so that consumers wouldn't be able to tell which dairies banned the use of the hormone. Our coalition of anti-rBGH organizations had stopped the attempts in seven out of the eight.

But not Ohio. In spite of our best attempts (I went to Columbus three times to testify and/or meet with state officials), and in spite of thousands of consumer comments protesting the proposed rules, the Dept. of Agriculture wrote their rules anyway.

Again, this was a great team effort – scientists, lawyers, physicians, consumer/health advocates and activists of all stripes worked together to pull this off.

September 24th, 2010

Sorting Out the Salmon

In all the years I've been working on genetically engineered (GE) food issues, I've never seen one get covered by the mainstream media like the proposed introduction of GE salmon. It's about time. They usually ignore all the serious problems and sweep the health and environmental risks under the rug.

Of course, we have a lot to worry about, namely that FDA will approve GE salmon. And if they approve it, it probably won't be required to be labeled. And finally, it may try to interfere with non-GE salmon processors who would rightfully want to go label their salmon non-GE.

But we don't know for sure at this point, so let's go back to the beginning and go over the basics:

Who's doing this? The name of the company that developed the fish is AquaBounty, based in Massachusetts.

What's different about the GE salmon? They grow to maturity about twice as fast as natural Atlantic salmon.

How is this done? They're inserting growth hormone genes from a different (Pacific) salmon, plus DNA from the anti-freeze genes of a completely different eel-like fish, the ocean pout. Normally, the growth hormone in salmon is only activated in the summer, but the engineering turns on the growth hormone all year round, enabling it to grow faster.

What does the FDA say? The committee chosen to review the GE salmon was the Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee (VMAC). They had tentatively said that the GE salmon is safe for human consumption and the environment. They also said that they didn't believe there was reason to require AquaBounty to label GE salmon for consumers, if it's approved.

However, in spite of several somewhat mystifying newspaper articles, many committee members may have been swayed by strong testimony at the hearings the past few days opposing the salmon.

What did the newspapers (including the NY Times) miss? In addition to the attitudes of some of the committee members, most keep getting a key point wrong on the labeling. In discussing the labeling issue, many referred to the rBGH situation, in which the FDA rules that dairies using rBGH aren't required to label it. The FDA guidelines also allow rBGH-free dairies to say so on their labels, as long as they don't make any health claims. However, the FDA does NOT, I repeat NOT REQUIRE that rBGH-free dairies add the disclaimer from the FDA that there is no significant difference between rBGH and rBGH-free milk. (Obviously, we totally disagree). It's a RECOMMENDATION, not a REQUIREMENT.

What's wrong with the science AquaBounty used to declare the GE salmon was safe? A LOT.

According to Consumer Union's senior scientist Michael Hansen, PhD, "There is sloppy science, small sample sizes (only 6 fish per group for the allergenicity study), questionable practices (manipulating IGF-1 data), and woefully inadequate analysis (a conclusion of growth hormone levels in the flesh, despite having no data at all on growth hormone levels due to use of insensitive test methodology). This analysis does not conform to FDA standard for assessment of a New Animal Drug (NAD). FDA requires New Animal Drugs to be shown to be safe for animals, humans and the environment. This has not been shown for the GE salmon."

Yes, you read that right. There were only 6 fish tested for allergenicity. I've been in touch with Michael throughout the hearings this week, and he said that the level of safety testing was so inadequate that if a college undergraduate turned it in for a project it would be dismissed. To see his full testimony, go [here](#).

What's the environmental problem? Contamination of wild salmon. The concern is that these fish will escape into the wild and outcompete wild salmon, leading to their extermination. AquaBounty counters that these will only be grown in closed pens inland and that they will only produce sterile females. Unfortunately, the track record of biotech firms saying there will be no contamination of GE crops has proved abysmally wrong. Human error is always a factor, as it could be here. Also, most scientific experts say that 100% sterility of the females is no sure thing. Even the committee members agreed there should be a full Environmental impact Statement before GE salmon are approved.

Where does the public stand on GE salmon? Squarely against it. Here are results from various polls:

On labeling – KSPT News Poll (Minneapolis, MN)

Favoring special labeling for GE salmon: 93.8%

No special labeling: 6.2%

National Public Radio Poll: “If FDA approves genetically engineered salmon, would you eat it?”

Yes, pass the lemon: 26.77%

No way! 57.65%

Let me get back to you: 15.58%

Wall Street Journal Poll: “Would you eat genetically-modified salmon if approved by the FDA?”

Yes: 36.5%

No: 60.0% -

Don't eat salmon: 3%

Food and Water Watch Poll: “Should the FDA approve genetically engineered salmon?”

Yes: 16%

No: 78%

Don't know: 6%

What's next and what can we do about this? The committee will come up with its final recommendations. There will be a 30-day public comment period on the environmental assessment and 60-day public comment period on labeling open until Nov. 22, 2010. We'll be working with our colleagues in other organizations to make it easy for you to comment. In the meantime, here are links to their websites on this:

[Center for Food Safety](#)

[Food and Water Watch](#)

[Friends of the Earth](#)

[Organic Consumers Association](#)

Thank You, Volunteers

At the Susan Komen Health Expo in Portland last weekend, we handed out thousands of pieces of literature and got 1,000+ postcards signed asking Breyers and Dreyer's to go rBGH-free. We've been tabling at this event for years and I've never seen a response so big.

This level of activity would never have been possible without the volunteers who gave their time to help at the table. A big THANK YOU to Kate Christy, Judy Davis, John Hewes, Sasha Kaplan, Lori Koeb, Karla Lindquist, Ann Pedersen, Mary Saunders and Sandra Smit. And another big thanks to Caroline Skinner and everyone at Rachel's Friends who got hundreds more postcards signed at their table at VegFest, which was going on simultaneously at the Convention Center.

Oregon PSR All Over the Internet

All kinds of people are contacting Oregon PSR for information, advice and offers to help on our ice cream campaign. The biggest boost came from author and speaker John

Robbins' August 19th [posting](#) in the [Huffington Post](#) entitled "Is Your Favorite Ice Cream Made with Monsanto's Artificial Hormones?" Robbins' best-sellers include *Diet for A New America*, *The Food Revolution* and *Healthy at 100*.

The article attracted over 176,000 views and led to over 9,700 Facebook postings and over 2,300 Twitter posts. It also had nearly 1,100 comments. The direct link to Oregon PSR's action alert to contact Breyers and Dreyer's to ask them to go rBGH-free led to over 3,500 people going to our website, where they were provided with direct e-mail links and phone numbers to the two companies.

Robbins' posting led to another [article](#) on September 13th by Dr. Joseph Mercola on his nationally-recognized website, which deals with all types of health issues, including food. He commented that "Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) has organized a major drive to get these two large ice cream producers to stop the use of rBGH. If you'd like to contact Breyers and Dreyer's and ask them to stop the use of rBGH, [PSR explains exactly how you can do so](#). Mercola's article attracted over 54,000 views and led to over 3,500 Facebook postings.

Oregon PSR was also contacted by the [Daily Beast](#) for its opinions on harmful substances in food and ran an [article](#) September 16th entitled "The Most Dangerous Food Ingredients." Viewing statistics are not available, but it's known that the Daily Beast routinely attracts tens of thousands of views on its own. When it gets picked up by other websites, it often goes into the hundreds of thousands, and the article was picked up by several others.

Regarding aspartame (NutraSweet), I was quoted as saying that I "wouldn't touch that stuff with a ten foot pole." On ractopamine, a drug injected into pigs to make them grow faster at the end of their life, and which has been linked to heart disease, I noted that over 160 countries have banned its use. Unfortunately, our warnings on genetically engineered crops such as corn, soybeans and canola were not mentioned enough by others who were contacted and did not make the cut to get into the article.

Finally, the Aug. 30 [International Business Times](#) ran an article critical of rBGH and noted "Recently, the Oregon chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility has set its sights on Breyers and Dreyer's, the two largest ice cream companies in the country, in an effort to have them also commit to the use of milk free from growth hormone."

September 9th, 2010

Oregon Ice Cream Goes Completely rBGH-Free

GREAT NEWS! Oregon Ice Cream, headquartered in Vancouver, WA, with production plants in Eugene, has announced they are now completely rBGH-free.

Oregon Ice Cream produces several brands of its own, including Julie's and Alden's, which are organic, and Cascade Fresh, Dutch Girl and LaCremosa Italian Ice Cream,

plus novelty items. The company has a very strong niche in food service (especially hospitals), with Cascade Fresh and private label brands. It's the 97th largest dairy processor in the country. The organic brands are sold all over the country and the conventional brands in 14 western states in over 1,000 ice cream stores and 6,000 food service establishments.

I had presented our rBGH Power Point to their sales leadership in April via a webinar and provided additional information after that. Also, several food distributors who worked with hospital food managers had requested rBGH-free ice cream. The main reason they went rBGH-free was simple: "The demand was there."

A big THANK YOU to Oregon Ice Cream for taking this important step – we very much appreciate it!

Mom's Website Takes it Viral to Breyers and Dreyer's

A big thank you to the website/blog [Healthy Child–Healthy World](#) for posting an entry on our ice cream campaign! Check it out [here](#).

