



Organic Food Quality & Health

Organic Food Quality News

October 2004

This monthly newsletter, edited by nutritionist and independent organic researcher Shane Heaton, is provided by the FQH association to keep researchers, the industry and other interested parties abreast of the latest news in organic food quality, research, health, diet and other relevant issues. Comments and contributions are welcome, or if you find an item of news that you think should be included, please email shane@dontjustsurvive.com

Quote of the month:

“Britain is too small an island to ever grow GM crops. We would need to have exclusion-zones of around 12 miles for every farm. It just isn't practical.”

Former UK environment minister Michael Meacher commenting on new US research showing GM cross-pollination 21 km from the source crop.

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1. PESTICIDES

EU: Pesticide residues worsening

The annual report, published in July by the European Commission, focusing on the "Pesticide residue monitoring in fruits and vegetables within the European Union, Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein", reveals a sharp increase in pollution affecting fruit and vegetables consumed within the member states. Indeed, 44% of the 46,000 fruit, vegetable and cereal samples analysed during 2002 were polluted by pesticides, compared to 36% in 1999. For fresh products, the MRL (Maximum Residue Levels for pesticides) were most often exceeded for spinach (13%), beans (7%), oranges/tangerines (4%) and peaches/nectarines (3%). The frequency of samples containing multiple residues is on the increase. This rose from 14% in 1999 to 20.7% in 2002. Once again, this year France stands out for its poor results. It should be remembered that France is the country of the European Union which uses the most pesticides in agriculture (5kg of active ingredients per hectare) and is the world's third largest consumer of pesticides after the United States and Japan. See

http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/fnaoi/reports/annual_eu/index_en.html

UK: Children's bodies routinely contaminated

Children's bodies are routinely contaminated by up to 75 potentially hazardous chemicals, according to a study by the WWF. Modern lifestyles are partly to blame, with fast food and household goods increasing exposure. The persistence in the environment of pesticides and industrial chemicals, some of which were banned a decade before the children were born, is another major factor.

US: Probable link between OP's and Gulf War Syndrome

Farmers who claim to have suffered ill-health after exposure to organophosphate-based chemicals have had their arguments bolstered by the findings of a leaked report. The report, by a federal panel of medical experts in the USA, is based on new research. It points to a probable link between OP-based chemicals and health defects suffered by soldiers who fought in the 1991 Gulf War. That finding contradicts all previous research which blamed the symptoms of pain, fatigue and memory loss on stress.

US: New Technology Helps Farmers Reduce Chemical Use

A \$541,050 federal grant will enable researchers at The Rodale Institute (TRI) to demonstrate how a new spin on old technology could reduce the need for toxic herbicides in American agriculture. 'Our new 'no-till' technology could eliminate the use of 30 million pounds of herbicides every year in the U.S.,' said David Ward, vice president of program development for TRI, which has developed a new tractor implement to reduce herbicide use in major crops such as soy, corn and cotton. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, 52.5 million acres - or 17.5 percent of all U.S. planted cropland - were in no-till management in 2000. While traditional cultivation techniques leave the soil prone to water and wind erosion, no till systems plant seeds without ripping the soil apart, preventing soil from water and wind erosion. However, the trade-off has been the application of chemical herbicides to kill weeds that would otherwise be uprooted by more aggressive ploughing methods. TRI's modified no-till technology adds mechanical rollers, which kill weeds by running over them. Straus Communications Press Release Kutztown, Penn (14/09/2004).