Dr. Jenny Pompilio, a pediatrician, mother and former board president of Oregon PSR, had contacted Janelle Sorensen at Healthy Child–Healthy World and Janelle was delighted to be able to help us out. As of today, between the website and Facebook, the blog received 46,249 impressions.

Our viral ice cream campaign continues to build. If you have connections to any other website/blog that you think might be interested in helping us out, please let me know. Breast Cancer Action Takes on Elanco – Please Sign Their Petition

For years, Breast Cancer Action has been opposed to rBGH. They launched their 2010 Milking Cancer Action September 1st. Here's an excerpt from their suggested Facebook posting that sums up how they feel:

"Eli Lilly is the sole worldwide manufacturer and distributor of rBGH, a dairy hormone that may increase your risk of breast cancer. They also manufacture a drug claiming to "prevent" breast cancer. Completing the perfect breast cancer profit cycle, Eli Lilly makes drugs like Gemzar that treat breast cancer. We're looking for 6,280 outraged and bold people – that's one person for every day that rBGH has been on the market – to stand up to Eli Lilly with us. We are committed to getting Eli Lilly to stop Milking Cancer. Stand with us for women's health—sign the petition and be one of the 6,280." Here's the [petition](#) – please sign it – thank you!

Monsanto – Gates Foundation Connection Questioned

I think the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation tries to do a lot of good things, but their connections with Monsanto and industrial agriculture are very disturbing.

For instance, Rob Horsch, formerly Monsanto Vice President of International Development Partnerships, was hired as the Senior Program Officer of the Gates Agricultural Development Program. Now comes news that, according to a financial website, the Gates Foundation now includes 500,000 shares of Monsanto stock, worth an estimated \$23.1 million. This is a huge increase from its previous reported holding of slightly more than \$360,000.

The Gates Foundation is pushing its Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) to help alleviate hunger. Unfortunately, Monsanto is intimately involved in it and using as its model the disastrous industrial framework of heavy use of fertilizers, pesticides and genetically engineered crops, produced, naturally, by Monsanto.

I don't know if this fits the legal definition of conflict of interest, but it sure looks like one to me. For the full story, go [here](#).

Latest GE Sugar Beet Slap in the Face

Regular readers of this update know that I'm often, to put it mildly, displeased with the USDA. Well, here they go again.

On August 13th, U.S. District Court judge Jeffrey White ruled that the planting of genetically engineered sugar beets was illegal because the USDA had failed to prepare an environmental impact statement on Monsanto's Roundup Ready sugar beets. The main concerns were the same ones that have been borne out with other GE crops, namely the genetic contamination of organic and conventional non-GE sugar beets and other crops and the promotion of "superweeds" resistant to Roundup, which are now an enormous problem in soybean and cotton fields throughout the South and Midwest.

So what does the USDA do? On September 1st, it announced it was in the process of issuing permits to authorize the planting of GE sugar beets without any environmental review. According to Andy Kimbrell of the Center for Food Safety, "USDA has become a rogue agency in its regulation of biotech crops. Despite numerous court opinions, congressional mandates and federal investigations, it continues to act illegally." Another court challenge to this could be next. For the full story, go [here](#).

Slap-Happy, Part 2

Meanwhile, over at our other favorite government agency, the FDA, things are going, um, swimmingly, while the rest of us are drowning in government bureaucratic bum decisions. Personally, I think the whole situation is all wet. (Sorry, once I got going with the water references, it was hard to stop.)

I'm referring to the FDA's opinion rendered last week that genetically engineered salmon are as safe as conventional salmon. This is paving the way for the fish to become the first genetically engineered animal approved for human consumption.

For a good review, see the New York Times article [here](#). But we need you to do more than read about this. Please TAKE ACTION by going to the Friends of the Earth website [here](#) to make direct comments to the FDA. It gives you all the major objections to this extremely ill-advised proposal. The deadline is September 16th for submission of comments. The FDA will then hold three hearings on its recommendations.

Thank you for the donations - \$4,730 in!

Our summer campaign has raised \$4,730 – thank you to all donors for your support! And in addition to the contributions, thank you to so many of you for writing such nice notes. It's good to feel appreciated.

For those not yet donating, you can always go [here](#) and click on the orange “Support PSR Oregon – Donate Now” button (or the cow button!). Then, on the “Interests” button, click on “Campaign For Safe Food.”

To donate by regular mail, send a check made out to “Oregon PSR Campaign for Safe Food” to our office address:

Oregon PSR – Campaign for Safe Food
812 SW Washington, Suite 1050
Portland, OR 97205

August 12th, 2010

Bon Appetit/Compass Go rBGH-free for Yogurt

Bon Appetit and their parent company, Compass Corporation, announced that they are now completely rBGH-free for yogurt. Bon Appetit is a food supplier that specializes in providing food for colleges and corporate campuses and has a well-deserved reputation for leadership in serving sustainably-produced food. It had already gone rBGH-free for fluid milk.

I was quoted in their press release and I wanted to add in our own newsletter that we are very grateful for their action. I should note that my very first rBGH Power Point presentation was to the regional managers of Bon Appetit at Lewis and Clark College here in Portland back in 2004. We've come a long way since then!

Cloned Meats – Are They or Aren't They in our Food System?

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, in Canada for trade talks, was asked by the Calgary Herald if cloned cows or their offspring have made it into North American food supplies. He said he didn't know, but “What I do know is that we know all the research, all of the review of this is suggested that this is safe.” The article also said that he believed “that ‘because science is often ahead of the regulatory process and ahead of

the ethics discussion,' the U.S. will continue their "moratorium" on not allowing the sale of meat from cloned animals until the products are widely accepted as safe."

Let's fill in some pretty important gaps. First, the FDA has done nowhere near the number of tests necessary to determine if cloned meat is safe. Second, the U.S. moratorium on putting cloned meat into the food supply is voluntary, and we all know how great corporations are at self-regulation (see *also* banks, coal mining companies, oil companies, etc.). Finally, the moratorium doesn't apply to the offspring of cloned animals.

Lucy Sharratt, co-coordinator of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, says "this whole issue of genetically-engineered animals is huge," but the government appears unperturbed by the sector's growth and the potential for entering the food chain. If experimental, non-regulated, genetically-engineered animals or crops get into the food system, they don't necessarily care unless the public makes it an issue. That's our experience." Yes, I'm afraid that's our experience too, Lucy.

Go [here](#) for the full article

Pink Slime – It's What's For Dinner!

It's time to return to one of our favorite subjects – "pink slime." Some of you may remember from an earlier newsletter what this is – high-fat sweepings from the slaughterhouse floor that gets ground into a paste, has the fat separated out, and then added as filler to hamburger. Oh, and it's treated with ammonia to kill nasty bugs like E. coli 0157 and antibiotic-resistant salmonella (although not always successfully). The company that produces it, Beef Products, Inc., sells so much of it that it ends up in 70% of hamburger in the U.S.

Who buys the stuff? Food companies aren't exactly advertising the fact that they're stuffing their hamburger with it because it's so cheap, but we do know that Burger King and McDonald's use it, and it's a good bet that many conventional restaurant chains also buy it. Beef Products' ultimate goal, according to them, is to have it in all (non-organic) ground beef in the U.S. Grist Magazine has done two excellent articles on this, which can be read [here](#) and [here](#).

GE Canola Escapes into the Wild in North Dakota

It isn't surprising that GE canola genes are found outside the crops that were intended to have it. Canola has very light pollen that can get carried many miles by the wind. What was surprising was the extent to which researchers found GE canola genes in plants in isolated areas in North Dakota. Out of 288 samples tested, they were almost everywhere, many in areas that weren't anywhere near farmland.

One major problem is that canola is a relative of many weed species. The GE traits are for resistance to herbicides like Roundup, which means that the escape of the genes

could be making these weeds resistant to herbicides. Go [here](#) for the full article in Scientific American.

Save Our Internet – Protect Net Neutrality

I really like Google. I use it almost every day to locate information I need. In fact, I just used it twice in putting together this newsletter. But I'm really bummed out at what Google, the corporation, is trying to pull with its buddy Verizon. Namely, they're trying to game the Internet so that wealthy corporate types who are willing to pay more would get internet service at a faster speed than people who can't pay as much (like, for instance, small non-profits and lower-income individuals). In other words, they would take a service that's now equal to everyone and give an advantage to the rich.

Google's motto is "Don't be evil." I think it's time they walked their talk. To urge them to do so, contact the Save the Internet coalition, an organization of 2 million people who are trying to preserve net neutrality. Just go [here](#) to sign their letter of protest.

This is serious stuff, folks. Please take action – now. Thank you.

July 29th, 2010

Back from Vacation

We're back from a wonderful trip to Grand Teton, Yellowstone and Glacier national parks. We just got the pictures yesterday and as great as they are, none can do justice to the incredible places each park has to offer. There were times when the sights we saw were beyond beautiful – they were jaw-dropping spectacular. If you ever get a chance, go see them.

I've attached two pictures from our trip. One is a male bison in Yellowstone defecating on a road. The other is a sweet shop in Jackson, WY with a Haagen Dazs sign saying its (rBGH) ice cream is "All natural." I'm sure you can connect the dots.

New Anti-GMO Group in Portland

Months ago, I was contacted by Mary and Ernie, who wanted to talk about GMO's. I said sure, we met for breakfast and I explained a lot of the strategies we've employed over the past seven years, some of which worked and many that didn't. They said they were going to do something about the GMO problem and we said good-bye.

I'm delighted to announce that they have done an incredible amount of work to highlight restaurants and stores serving GMO-free food. In their own words:

"Avoiding eating GMO's is possible. We did it and we'll help you. That's what our website does, plus we're personally on-call for you. Our site has something for everyone

including out-of-area readers, so please look around and email us so we can welcome you. If you're local, please frequent the stores and restaurants we feature. If you say "non-GMO" a lot, they'll put up shelf tags & add menu labels to capture our market. It might spread like wildfire because there's no faster outreach than marketing (plus we're aiming to get press)." -Mary & Ernie, [The GMO-Free Portland! Project](#)

They'll be at the Portland Farmers Market 8/12 and 9/9, 3-7pm on NW 23rd & Savier with their materials, including Oregon PSR's rBGH fliers and postcards. Great work!

Go Get 'Em, Katie

CBS News anchor Katie Couric is at it again, this time highlighting Congressional hearings on a bill phasing out the use of non-therapeutic antibiotics in farm animals, which can promote antibiotic resistance in humans. Although her story features testimony from an industrial agriculture vet saying everything is hunky-dorry, she makes it clear that there is a wealth of evidence to the contrary. I can't tell you how refreshing it is to see a mainstream news organization have the guts to take on big ag. Go [here](#) to see the clip.

Arsenic for Breakfast in Utah

A family in Utah raises backyard chickens, collecting their eggs. It seems that their two kids had levels of arsenic in their urine exceeding the federal limit of safety for this carcinogenic substance from eating the eggs. How did this happen?

Many of you may not know that arsenic in the form of an additive called roxarsone is in feed for chickens, turkeys and pigs to promote growth and prevent diseases. At this point, I'm sure you may be thinking, WHAT? ARSENIC? I know, I know, it's just nuts. There are two kinds of arsenic compounds, inorganic (the more harmful one) and organic (the less harmful one). Only the organic is allowed to be added to feed, but there are a lot of suspicions it can harm human health. Already, the Center for Food Safety, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, and many others, including Oregon PSR, want this stuff gone from our food system.

Grist magazine has an excellent [article](#) on this story.

Contamination 1, 2, 3 . . .

Germany - Greenpeace reported that a GE corn, not approved for planting in the European Union, had accidentally been sown on 3,000 hectares. All the crops will be destroyed. According to the BBC, two sacks of GE seeds got mixed in with other sacks.

Japan – Plants found near a highway had genes of a GE canola plant. It appears to be the result of a crossing between a wild plant and imported GE canola. In collecting 14 samples of cruciferous plants, university researchers found GE genes developed by Monsanto and Bayer CropScience in 13 of them. The GE seeds had probably fallen in

transportation.

Arkansas – For the fifth trial in a row, federal judges have ruled in favor of American rice farmers against Bayer, whose unapproved GE rice contaminated their crops. So far, the damages have totaled \$53 million with 6,000 more lawsuits waiting in the wings. All five juries found Bayer negligent and liable in the contamination incidents, which they still say is a mystery how they happened.

Bottom line – if pollination isn't the cause of contamination, you can bet your last dollar that human error will be. (Or, in a more cynical scenario, the biotech firms could intentionally find a way to contaminate non-GE crops)

The World According to Monsanto published

Following up on the blockbuster movie, the book *The World According to Monsanto* is now available. According to the author, investigative journalist Marie-Monique Robin, "Monsanto was fully aware of their harmfulness but developed the habit of publicly asserting the opposite of what was known inside the company."

True to the movie, the book chronicles Monsanto's devastating legacy to the world, including its role in developing PCB's, Agent Orange, rBGH and its wide array of GE crops.

Coming Up

We have a great opportunity to create a video on our ice cream campaign to persuade Dreyer's and Breyers and their associated companies to go rBGH-free. The video would be professionally produced and expected to get a very wide distribution on the internet. However, the cost is \$5,000, money that we don't have in the budget. We'll be making a special ask to all of you soon to support this effort.

July 7th, 2010

rBGH-Free Cheese Chart Now Available

For the last month, I've been contacting cheese processors all over the country to see what rBGH-free varieties they have, if any. I was pleasantly surprised - there were more available than I thought.

This effort was in response to more and more institutions, such as hospitals, colleges, food distributors, restaurants, etc., wanting to go the distance on rBGH-free products. Many of them have gone rBGH-free for milk and yogurt but now are desiring cheese, ice cream and butter too. The chart is primarily intended for institutional buyers but has good information for individual consumers too. It lists mostly the largest companies, but there are plenty of excellent smaller rBGH-free companies too. For the Pacific

Northwest, many are listed in our regular Consumers' Guide available on our website.

FDA – Good Move?

Last week, the FDA released a policy document saying that antibiotics used in agriculture should only be used to assure animal health and that veterinarians should be involved in their use. Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, FDA Deputy Commissioner, wouldn't give details, but said "We believe this is a public health issue of some urgency."

No kidding. Thousands of people die every year resulting from antibiotic resistance and a major cause of it is antibiotic use in animals. We don't oppose the use of antibiotics in conventional agriculture to treat sick animals. We are VERY opposed to putting antibiotics in feed and water to prevent disease caused by the crowded, unhealthy conditions in factory farm operations and to promote growth. In a q. and a. sheet, the FDA stated their stance quite clearly:

"Is using medically important antimicrobial drugs to increase production in food-producing animals a judicious use? No. FDA thinks that using medically important antimicrobial drugs to increase production in food-producing animals is not a judicious use."

That's great, but look out - it gets tricky here. If the FDA banned the use of antibiotics to promote growth, the conventional meat industry could (and would) just say it was using antibiotics in feed and water to prevent disease, not to promote growth. (Organic meat production doesn't allow the use of antibiotics.) The best solution is the simplest – ban the non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in meat production. This is why Oregon PSR, along with 350 other major medical, scientific and consumer protection organizations, supports the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act, HR 1549/S 619, currently in Congress.

FDA – Bad Move!

The FDA is also considering whether to allow genetically engineered salmon to be sold on the market. For the last ten years, AquaBounty Technologies has been developing this Atlantic salmon, which contains a growth hormone gene from a Chinook salmon and a genetic on-switch from an ocean pout, a distant relative of the salmon. The pout's gene forces the salmon to make growth hormone the entire year instead of only in warm weather, enabling it to grow to full size in 16-18 months, instead of the three years it takes for natural salmon to develop.

We have a lot of problems with this. First, the FDA is regulating genetically engineered animals as if they were veterinary drugs. This means the evaluation process is confidential and doesn't allow any meaningful review or input from the public. Any time you see the government blocking transparency in favor of corporate secrecy, it's a near certainty public health and the environment are getting compromised.

Then there's labeling. If the salmon is approved, the FDA most likely wouldn't require labeling so that consumers wouldn't be able to tell the difference. The supposed "middle ground" stance would be to allow voluntary labeling. Right. Dairy processors using rBGH also can voluntarily label their products. How many of them have labeled since the drug was approved in 1993? None. They don't want you to know.

Finally, there's AquaBounty's assertion that the GE salmon is identical to Atlantic salmon in every way. I just have a hard time believing this is true, especially if no independent scientists can review the data. One concern with a genetic promoter in any GE food, plant or animal, is if it's turning on other genes at the same time it's turning on the growth hormone gene. These promoters and genes can unleash a Pandora's Box full of harmful, unintended health consequences.

The FDA is expected to make a determination by this fall.

Job Openings

The Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District has four Board of Directors positions open and is looking for progressive, conservation-minded individuals to fill them. Jayne Miller, a current board member, has posted information for anyone interested on her [website](#).

June 22nd, 2010

Supreme Court Rules on GE Alfalfa

I read the news today. Oh boy.

After going through the NY Times, Washington Post, Oregonian, LA Times, Reuters and the Center for Food Safety's press release, I've tried to sort out the Supreme Court's ruling on genetically engineered alfalfa (and the different perspectives on it) so that I could give you a clear picture from all sides.

The background: In 2007, a federal judge in San Francisco ruled that the USDA had illegally allowed planting of Monsanto's Roundup Ready® alfalfa without determining if it had an environmental impact. He then banned the further planting of it until a full environmental impact study had been completed. His decision was upheld by a federal appeals court.

The bad news: In a 7-1 decision, the Supreme Court agreed with Monsanto and overturned the lower courts' decisions, saying they had gone too far, preventing the USDA from a partial allowance of planting. That's too bad, although I'm not sure we could have expected anything different from the court that gave us the Citizens United decision, allowing corporations to spend unlimited money on candidates.

The decision was based on the opinion that RR alfalfa could be segregated from conventional non-GE or organic alfalfa, so as not to contaminate them. Of course, this is fantasy. Ask any corn, canola or soybean farmer who has had their crops contaminated, either by pollination or physical mixing due to human error. Or, for that matter, ask your local honeybees, who have an irritating habit of ignoring the USDA's separation distances between GE and non-GE crops. As we say in this business, co-existence = contamination.

The USDA will continue to do its environmental assessment of RR alfalfa. The chances they won't approve it for planting aren't too much better than BP being named Green Corporation of the Year by the Sierra Club.