Online: New information service for small scale tropical farms

The German branch of Pesticide Action Network (PAN) has developed a web-based information service focused on, not surprisingly, non-chemical pest management for crops grown on small-scale farms in the tropics. Known as OISAT (online information service for non-chemical pest management in the tropics), it is freely available from the website <http://www.oisat.org>

UK: Pesticide residues highlighted in lettuce samples

Evidence that regular testing for pesticides in foodstuffs is valuable to both the consumer and industry comes after a government-backed initiative finds lettuce and farmed fish products among the most contaminated products in the UK food chain from a range of tested foodstuffs. The Pesticide Residues Committee (PRC) investigated pesticide residues in beef, mature cheese, farmed fish, infant food and lettuce. In addition cow's milk, orange juice, pre-packed salads and canned sweetcorn were monitored, all in the first quarter of 2004. A total of 24 samples of lettuce were tested for 109 pesticide residues with two samples exceeding the MRLs (Maximum Residue Levels), including one produced in the UK, which contained inorganic bromide at 278 mg/kg (Codex MRL 100 mg/kg). This level exceeds the Acute Reference Dose (ARfD), the amount that can be consumed without 'appreciable health risk' to the consumer.

Farmed fish, last sampled in 1997, is sampled every few years as part of the rolling programme of commodities at the PRC. Although they have a relatively short life-span (typically 12 months for trout and 24 months for salmon) they may be exposed to residues from feed and the environment. A total of 28 samples of salmon and 20 samples of trout were tested for 11 organochlorine pesticide residues. The scientists concluded that a massive 47 of the 48 samples tested contained residues. *"Risk assessments on the highest levels found showed that there were no concerns for consumer health,"* said the committee. Showing the value of a regular testing, the study found one infant food - Heinz vegetable and chicken hotpot – out of 58 samples that gave a test result above the MRL. The product contained a residue of chlorpropham at 0.03 mg/kg (MRL 0.01 mg/kg).

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2. ADDITIVES

UK: Aspartame debate continues

An editorial in the British Medical Journal this month that concludes criticisms of aspartame are 'unfounded' adds fuel to the ongoing debate surrounding this common artificial sweetener. Approved by the EU and US regulatory authorities, and available in more than 100 countries, aspartame is found in a raft of products, from soft drinks and yoghurts to tabletop sweeteners and chewing gum. But over the years, the product has been the subject of 'much sensationalist journalism, mostly on websites,' write professor Michael Lean and Catherine Hankey, both from Glasgow University, in the October issue of the BMJ. "Evidence does not support links between aspartame and cancer, hair loss, depression, dementia, behavioural disturbances, or any of the other conditions appearing in websites," they write. Aspartame's safety was convincing to the

European Scientific Committee on Food in 1988, but proving negatives is difficult, and it is even harder to persuade vocal sectors of the public whose opinions are fuelled more by anecdote than by evidence, add the authors of the aspartame review.

Rapid responses provoked by the BMJ editorial include Dr John Briffa, a UK-based doctor, who writes: "The defence [that aspartame brings nothing new to the diet] is flawed in that it pre-supposes that naturally occurring food constituents can have no adverse effect on health. While this notion may seem far-fetched to some, an example of it is known in the real world: two studies suggest that giving beta- carotene in supplement form may increase risk of lung cancer in smokers, although there appears to be no such association with dietary beta- carotene." The EU's 375 million consumers digest about 2000 tonnes annually of aspartame
Foodnavigator.com 07/10/2004

World: Campaign to lower trans fats continues

Pressure is mounting on food industry players to remove trans fatty acids (TFAs) from food formulations due to ongoing research that suggests trans fats raise LDL (bad) cholesterol levels, causing the arteries to become more rigid and clogged. An increase in LDL cholesterol levels can lead to heart disease. Formed when liquid vegetable oils go through a chemical process called hydrogenation, Trans fatty acids are common in a range of food products – biscuits, chips, doughnuts, crackers. Hydrogenated vegetable fat is used by food processors because it is solid at room temperature and has a longer shelf life. But a raft of manufacturers are switching to non-trans fat alternatives. Kraft foods said earlier this year that it had launched a trans fat free version of its iconic Oreo biscuit. The move followed a court case against Kraft's owner Nabisco – which attracted massive media attention in the US - whereby BanTransFats.com called on the firm to remove the biscuits from sale because of the harm trans fats could cause to children. Swiss food behemoth Nestle is also working to reduce trans fat presence. McDonald's is currently being sued in California by BanTransFat.com for misleading the public about reducing TFAs in it's fries.