The good news: The selling and planting of RR alfalfa is still illegal and won't be allowed until the USDA completes its assessment, which could take another year.

And the court did recognize, according to the Center for Food Safety, that "the threat of transgenic contamination is harmful and onerous to organic and conventional farmers and that the injury allows them to challenge future biotech crop commercializations in court." This is no small matter. It includes financial harm as being part of an environmental assessment.

Moreover, many alfalfa farmers, especially in the Northwest, just don't want GE alfalfa. They sell much of their harvest overseas to companies in nations that want nothing to do with our GE experiments.

So stay tuned. In terms of what we can do regarding the USDA's upcoming decision, we'll keep you informed. This isn't over yet and there may be plenty of opportunity for action and, if necessary, further legal action.

Two Documents Now Available in Spanish

Oregon PSR has now translated our Consumers Guide to rBGH-Free Dairy Products and the press release announcing the American Public Health Association's November 2009 decision to officially oppose rBGH and ask the FDA to ban it. Both are available on our website. A BIG thank you to volunteer Francisco Gadea for his translations! Francisco has been a tireless advocate for another great organization fighting GMO's, Northwest Resistance Against Genetic Engineering, and a valuable advisor for our programs.

Yet Another Reason to Turn Your Back on the U.S. Conventional Meat System

Here's an interesting little [tidbit](#) from the pork producers – look on page 33:

This chart compares the withdrawal period of the family of tetracycline antibiotics between most foreign nations and the U.S. The withdrawal period is the time between when a pig can be given a drug.

Report from D.C., June 15th, 2010

Everyone - Last week I was invited by Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, to be part of their third annual activists' summit in Washington, D.C. I spoke on a panel that included Jill Richardson, author and blogger of La Vida Locavore, Paul Shapiro of the Humane Society of the U.S., and Carol Tucker Freeman of the Consumer Federation of America. Our topic was "A Real Happy Meal: What are the elements that would be in the ideal food system?"

One statement I made summed up Oregon PSR's beliefs, based on intensive scientific research the past seven years: "We don't believe – for one minute – that genetically engineered foods have been demonstrated safe for human health or the environment." I then went over the basics of GE foods, including rBGH, and added our opposition to many of the practices of the conventional U.S. meat system.

In addition, I had the opportunity to meet with Oregon's Sen. Jeff Merkley and his aide that handles food issues, Angela Crowley-Koch (former director of Oregon PSR!). I thanked Sen. Merkley for his sponsorship of the PAMTA bill that would phase out antibiotics in animal feed and urged him to ask Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to not allow the approval of genetically engineered alfalfa. Then I asked him what he saw as the biggest problems we face. His answers, which should surprise absolutely no one:

1. Procedurally, the arcane rules of the Senate, which are crippling the ability of Congress to adequately address the nation's problems.
2. Overall, the influence of corporate money in our government, especially now, with the Citizens United Supreme Court case giving corporations the green light to give unlimited amounts of money to candidates' campaigns.

At lunch Thursday, we were treated to a parade of Congressional leaders who have helped CU in a variety of consumer issues, including Reps. Jackie Speier, Rosa DeLauro, Chris Van Hollen and Sen. Mark Pryor. The highlight was Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who spoke for about 20 minutes.

It was a terrific conference, with lots of high-profile speakers, and as usual, I learned more than I taught. Elizabeth Warren, Washington's top financial watchdog, was great, as was Robert Adler of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Then there was Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*. I had the chance to talk to him briefly before he spoke. Years ago, I had read his book and told him what I remembered, in addition to the various atrocities of our conventional meat system, was

that the overall culture and values of the U.S. were badly in need of repair. He simply replied, "That was the point of the book."

In his talk, Schlosser informed us that "spent chickens," those that are so old and worn out that restaurants and retailers won't accept them, are bought by the USDA for school lunches for our kids. Schlosser was also involved in the making of the movie Food, Inc., which was shown Thursday night. If you haven't seen it, I highly recommend it. The DVD can be ordered online for \$10. I always thought one of the most outrageous aspects of our food system was exposed by the movie – the so-called "veggie libel" laws in place in several states. For instance, in Colorado, it's a felony to criticize a food product – you could go to jail. How's that for a corporate attack on freedom of speech?

One final note – I get some of my best reading done on airplane trips. We're typically fighting the power structure and it's always good for my soul to see what other activists have experienced, so I read a book on the beginnings of the women's rights movement, The Ladies of Seneca Falls. It chronicles the amazing efforts and accomplishments of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott and many others. Here's what a few newspapers said about their meetings to speak out and organize for basic equality:

"A mass of corruption, heresies, ridiculous nonsense, and reeking vulgarities, which these bad women have vomited forth for the past three days" and "the most shocking and unnatural incident ever recorded in the history of womanity." Another newspaper said that equal rights would "demoralize and degrade" women and "prove a monstrous injury to all mankind." Sheesh. And I thought the biotech criticisms of anti-GMO activists were bad!

May 28th, 2010

Action Alert 1 – GE Alfalfa

Here's what the USDA said about people like you and me: "There is no evidence that consumers care about genetically engineered contamination of organic alfalfa." Oh really? Well, this won't be the first time that the USDA has been both arrogant and wrong.

Here's what's happening – Oregon Representative Peter DeFazio and Senator Pat Leahy of Vermont are circulating a congressional sign-on letter asking the USDA to keep the ban on genetically engineered alfalfa. If the commercialization of Monsanto's Roundup Ready alfalfa is approved, it's virtually certain that it will contaminate both conventional and organic alfalfa. We're very concerned about the health and environmental effects of GE alfalfa and also the financial harm to farmers who are selling to domestic and overseas customers that want no part of this stuff.

Please take a minute to support the sign-on letter by going to the Center for Food Safety's [website](#) and either sending a quick e-mail or making a few calls to your Congressional delegation. Thank you!

Action Alert 2 – Web Neutrality

This isn't exactly about food safety but more about all the little guys like me that depend on the internet to promote our causes and not be restricted by big corporations that want to restrict content and charge more for faster use of the internet. Common Cause, an organization that protects democracy, defines net neutrality as "the principle that Internet users should be able to access any web content they want, post their own content, and use any applications they choose, without restrictions or limitations imposed by their Internet service providers (ISPs)."

Here's a little sample from Common Cause of what we can expect if big corporations start deciding what gets on the web and at what costs: "Verizon refused to allow political text messages from NARAL to go to its customers, even though those customers had signed up to receive the messages. Comcast was caught denying and degrading legal file sharing communications on its network. And the future looks even worse: AT&T has announced to potential investors that it is "ready to filter the internet."

Please contact the FCC by going to the Common Cause [website](#) and taking action through them. And please contact your senators and representatives too. I got a bit of a shock when I called my representative, David Wu, and found out he hasn't taken a position yet on this. THANK YOU!

Shoot-Out at the Radio Corral

I got invited to talk about rBGH yesterday on the radio show Rural Routes that broadcasts in the Midwest and Plains states. It was a pretty wild and wooly interview.

I knew the hosts were firmly in favor of industrial ag but wasn't quite prepared for the grilling I got on everything from why PSR's name "reeks of a political agenda" to the implication that I'm in this for the money – hah! In a subsequent e-mail to the hosts, I told them that anyone who works for a nonprofit for the money is "really dumb or really crazy." Hopefully, I'm neither, but that's debatable.

If you want to hear what the other side is thinking, you can listen to the interview [here](#). I actually think the hosts are decent guys, just completely taken in by the tall tales the biotech and drug firms are spinning.

Enviropigs?

The "Enviropig" is a trademarked industry name for a pig genetically engineered by Canadian scientists to excrete less phosphorus in its feces. Excess levels of phosphorus from factory pig farms promote excess algae growth in waterways that steal

oxygen, killing fish and other organisms and creating “dead zones” such as we have in the Gulf of Mexico (even before the oil spill) and off the west coast.

Is this necessary? Of course not. The simple food additive phytase accomplishes the same thing, reducing phosphorus up to 50%.

Is this safe? Who knows? The only safety tests have been done by the same people who developed the pig, not Health Canada or the FDA. And this information is classified as “Confidential Business Information.” In other words, the fox is again in charge of the hen house, or in this case, the pig pen.

At this point Canada and the U.S. are deciding whether they will approve it or not, but they're expected to. If so, will the pigs be labeled? NO – the corporations producing these pigs will not have to tell you. Stay tuned, this looks like another outrage in the making.

Meatless Mondays Gaining Popularity

The concept of Meatless Monday started in World War I as a way to serve the war effort. Today, the effort to reduce meat consumption is based on a belief that many Americans simply eat too much meat, which is bad for their health and creates all kinds of environmental problems, from polluted waterways to global warming.

Baltimore City Public Schools launched meatless Mondays for its 82,000 students last October. A few months ago, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution calling on schools, restaurants and stores to offer meatless options. The state of Michigan had a one-day “Meatout” in which residents were asked not to eat meat. And 32 hospitals have signed on to Health Care Without Harm’s Balanced Menu Challenge, which calls for reducing meat purchases by 20%.

Temple Grandin in Seattle

The Food Alliance is sponsoring a fund-raiser featuring Temple Grandin, the nationally-known expert on humane treatment of agricultural animals. It will be held at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle Friday, June 18 at 6:30 p.m. It sounds like a great evening, with all kinds of guests showcasing sustainable agriculture in the Northwest. Please go [here](#) for more information.

May 18th, 2010

Cabot Cheese Alert

When Agri-Mark, the parent company of Cabot Cheese, announced it would only accept rBGH-free milk for Cabot Cheese starting August 1, 2009, we applauded their decision and spread the word far and wide. Cabot, based in Vermont, is a well-known and highly-

regarded cheese in New England and New York, and even sells some of their cheese all over the country.

However, I was contacted by a source in Vermont that became concerned when some of the Cabot-labeled cheeses she saw said “Distributed by Cabot” instead of “Manufactured by Cabot.” She and I both made further inquiries and confirmed that these Cabot-labeled cheeses are NOT rBGH-free:

Muenster
American
Pepper Jack
Colby Jack
Swiss
Mozzarella

Also, Cabot’s whipped cream is NOT rBGH-free. I’ve sent a letter to the CEO of both Agri-Mark and Cabot expressing concern that consumers are making the erroneous assumption that all Cabot-labeled cheese is rBGH-free, when in fact it isn’t. I expressed the hope that all of their cheese will be rBGH-free soon. I haven’t received an answer yet, but will follow up soon if I don’t.

Whole Foods Takes a Positive Step, But Be on the Lookout

Whole Foods, the nation’s largest natural food chain, has an official position on rBGH: Whole Foods Market does not support the use of the synthetic growth hormone rBST (rBGH) in dairy production. Whole Foods Market feels strongly that using genetically engineered synthetic growth hormones to boost milk production in cows is not in the interest of the animal’s welfare, is contrary to our core values as a company, and does not meet the core expectation of consumers of natural food.

That sounded good, and when I stopped by my local Whole Foods and asked the cheese manager if all their products were rBGH-free, he assured me they were. Unfortunately, when I checked out the dairy case, I discovered Grande Cheese, which allows the use of rBGH. I let the cheese manager know, and he gave me the name of the regional person to contact. I did, and to his credit, he discontinued selling Grande in the entire Northwest region and substituted another Wisconsin-based cheese that was rBGH-free.

Bottom line, however, is this: Whole Foods makes a lot of purchases regionally, so be careful. And if you do see a cheese being sold that allows rBGH, please inform two people – the cheese manager, to request that they go totally rBGH-free; and me, so I can follow up with their corporate headquarters.

The Sobering Tale of the Super-Weeds

The most widely-used herbicide is Roundup, Monsanto's product that contains glyphosate. Their Round-up Ready soybeans, corn and cotton have all been genetically engineered to resist Roundup, which kills all other plants in the field, mainly weeds. Only not any more. As anyone (but Monsanto, it seems) could have predicted, "super-weeds" have developed resistant to Roundup that have spread throughout the nation. This necessitates farmers using more, and stronger herbicides, not less.

Here's an excerpt from an [article](#) in Discover that gives an excellent snapshot of plant resistance:

Monsanto scientists ran tests that showed no evidence of resistance. Glyphosate seemed to strike at such an essential part of plant biology that plants could not evolve a defense. But after glyphosate-resistant crops had a few years to grow, farmers began to notice horseweed and morning glory and other weeds encroaching once more into their fields. Farmers in Georgia had to cut down fields of cotton rather than harvest them because of infestations of Palmer amaranth.

It isn't just the unintended health risks of GE food that concerns us. It's the environmental effects too.

Scientists Restricted, Attacked

Suppose you're a scientist that wants to test how effective a GE corn crop is compared to a corn crop developed by conventional means. Or suppose you want to test the health effects of a GE soybean. Good luck on getting the permission from the biotech firms to do unfettered research. Then suppose you're a scientist that actually has managed to do research and found risks of the GE crop in question – you need more than good luck, you need to be ready to be attacked by the entire GE corporate spin machine.

In February 2009 two dozen scientists wrote an anonymous (to protect themselves) letter to the media revealing that biotech firms wouldn't allow U.S. scientists to do independent research on GE crops, which meant, in effect, that almost the only evaluations of these crops were from the corporations, hardly an unbiased source. Now nine of the scientists have stepped forward to say that industry's half-hearted attempt to address their concerns aren't enough. As Dr. Chuck Benbrook said, "when their data presents a challenge to the companies, these scientists "have found themselves under personal and professional threats.... The companies, in their paranoia, have created a vacuum of expertise and it's the farmers who will ultimately be the victims." Read the [full story](#).

One such French scientist is Dr. Gilles-Eric Seralini, who recently published seven peer-reviewed scientific papers on potential side effects of glyphosate and GE corn on human and mammalian health. He has been under vicious attack from the biotech companies and their supporters who are desperate to preserve the status quo myth that GE foods are perfectly safe. It's been so bad that Seralini, a highly-regarded scientist

around the world, has found support from over 250 scientists from 20 countries that have signed a letter defending his work. As Dr. David Eherenfeld of the U.S. said, "I fully support Professor Séralini, and condemn the victimization to which he has been subjected. His work is respected and important. Professor Séralini brings great distinction to France, and is an inspiration to scientists around the world." Read the [full story](#).

Need a Speaker For Your Group?

In the last month, I've had a lot of wonderful opportunities to make public presentations. This has included the Association for Healthcare Foodservice meeting in Seattle, two presentations to OASIS in Portland, a panel discussion after the movie "Fresh" at Portland State U., Willamette Women Democrats in Lake Oswego, Dr. Betty Izumi's class at Portland State, and a tabling at Rachel's Friends movie/speaker on environmental causes of breast cancer in Portland. At every event, I enjoy seeing old friends and making new ones.

I have three basic Power Point presentations, rBGH, Genetic Engineering, and the U.S. Industrial Meat System. I can also tailor any of these to fit a group's particular interests. Each lasts 20-25 minutes, leaving plenty of time for q. and a. If your group would be interested in a presentation, just e-mail or call me at 503-968-1520. I think you'd find the information highly interesting, important and useful.

Campaign for Safe Food's op-ed published in Capital Press

On May 7th, 2010, the Campaign for Safe Food had [our opinion on rBGH](#) published in Capital Press, a leading publication on agricultural issues in the Western States.

April 24th, 2010

Action Alert – Please Sign On!

It's a standard scheme of corporations producing genetically engineered (GE) food to fight labeling. They don't want consumers to know whether their food has been genetically engineered or not, because they know a majority don't want it, and their sales would plummet.

Now the U.S. government, again, is doing the bidding of corporations like Monsanto, Syngenta and Bayer. The FDA and USDA have drafted a letter to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the U.N.'s agency that develops labeling and food safety standards. They are asking Codex to disallow labeling of GE food, saying the labels would be "likely to create the impression that the labeled food is in some way different" and would be "false, misleading or deceptive."

Of course, they ARE different and requiring labels is no more misleading than labeling “No artificial preservatives, no artificial coloring,” etc.

What would this mean?

- Nations that already have labeling of GE food, such as in the European Union, Australia, etc., could be forced to remove the labels
- These same nations could be prohibited from labeling foods as “GMO-free” or “No genetically engineered ingredients.” This, of course, includes the U.S.
- Organic foods in the U.S. and elsewhere could be prohibited from informing consumers on their labels that they don’t contain GE ingredients

This is a serious attack on free speech and our right to know what’s in our food. In the name of protecting consumers, the FDA and USDA are advocating censorship of information consumers around the world want and need to make informed buying decisions.

Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, has a [full report](#) on this, including a sign-on letter of protest for organizations, which Oregon PSR has signed on to. It’s been sent to both the USDA and FDA.

Here’s how to do something about it. Just go to the Food Democracy’s [website](#) to sign your name on a petition to let our government leaders know that the United States should not be censoring free speech either here or in other nations around the world
Supreme Court Hearing GE Alfalfa Case Tuesday

The first genetically engineered food case to be argued before the U.S. Supreme Court is coming up this Tuesday, April 27th. The Center for Food Safety, a leading organization in food safety, will be asking the court to deny approval for Monsanto to sell its Roundup Ready alfalfa.

The main reason is the almost-certain contamination of both conventional non-GE alfalfa and organic alfalfa. Alfalfa is a much-used plant to feed dairy cows, and contamination would threaten both domestic organic dairies and U.S. conventional dairies that sell their alfalfa overseas to countries in Asia, Europe and the Middle East that want nothing to do with GE food.

There have been seven amicus (friends of the court) briefs filed in support of the Center for Food Safety. They include a variety of interests, ranging from the attorneys general of California, Oregon and Massachusetts; the Organic Trade Association and such businesses as Organic Valley, Nature’s Path Food and Clif Bar; the Arkansas Rice Growers Association, who have already lost millions of dollars of exports because of GE contamination; and non-profits such as the Union of Concerned Scientists, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife and National Resources Defense Council.

This is, to be sure, an uphill battle. This is the same Supreme Court that just handed corporations a blank check to spend whatever they wanted on elections in the *Citizens United* case. Say a prayer, cross your fingers and hope for the best.

Kenya Bans rBGH Use

Great news! The government of Kenya has now banned rBGH use. Just as there are all kinds of consumer, safe food and animal welfare advocates here in the U.S., so there are in other nations. Our congratulations go out to the Consumer Information Network and Africa Network for Animal Welfare for all their work in helping bring about this important decision.