From January 2006 food manufacturers working in the US market will have to label trans fat content on food products. Europe has yet to introduce a similar rule, but consumer organisations are pressing for such transparency. Last year Denmark became the first country in the world to introduce restrictions on the use of industrially produced trans fatty acids. Oils and fat are now forbidden on the Danish market if they contain trans fatty acids exceeding 2 per cent. In the UK, the government's latest national diet and nutrition survey shows how the consumption of trans fats has fallen from 2.1 per cent of total energy in 1985 to 1.2 per cent energy in 2000, though a recent survey by Which? magazine has shown it's still common in foods and renewed calls for it's removal from the food chain.

EU: Food additives reviewed

A meat preserver, a gel-forming additive and an anti-microbial agent face tougher European rules as Brussels adopts a proposal to change the current food additive directive. The European Commission proposed that amendments to the Directive 95/2/EC, dealing with food additives other than colours and sweeteners, cut permitted levels of nitrates and nitrites in meat products, enforce a ban on parabens E216 and E217 and a ban on a jelly mini-cups containing certain food additives derived from seaweed and/or certain gums. The proposal now passes to the Council and the European Parliament before being rubber-stamped through the co-decision procedure.

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3. ANTIBIOTICS/FOOD SAFETY

US: Food scientists design sensor for listeria detection

Researchers in the US have designed a new biosensor to detect the potentially deadly bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*. The antibody-based fibre-optic biosensor created by food scientists at Purdue University can detect the listeria bacteria in less than 24 hours at concentrations as low as 1,000 cells per millilitre of fluid. *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm), an emerging foodborne disease because the role of food in its transmission has only recently been recognised, can cause abortion and stillbirth, and in infants and persons with a weakened immune system it may lead to septicemia (blood poisoning) and meningitis. The disease is most often associated with consumption of foods such as soft cheese and processed meat products that are kept refrigerated for a long time because Lm can grow at low temperatures. Food safety experts estimate that 100 to 1,000 cells can cause the illness. Cooking kills most of the *L. monocytogenes* cells that can grow at refrigeration temperature, but ready-to-eat products, such as pates, smoked fish, cheeses and hot dogs, are not always cooked by consumers before consumption.

"The selectivity, sensitivity and rapidity of this sensor represent a vast improvement over the types of test kits that are currently available commercially," said Arun [Bhunia](#), associate professor of food microbiology and one of the sensor's developers. The sensor is made of a small piece of optical fibre - a clear, solid, plastic material that transmits light through its core. The fibre is coated with a type of molecule called an antibody, which specifically recognises *L. monocytogenes* and captures it, binding it to the fibre. When the fibre is placed in a liquid food solution, any *L. monocytogenes* in the sample will stick to the fibre.
[foodnavigator.com](#) 06/10/2004

US: No higher risk of salmonella in organic chicken

There is no discernible difference in *Salmonella* levels between free-range, organically produced poultry and conventionally produced birds, a USDA Agricultural Research Service scientist has found. ARS microbiologist J. Stan Bailey of the Poultry Microbiological Safety Research Unit at the Richard B. Russell Research Center in Athens, Georgia, examined 110 processed free-range chickens from three organic producers and found that about 25 percent of the chickens tested positive for *Salmonella*. Chickens raised conventionally had about the same levels.

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4. GMOs

US: Traceability concerns as GM grass blows far

Pollen from a genetically modified (GM) grass has travelled up to 21 kilometres on the wind before pollinating other grasses, a new study in the US has found. Raising traceability issues, researchers from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), found that cross-pollination over such a distance was much further than previously measured and is believed to be a record for any GM pollen. In Europe, new rules recently introduced for genetically modified food

ingredients and tougher labelling laws mean that food manufacturers are on the alert for Identity Preserved - easily traced - ingredients, essential to avoid the risk of contamination. According to the *New Scientist* the grass in question is an experimental variety of GM creeping bentgrass, modified to make it resistant to herbicides and which could be used on golf-course putting greens. It's been grown in experimental fields in Oregon, US, for the past two years.