Upcoming Speaking Event May 12– Open to the Public

On Wednesday, May 12, at 4:00 p.m., I'll be speaking on "The Politics of Genetically Engineered Food" at the Willamette Women Democrats Club. The presentation will be held at the Oswego Lake Country Club at 20 Iron Mountain Boulevard in Lake Oswego. The program is open to the public.

Using rBGH as one example, I'll be examining how politics and undue corporate influence have contaminated the U.S. regulatory apparatus for approving GE food and testing procedures. For more information and to register, see the WWD [website](#) under Programs. Light refreshments will be served.

Campaign For Safe Food on Oregon PSR's Facebook

Starting next week, our Campaign for Safe Food will begin posting information on Oregon PSR's Facebook page. I very much appreciate all the advice I've been given on getting more internet-savvy. Special thanks to Lori Koeb, Rene Pyatt and Michelle Vlach-Ing, who took the time to have a very informative conference call with me on the subject and Jill Richardson and Robyn O'Brien who gave me more great information on website usage.

April 17th, 2010

Newest rBGH Estimates – They're Down

In preparation for an article I wrote for the latest edition of the Milkweed, a national dairy newspaper, I did extensive research on USDA, academic and accounting figures on rBGH use. Then I factored in all the dairies in the last few years that have gone rBGH-free. Here are Oregon PSR's latest estimates:

Dairy operations in the U.S. using rBGH: 9-12%
Dairy cows in the U.S. injected with it: 10-14%

For perspective, compare this with the USDA estimates for 2007 – 15.2% of dairy operations and 17.2% of cows. The most recent academic study by Henry An and Leslie Butler found that “Our main result is that rBST (rBGH) use in California is on the decline. The confluence of low profitability, increasing consumer backlash, and a shifting of demand toward more natural milk has led many dairy producers to conclude that rBST is not an effective technology.”

Does this mean that rBGH will go away simply on its own? Not a chance. Elanco is digging in and re-doubling their efforts to persuade retailers and processors to stem, and even reverse, this trend. With their misleading report, noted in earlier versions of this newsletter, they’ve launched a counter-offensive.

This Milkweed article, and all others I write, will be available on our website by the end of next week.

Battle in European Union over GE Crops

The bad news is that the European Union Commission has approved growing some additional genetically modified (GM) crops, ignoring a significant majority of EU citizens who don’t want them. This, however, doesn’t mean that there will be widespread planting and selling of these crops, because residents of EU nations have much more information available to them from their mainstream media on the risks of GM foods. Many people simply refuse to buy or eat them. Also, the decision has generated such outrage that there is an on-line petition to “put a moratorium on the introduction of GM crops into Europe and set up an independent, ethical, scientific body to research the impact of GM crops and determine regulation.” The petition, open only to EU residents, already has over 536,000 signatures.

Interview With Fred Kirshenmann

Grist Magazine interviewed Fred Kirshenmann, one of four winners of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) second annual "Growing Green" awards. First of all, congratulations to Fred, who I’ve met at several conferences. He’s not only an excellent organic farmer and systems thinker, he’s also a very nice guy.

Fred confronts the reality that industrial agriculture proponents won’t acknowledge – the upcoming shortage of fossil fuel simply won’t allow us to continue as usual. He sees us going to a much more regionally-based food system that actually has many advantages over today’s system. He also mentions some very exciting work that Wes Jackson is doing at the Land Institute in perennial zing crops such as wheat, which would be an incredible boon to both farmers and consumers. I also had the pleasure of meeting Wes and hearing him speak recently at the Illahee lecture in Portland and his ideas were truly innovative. You can find the Grist interview [here](#).

National Research Council Releases Report on GE crops

Last week, the National Research Council released a report entitled “The Impact of Genetically Engineered Crops on Farm Sustainability in the United States.” The report, chaired by Dr. David Ervin at Portland State U., concentrates on the economic, social and environmental effects. It doesn’t deal with health risks to humans, which is, of course, our major concern.

I’ve only had time to read the executive summary, so I’m certainly no expert on the report, but generally, it’s favorable toward GE crops, saying, for instance, that “Many farmers who use GE crops have experienced more cost-effective weed control and reduced losses from insect pests.” There are, however, several warnings, including the increasing resistance of weeds to Roundup and the economic problems of contaminating the crops of non-GE farmers. See the summary [here](#).

Washington Post Article Addresses GE Problems

Let’s hear it for the Washington Post, which ran one of the few [articles](#) I’ve seen in the mainstream media that addresses the risks of GE food and the lapses of the U.S. regulatory agencies like the USDA and FDA. It’s interesting to compare this article with the mostly positive statements of the NRC report on glyphosate, the main ingredient in Roundup: “Outside researchers have also raised concerns over the years that glyphosate use may be linked to cancer, miscarriages and other health problems in people.”

See This Movie!

If you want to see a terrific expose of industrial agriculture in the U.S., check out Food, Inc., which will be shown on PBS this Wednesday, April 21 at 9:00 p.m.

There have been a lot of really good food documentaries in recent years, including The World According to Monsanto, King Corn, Farmer John, etc., and this one ranks with the best. I led a question and answer session when it opened in Salem last year and the 25 or so people that stayed afterward were very open about how much this movie affected them. You’ll learn a lot!

For a Good Laugh

Stephen Colbert has done it again, taking on a very serious subject - patenting of human genes – and producing a hilarious [spoof](#).

March 13th, 2010

Breyers and Dreyer’s Campaign Update

THANK YOU to so many of you for e-mailing or phoning Breyers and Dreyer’s to ask them to stop using the genetically engineered hormone rBGH (rBST) in their ice cream

products! And a DOUBLE thanks for those of you who forwarded the request through Facebook, MySpace, blogs, e-mail, Twitter and word of mouth to your family, friends and neighbors.

This only takes a few minutes and it's very important – if you haven't reached these companies yet, just refer to my March 5 Update for the contact information – every message brings us one step closer to their doing the right thing.

Meet the New Boss . . .

When Elanco bought rBGH (brand name Posilac®) from Monsanto in October 2008, many people breathed a sigh of relief, since Monsanto has the well-deserved reputation of being one of the most heavy-handed, lawsuit-happy corporations in the world. It's accurate that Elanco, a division of the Eli Lilly drug company, doesn't have the litigious history of Monsanto. But don't be fooled – Elanco, like Monsanto, isn't going to let minor details like facts stand in the way of increasing sales of rBGH at the expense of human and animal health.

We've mentioned before that Oregon PSR and some of our colleagues researched and wrote a blistering rebuttal to Elanco's report on the purported safety of rBGH, pointing out that it contained numerous falsehoods, misrepresentations and omissions. It's on our website. Moreover, Elanco's statement that their report was authored by a "group of independent scientific experts" rang hollow – every one of them was paid by Elanco and at least two of them had been paid by Monsanto in developing the hormone.

Now comes an article by journalist Jonathan Latham in the Bioscience Resource Project [online publication](#) that digs even deeper. Latham contacted several public health organizations that Elanco had claimed had endorsed rBGH as safe for human health, like the American Medical Association, American Cancer Society and American Association of Pediatrics, and confirmed (as we had), that they had said no such thing. But Latham went further and contacted several of the authors of Elanco's report to ask them about their statements contradicting the facts. One simply refused to answer and another said he was "unaware of any errors." But a third, Dr. David Clemmons, admitted that the endorsements were "technically untrue" and that the report "counted endorsement as failure to oppose rBGH." SAY WHAT? By this absurd logic, such organizations as the Salvation Army, Audubon Society and your local YMCA had endorsed rBGH since they hadn't opposed it.

And here's another little trick they pulled in saying "more than 20 leading health organizations" endorsed rBGH as safe. They cited the Endocrine Society and used as their justification a favorable article that had been printed in their journal in May 1991, authored by a developer of rBGH. This, of course, wasn't an editorial expressing the organization's official stance, but, hey, close enough when most people will never know any better. Sure enough, when I called the Endocrine Society, Stephanie Kutler, their Director of Government Affairs, confirmed they had never had a policy on rBGH.

Latham also dug up one other interesting tidbit – Elanco had commissioned Porter Novelli, a professional PR firm, to put together their report. It's not known whether Porter Novelli wrote most or all of the report or put their finishing touches on it to make it more slick, which it certainly was.

. . . Same as the Old Boss

Meanwhile, back at Monsanto, India branch, Tiruvadi Jagadisan, the former managing director of India operations for Monsanto, asserted in an [article](#) in India Today that the company “used to fake scientific data” submitted to Indian regulatory agencies to get approval for its products.

Jagadisan, now 84, who worked for Monsanto for nearly two decades, says he retired from the company because he felt that it was “exploiting our country.” He made these statements in the heat of the fierce debate over the approval of Monsanto's genetically engineered brinjal (eggplant), which the Indian government has, at least for now, denied.

Tell Your Representatives in Congress to Oppose GE Alfalfa

In a previous update, we asked you to comment to the USDA in opposition to GE alfalfa, which Monsanto is pushing to get approved. Now, please take one step further and make a few quick phone calls to your senators and representative in Congress. All the details you need are in the attachment from the Center for Food Safety. There is no doubt that GE alfalfa will contaminate conventional and organic alfalfa, which would be disastrous for these farmers and inject a crop unproven for safety into the food supply for beef and dairy cattle.