Lidia Watrud and colleagues from EPA's national health and environmental effects research laboratory in Oregon, collected seeds from wild grasses growing in an area stretching tens of kilometres in every direction from the experimental fields. They then grew the seeds in greenhouses and tested the resulting grasses for signs of contamination by the GM variety. The team recorded significant levels of cross-pollination in samples from seeds collected within two kilometres downwind of the GM plots, but were more surprised to find contaminated seeds covering an area of 310 square kilometres, with the furthest example 21 kilometres from the GM source. Few studies have previously investigated cross-pollination from crops - GM or traditional - at distances of more than a few hundred metres. In light of this latest data, it has been suggested that windblown pollen from certain crops could travel hundreds of kilometres from its source. Former UK environment minister Michael Meacher said the research was "extremely significant". He added: "What this means is that Britain is too small an island to ever grow GM crops. We would need to have exclusion-zones of around 12 miles for every farm. It just isn't practical." Details appear in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

EU: Successful co-existence for GM food crops in 5 steps, claims new research

New rules in Europe recently opened the way for market opportunities of GM food crops but the debate still rattles on with the focus now turned to the co-existence of GM, organic and conventional crops with a new UK report claiming this is possible through five key steps. UK consultants [PG Economics](#) suggest in a new research paper that there are fundamental flaws in the argument that GM crops cannot 'co-exist' along side their organic and conventional equivalents. "Co-existence is based on the premise that farmers should be free to cultivate the crops of their choice using the production system they prefer whether they are GM, conventional or organic. Despite claims from opponents, co-existence is not a crop safety issue but one that relates solely to the production and marketing of crops approved for use," said Graham Brookes, author of the report. The research paper from PG Economics crystallises five key principles that can be adapted by farmers to local circumstances on a crop by crop basis – these are context, consistency, proportionality, equity (fairness) and practicality.

According to the report, on-farm experience in North America and Spain since 1995 has demonstrated that through the application of sensible farm level practices (e.g. the separation of crops by space and time, good communication with neighbours and the use of good husbandry practices) 'successful co-existence between GM and non GM crops has been possible, and without government involvement'. Context determines the relative commercial and agronomic importance of different crop production systems based on planted area, production and economic value and for 'consistency' should be consistent in dealing with the adventitious presence of all unwanted material, including GM, organic and conventional, write the UK consultants. On to 'proportionality' the paper claims that all co-existence measures established should be proportionate, non discriminatory and science-based and significantly, 'equity' (fairness) being any economic liability provisions (that compensate non GM growers for adventitious presence of GM) should be equally applicable to GM growers for adventitious presence of non GM crops. 'No one sector should be able to veto another – access and choice works both ways,' claims the research paper. Finally 'practicality' whereby all co-existence measures should be based on 'legal, practical and scientific realities'. Earlier this year tough

new labelling rules on GM foodstuffs opened the way for the European Union to end its five-year moratorium on the entry of new genetically modified food crops into the European market.
Foodnavigator.com 20/10/2004

Canada: GM farmed fish would dominate

Researchers in Canada have discovered that if GM fish escape into fishing grounds there will be little to stop them flourishing. After releasing a mixture of wild and farmed trout into five experimental lakes with no natural fish population, they found that the farmed trout took more risks when they were feeding and therefore grew bigger and more quickly than the wild ones. The scientists warn that a consequence of commercial exploitation may be "increased vulnerability of ecosystems to invasion".

Foodnavigator.com 23/09/2004

Phillipines - Non-GM techniques produce High-Iron content rice

There are already successes reported in naturally breeding and selecting rice with high iron content, which would not carry the risks associated with genetic engineering. Plant breeders at the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) have identified rice varieties that are naturally high in iron. They screened nearly 7 000 samples of rice germplasm stored in the IRRI gene bank, for high iron and zinc content. Of these, 1 138 samples were grown. They found that aromatic grains were usually higher in iron concentration and often also higher in zinc, compared to non-aromatic varieties. Data from various studies demonstrated that high iron and high zinc traits were generally expressed in all rice environments tested.