Personal Statement - Taking on the System (My thoughts – not official PSR Campaign For Safe Food comments)

Any of you reading these updates know how upset I was by the Supreme Court's recent ruling that corporations will be treated as persons and can give unlimited amounts of money to candidates for office at any level. Our democracy is already seriously undermined by corporate influence, and if this goes unchecked, I can't imagine what a mess this country will become. Whether it's genetically engineered food, the FDA and USDA, health care, global warming, pollution, media consolidation or any number of aspects of our lives, corporate power is running rampant over individual rights. (Just to be clear, I'm fine with private enterprise – most of my friends work for businesses. But I'm very opposed to how much power they've been allowed to have over our lives. Capitalism is a useful servant. It's a terrible master.)

I strongly urge you to sign a petition to amend the Constitution to take back our rights as human beings. The Move to Amend website, in addition to the simple petition-signing, has links to all kinds of ways you can become involved in this great effort. It's already

been signed by environmental leader Bill McKibben, author and populist Jim Hightower, author David Korten, Rabbi Michael Lerner and 73,000 others.

March 5th, 2010

Take Back Our Ice Cream

As most of you know, we've had a continuing, very successful post card campaign to Breyers and Dreyer's ice cream asking them to go rBGH-free. Nationwide, thousands of post cards have been sent. They've got the message that consumers are upset and we know discussions have been held at both companies.

Now it's time to take this viral, and we need you to help.

More and more people are finding out that the artificial hormone rBGH (rBST) in dairy products harms cows, leads to increased antibiotic resistance in humans and may increase cancer rates. Its use has been banned by Canada, Australia, New Zealand and all 27 nations of the European Union. The American Public Health Association, American Nurses Association and Health Care Without Harm all have taken official positions opposing rBGH. The American Medical Association doesn't have an official stance, but its past president asked that all hospitals serve only rBGH-free milk.

There has been a consumer revolt against this hormone and dozens of retailers and dairy processors and have stopped using it completely, including Starbucks, Chipotle Restaurants, Darigold, Tillamook and many more. Walmart, Kroger, Kraft and others have started offering rBGH-free product lines and last year, Yoplait and Dannon yogurts both went completely rBGH-free in response to consumer demand.

But not Breyers and Dreyer's, the two largest ice cream producers. Breyers, whose labels say "All natural," also includes Good Humor, Klondike Bars and Popsicle. Dreyer's includes Haagen Dazs, Nestle and Edy's.

Please contact them today and ask them to stop using rBGH!

If you have stopped buying their product(s) or will stop because they use rBGH, let them know!

And please forward this message through e-mail, Facebook, Twitter and good old face-to-face conversations with family members, friends and neighbors!

Feel free to tell them who you are (such as a mother, nurse, business owner, teacher, etc.) and to ask for a response. Tell them you don't accept the FDA's misguided opinion that rBGH is safe.

Please [e-mail](#) U.S. Ice Cream, which includes Breyers, Good Humor, Klondike Bars and Popsicle. If you'd rather call, the separate numbers are:

BREYERS - (800) 931-2826
GOOD HUMOR - (800) 931-2854
KLONDIKE - (800) 931-2830
POPSICLE - (800) 931-2849

Please [e-mail](#) Dreyer's, which includes Haagen Dazs, Nestle and Edy's. For separate phone numbers:

DREYER'S - (877) 437-3937
EDY'S - (888) 590-3397
NESTLE - (800) 225-2270
HAAGEN DAZS - (800) 225-2270

Every e-mail, phone call or post card brings us one step closer to these companies going rBGH-free. THANK YOU for taking a few minutes to participate in this great cause, and please forward this message to family and friends!

February 17th, 2010

Action Alert – Please Sign Petition to USDA on GE Eucalyptus Trees

This is late getting out, but please sign this [on-line petition](#) to stop the planting of genetically engineered eucalyptus trees, led by the Global Justice Ecology Project. I just signed on and it only took two minutes.

ArborGen is petitioning the U.S. government for permission to plant an estimated 260,000 flowering GE eucalyptus trees across seven southern U.S. states. It is hard to imagine a worse tree to be purposely spreading. Eucalyptus trees are known for their voracious thirst, sucking up water that is badly needed, and they've contributed to major forest fires in California. Moreover, plantations of these trees will use pesticides, contaminating thousands of acres of soil and groundwater.

Mass Actions Against GE Across the World

There have been several examples of popular resistance against GE crops around the world:

India – Great news! As reported by [GM Watch](#), “In a groundbreaking victory for citizens, farmers, NGOs, and independent scientists, India's Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh announced on 9 February that the commercialization of Bt brinjal (eggplant/auvergne) will not go ahead . . . Ramesh said there was "no clear consensus within the scientific community" on the safety of Bt brinjal for human health or the

environment. He added, "Serious questions have not been answered," and remarked on the "widespread opposition" to commercialization."

When he said widespread opposition, he wasn't kidding. Hundreds of thousands of Indians demonstrated against the brinjal, and the chief ministers of 13 states told the central government that they didn't want their farmers to grow the crop. There is widespread resentment against Monsanto and its subsidiary in India.

Bulgaria – Following a "[wave of protests](#)," the country's ruling party has proposed a five-year moratorium on all GE crops. About 300 people in Sofia demonstrated against amendments that would have weakened the bill.

Japan – This is from the [Canadian Biotechnology Action Network](#): "In 2004, a coalition of Japanese consumer and food industry groups delivered a petition to the Governments of Canada and the U.S. urging them not to introduce GM wheat. 'Today, consumer rejection of GM wheat in Japan is just as strong as ever. 80 organizations in Japan have already signed the rejection statement,' said Keisuke Amagasa of the Tokyo-based No! GMO Campaign. 'A large majority of consumers here in Japan are voicing their strong opposition to the cultivation of GM wheat. We see strong opposition from all sectors of society.'" The Flour Miller's Association of Japan also released a statement last week indicating its opposing to GM wheat.

Katie Couric Exposes the Scandal of Antibiotic Use in Animal Feed

CBS News' Katie Couric did one heck of a job in her two-part investigation of antibiotic use in animal feed, the disastrous practice that is contributing to a crisis in antibiotic resistance in the U.S., the cause of 70,000 deaths last year. I highly recommend you view both segments.

The [first](#) covers what has happened to people experiencing antibiotic resistance from Pilgrim's Pride chicken CAFO (confined animal feeding operation) in Arkansas and the [second](#) gives a clear picture of Denmark's experience in banning their non-therapeutic use. Both feature a vet from the National Pork Board who shamelessly defends current industry practices.

You Won't Believe This

A little poem I composed just for this occasion – Robert Frost would be proud:

Black is white,
Night is day,
I'm actually complimenting
The USDA.

It's true. The USDA has announced new rules that strengthen and clarify organic certification for dairy farms. According to the Cornucopia Institute, the new rules "require

that dairy cows and other ruminants be out on pasture for the entire growing season, but for not less than 120 days. It also requires that the animals receive at least 30% of their feed, or dry matter intake (DMI), from pasturing. In addition, organic livestock will be required to have access to the outdoors year-round with the exception of temporary confinement due to mitigating and documentable environmental or health considerations.”

I frequently criticize the USDA’s inadequate rules and lack of enforcement on the ones they have. Let’s give them credit when they deserve it. See [here](#) for more details.

Special Report, February 5th, 2010

After Six Years, Oregon Biopharm Rules a Reality – We Did it!

Yesterday, the rules addressing the problems of biopharmaceutical (biopharm) crops, those genetically engineered to produce drugs, were approved. They will be posted soon on the Dept. of Agriculture’s [website](#).

Six years ago, Oregon PSR began this journey with a simple idea in mind: We don’t want drugs in our food. Or, for that matter, in the environment. The USDA’s policy allowing biotech corporations to plant biopharm crops outdoors using food crops is, in our opinion, one of the dumbest, most dangerous ideas we’ve ever seen. And we’re not talking about just any drugs contaminating our food and environment. We’re talking about experimental drugs that have never been tested for human safety in FDA clinical trials.

Oregon PSR, recruiting experts around the country, intensively researched the issue, put together fact sheets, developed a Power Point, and in 2004 went around the state to numerous groups, including the state Board of Agriculture, to spread the word. In 2005, working with Sen. Frank Shields and his staff advisor Sara Chieffo, we introduced a bill in the state legislature to put a four-year moratorium on the planting of any outside and/or food biopharm crop. (NOTE: the bill would have allowed the planting of non-food biopharm crops in a contained, controlled inside facility.)

We were able to pass the bill in the Senate but not the House. However, by meeting with dozens of legislators and state officials, we raised so much visibility that the governor and Dept. of Agriculture appointed an ad hoc committee that met monthly for a year to gather information and hear presentations from experts all over the country. Oregon PSR provided data, recommended speakers, and attended every meeting, asking the questions that made the presenters promoting biopharm crops to be a teensy bit uncomfortable.

After the committee drafted their recommendations, we suggested changes, many of which were implemented, and we played a key role in drafting the actual language of the rules. Did we get everything we wanted? No, the rules are not as strong as our bill.