IRRI at the same time was trying to grow, by conventional breeding, new varieties that could thrive in poor soils and cold temperatures. "Quite by chance, it was discovered that one of the varieties designed to tolerate low temperatures had also inherited a richness in iron and zinc from one of its parents," explains IRRI scientist Dr. Glenn Gregorio. This aromatic variety is a cross between a high-yielding variety and a traditional variety from India, from which IRRI identified an improved line (IR68144-3B-2-2-3) with high iron concentration. The grain has 21 parts per million (mg/kg) of iron, about double the normal content in rice, and also about 34 parts per million of zinc.

<http://www.i-sis.org.uk/NGMIRAS.php>

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5. BSE

EU: More rapid live BSE tests needed

Europe's food safety authority backs calls for a rapid test for live cattle in the battle against Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and which could save on needless culling.

At the request of the European Commission, the food agency called together an expert group of scientists to examine the community's need to introduce on to the market new rapid tests. At present five rapid BSE test kits are approved by the EC for the routine post mortem testing of slaughtered cattle over 30 months of age. "It has been recognised that the availability of a rapid test for live cattle would be a major advance in dealing with the problem of BSE and TSE in general, but particularly with regard to epidemiological screening," said the European Food

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Safety Authority. EFSA said that in the long term an accurate live animal test might offer the possibility to reduce the number of culled animals after the detection of one positive animal. "A rapid BSE test for live cattle could be approved for the purpose of consumer protection, for epidemiological screening or for both. For the purpose of consumer protection any new rapid BSE test including tests for live animals should not be statistically inferior to that of the currently approved post mortem tests," said the Brussels-based agency. EFSA has come up with a protocol for the 'design of a field trial protocol for the evaluation of BSE tests for live cattle for the purpose of consumer protection only.'

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6. NUTRIENT CONTENT

France: New study comparing nutrient contents org vs conv AND human feeding trial

This is the most significant study comparing the nutrient contents of organic vs non-organic food this year. Plenty of ammunition for both sides of the debate, it may simply add to the confusion. In short, the organic tomatoes contained higher levels of antioxidants, though a human feeding trial then failed to detect any net benefit on the plasma antioxidant status of subjects including the tomatoes (as puree) in their diet for three weeks. Here's the abstract:

CARIS-VEYRAT C, BOREL P et al. (2004), Influence of Organic versus Conventional Agricultural Practice on the Antioxidant Microconstituent Content of Tomatoes and Derived Purees; Consequences on Antioxidant Plasma Status in Humans, J Agric Food Chem 52(21), (October 20, 2004)

The present study aims first to compare the antioxidant microconstituent contents between organically and conventionally grown tomatoes and, second, to evaluate whether the consumption of purees made of these tomatoes can differently affect the plasma levels of antioxidant microconstituents in humans. When results were expressed as fresh matter, organic tomatoes had higher vitamin C, carotenoids, and polyphenol contents (except for chlorogenic acid) than conventional tomatoes. When results were expressed as dry matter, no significant difference was found for lycopene and naringenin. In tomato purees, no difference in carotenoid content was found between the two modes of culture, whereas the concentrations of vitamin C and polyphenols remained higher in purees made out of organic tomatoes. For the nutritional intervention, no significant difference (after 3 weeks of consumption of 96 g/day of tomato puree) was found between the two purees with regard to their ability to affect the plasma levels of the two major antioxidants, vitamin C and lycopene.

It is likely critics of organics will attempt to use this study to point out that even when organic food contains higher concentrations of nutrients, this does not convey any nutritional benefit to the consumer. However the first part of the study confirms again the higher nutrient content of organic crops and the second part of the study was far too limited to assess the biological value of this to consumers. While the author is to be commended for attempting to assess the biological effect of eating an organic food with demonstrably higher nutrient contents, the absence of any significant outcome is unsurprising given the very short duration of the study (3 weeks), the very small number of subjects involved (10 in each group), little or no control of the

rest of their diet or lifestyle, and very little dietary change (just 100g of tomato puree in addition to their normal diet). Furthermore, the blood sampling was taken after a minimum 12 hour fast, despite Serafini et al. (2002) showing that the effects of dietary antioxidant intake can be transient and is usually gone by this time.