But they're quite good - they make Oregon second only to Maine (which banned the outdoor planting of biopharm crops) in protection from biopharm contamination. They:

- Elevate the Oregon Health Division to an equal status with the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture in reviewing biopharm permit applications.
- Allow officials at OHD and ODA to see confidential business information (such as what gene is being genetically engineered and exact location of the proposed planting) which before had been off limits to state officials. This is contingent upon a memorandum of understanding with the USDA still to be written, and don't worry, we plan to be involved with that process.
- Elevate environmental concerns of biopharm contamination to the same level as human health and economic concerns of farmers and food processors.
- Call for a public comment period, including a public meeting in the county in which a biopharm crop planting is proposed – transparency.
- Require applicants to pay up to \$10,000 to the state for increased monitoring.
- Require applicants to pay the costs of any required remedial action.

The rules send a clear message to any company thinking about planting here: Oregon is pro-active in prevention, instead of just waiting to react after a potentially disastrous contamination incident.

My sincere thanks to Dr. Martin Donohoe, our chief scientific advisor, for all his help from the beginning. My thanks also to Dr. Michael Hansen from Consumers Union, Bill Freese from the Center for Food Safety and Dr. Doug Gurian-Sherman from the Union of Concerned Scientists, for all their work, especially as we were gathering scientific data to present to legislators and the public. And my thanks to all of you who submitted comments to legislators and regulators, testified at hearings, served on the ad hoc committee or worked for the state of Oregon. As always, this was a tremendous team effort.

January 22nd, 2010

Thank You, Donors

Attached is the "honor roll" of all of you who contributed in the 2009 campaign to fund Oregon PSR's Campaign for Safe Food. Through your gifts, you have made this program possible, and all of us at Oregon PSR very much appreciate your support.

I've double- and triple-checked this list for accuracy, but if I screwed up and left your name off, please let me know! And if you haven't contributed but still would like to, it's easy – just go to our [website](#), click on the "Donate Now" button and specify Campaign For Safe Food. Or, you can just send a check made out to Oregon PSR Campaign For Safe Food to our office at 812 SW Washington, Suite 1050, Portland, OR 97205.

Thanks for Nothing, Supreme Court

I've seen a lot of bad decisions by the U.S. government, but nothing equals yesterday's 5-4 Supreme Court ruling to allow corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money on political campaigns for Congress and President. It allows unions to do the same, but their financial clout is nothing compared to the likes of Monsanto, Exxon Mobil, Goldman Sachs, Eli Lilly, health insurance companies and all the others who now have the potential to swing elections any way they want through massive campaign advertising.

The fundamental problem here is that the court is equating corporations with persons, asserting they have the same freedom of speech rights (in this case, freedom to spend) as you and me. To most normal people not wearing robes in Washington, D.C., it's pretty obvious that corporations are not the same as people.

To be sure, corporations already have far too much influence over our government and virtually every aspect of our life. In our arena, we can see how the consolidation has led to almost no real debate in the mainstream media over the health and environmental risks of GMO's. But this makes a bad situation intolerable. It's even worse than you can imagine – this means that foreign-owned companies can now spend millions on U.S. elections. How does a Swiss drug company flooding the airways against a Senatorial candidate who wants lower drug prices sound to you?

I urge all of you to get involved in some way to fight back – one good way is to google “corporate personhood” and/or “campaign finance reform” and link up with one of the many groups that are taking action. Specific organizations include Reclaim Democracy, Common Cause, Public Citizen and others. I try never to exaggerate and I mean this in all seriousness – I'm very afraid that, unless we can change this direction toward corporate control, our democracy itself will become history.

And Speaking of Too Much Corporate Power – Stories from Indianapolis

On Tuesday, I spoke at a forum in Indianapolis on the story of our rBGH campaign and how ordinary citizens can use their influence to make positive changes. The forum was organized by Indiana organizations and activists who are fighting confined animal feeding operations (CAFO's), also known as factory farms in which thousands of cows, pigs or chickens are crowded together in filthy, unhealthy conditions that are inhumane to the animals and unhealthy for humans. Think E. coli and antibiotic resistance. Think also of millions of fish being killed by manure spills. They're an environmental disaster.

One man told me his story of horror, and he's not alone. He and his wife were living peacefully on a small farm when a CAFO moved in very close. The stench from the manure permeated their house, clothes, furniture, everything. But it was far worse than the smell – both of them started suffering severe health reactions including headaches and nausea, getting so bad that they had trouble even thinking straight. They were forced to leave their home and move miles away. An article in an independent newspaper also cites over a dozen families suing these CAFO's because they're

suffering breathing difficulties, tightness of the chest, sinus infections and burning eyes, noses and throats.

And what's the reaction of the Indiana government to all this? Why, Gov. Mitch Daniels has rolled out the red carpet, encouraging CAFO's to move in. And the Indiana Dept. of Environmental Management has failed to even enforce the already-weak laws they have. Now the state government is proposing massive cuts to the inspection program of local meat packers, threatening to close them down, further weakening small, independent meat producers.

Our hats are off to the Indiana activists fighting against these injustices.

New French Study Exposes Risks of Monsanto's GM Corn

Another study out of Europe shines a bright light on the risks of genetically engineered crops. This time, a group of French scientists at the Universities of Caen and Rouen found that three varieties of GM corn developed by Monsanto "clearly underlines adverse impacts on kidneys and liver, the dietary detoxifying organs, as well as different levels of damages to heart, adrenal glands, spleen and haematopoietic system." The peer-reviewed study was published in the International Journal of Biological Sciences last month and is available [here](#).

The scientists used the same data Monsanto used to gain approval of these crops in 2005 in both the U.S. and several nations in Europe. Instead of Monsanto's "don't look, don't find" protocol and analysis, they exposed the shortcomings of the data and the way Monsanto interpreted them. They called for the immediate ban on the import and export of these crops. They also strongly recommended that further studies be done longer than the 90 days Monsanto used and on at least three species, not just mice.

Upcoming Program in Eugene

The fourth annual Local Food Connection will be Monday, February 1st from 8:30 – 3:30 at Lane Community College. It's designed to connect local farmers with food buyers of all types – hospitals, restaurants, grocery stores, schools, etc. to promote buying local, sustainably-produced food. It's open to the public and there will be all kinds of workshops and opportunities to network.

Dr. Lisa Weasel, biology professor at Portland State and author of Food Fray: Inside the Controversy Over Genetically Modified Food, and I will present a workshop entitled "The Latest News on GMO's: Why You Should Be Concerned and What You Can Do About it." Go [here](#) for more information and to register. If you come, please introduce yourself to me.

May 11th, 2009

The four-month battle to preserve Kansas's rBGH-free labeling without restriction ended at 2:30 a.m. Saturday when the state legislature adjourned without an override attempt of Governor Kathleen Sebelius's veto of HB 2121.

The bill would have required the FDA-recommended disclaimer that there is no significant difference between rBGH and non-rBGH milk. This disclaimer is false and Oregon PSR coordinated a coalition of local, state and national organizations and individuals in opposing the bill.

Although organizations like the Kansas Farmers Union, Kansas Rural Center, Kansas Sierra Club and Kansas City Food Circle opposed the bill, it passed both the House and Senate. The powerful Kansas Farm Bureau favored it.

As we've said on numerous occasions, the only way we were able to stop this bill is by working closely with groups like the Kansas organizations cited above and national organizations like Consumers Union, Center for Food Safety, Food and Water Watch, Organic Consumers Association, National Family Farm Coalition, Health Care Without Harm and many others.

In addition, we worked closely with the International Dairy Foods Association (which doesn't oppose the use of rBGH like us), who fought the bill on the grounds that dairy processors should have freedom of labeling. Progressive rBGH-free dairies like Ben & Jerry's and Stonyfield also threw their resources into the fray. Finally, thousands of individuals took the time to call or send e-mails or letters to legislators and the governor to express their views. Gov. Sebelius wasn't kidding when she cited the "overwhelming opposition" to this bill.

Finally, we worked directly with two key state legislators, Sen. Marci Francisco and Rep. Josh Svaty, who were instrumental in leading the opposition inside the capitol. Our thanks go out to both for all their hard work that was such a crucial component to this victory.

This was our third attempt in Kansas to ban or restrict rBGH-free labeling. The saga started in February 2008 with a bill, backed by Monsanto, which would have banned any kind of labeling telling consumers about the rBGH status of the milk. *It was pure, unadulterated censorship.* Our national coalition immediately connected with Kansas organizations and within a week mounted a massive opposition in the state legislature to stop the bill in its tracks.

Then, last fall, the Kansas Dept. of Agriculture tried to implement rules that, while not banning all labeling, would have made it much more difficult and still specifically banned "rBGH-free" labels. In other words, *they would have made it illegal to tell the truth.* After another all-out opposition campaign to KDA and Governor Sebelius, they announced they would not implement the rules. That's when pro-rBGH legislators adopted the KDA rules almost verbatim and made them into a bill last January.

Oregon PSR will always defend freedom of speech and the consumer's right to know.

We're keeping a constant watch out for any other anti-labeling bills or rules that may pop up. And now that Kansas has been settled, we'll have more time to take the offensive once again. Finally, we'll be getting more news to you on the overall anti-GMO effort beyond the rBGH world.

Stay tuned...