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7. HEALTH & DIET

US: Fruit & Veg cut cancer risk (again)

Powerhouse antioxidants contained in three or more pieces of fruit and vegetables a day could severely reduce the risk of developing cancer of the lymphatic system, with broccoli and cabbage showing particularly strong benefits. Researchers at the US National Cancer Institute found that people who consumed three or more servings of vegetables per day (not including potatoes) had a 40 per cent lower risk of developing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL), a form of cancer of the lymphoid tissue that hits some 54,000 Americans each year, compared to people who ate less than one serving per day. The findings were particularly strong for one or more servings per day of green leafy vegetables and just one half or more servings per day of vegetables from the broccoli and cabbage family, including cauliflower and Brussels sprouts. Findings from the study, which also involved four academic centres in Iowa, Seattle, Los Angeles and Detroit, build on mounting evidence that suggests compounds found in fruit and vegetables, and notably green leafy vegetables, could help the body fight a raft of diseases.

More than 125 scientific papers have been published on sulphoraphane, abundant in broccoli, brussels sprouts and kale, with many of them focusing on sulphoraphane's anti-cancer activity, as well as its benefits for heart health. In this latest study researchers investigated the relationship between cancer prevention and fruit and vegetable intake based on the results of a dietary questionnaire given to more than 450 men and women with NHL between the ages of 20 to 74 years. Lower risks were also found, although not significantly, with higher intakes of whole fruits (excluding juices), yellow/orange/red vegetables and processed tomato products such as tomato sauce and tomato juice. For specific nutrients, higher intakes of both selenium and zinc were also associated with lower risk of NHL. The researchers found no strong link to increased intakes of the individual vitamins A, C, or E, or individual carotenoids or retinol.

The study participants were matched to approximately 400 individuals without cancer who were similar in age, sex, race and lived in the same geographical region. "This type of study design has some limitations because we are asking people who already developed cancer to remember how often they ate fruits and vegetables in the year prior to cancer diagnosis," said Dr Linda Kelemen, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, and lead investigator of the study. "However, even after taking into account other possible risk factors like smoking, our results are consistent with those of studies where diet was assessed in healthy people who were followed forward in time to see if they develop cancer." Although specific links between individual antioxidants such as vitamins C and E were not found with NHL in this study, the scientists suggest that vegetables and fruits contain many other nutrients that may explain the association with NHL, and a reason for the public to take fruit consumption on board. "Dietary modifications such as eating more vegetables and fruits are within the public's grasp to lower their risk of

cancer and other diseases. We hope that these findings, in conjunction with continued research and reporting, will help to favourably change the public's eating behaviour," said Dr Kelemen. Foodnavigator.com 19/10/2004

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8. RESEARCH

EU: International congress on Organic Farming, Food Quality and Human Health

A major international congress jointly organised by European researchers and the organic farming movement is to distribute and discuss research in organic farming and its benefits on environment, food quality and human health. The event will take place in Newcastle upon Tyne in the north of England from 6 January to 9 January 2005. For the last decade there has been an increasing interest in organic agriculture. Practices used in organic farming have been shown to be beneficial for the environment, biodiversity and economic regeneration in rural areas. Furthermore, increasing evidence shows that the way organic farmers manage the soil and look after their livestock can positively affect the health and well-being of people eating organic food. Organic and other 'low input' farming are thus seen as an opportunity to reconnect public health and agriculture. For these reasons most European governments and the EU Commission have taken an interest in developing organic and low-input farming practices. This interest has been translated into the initiation of a number of European research projects on different aspects of food and farming. Common to these European research projects is the wish to disseminate research results to actors within the organic food chain, but also to engage in direct discussions with the farming community and other stakeholders, including food processors, retailers and consumers, about the research agenda.

In order to facilitate this dialogue, an international congress on 'Organic Farming, Food Quality and Human Health' has been organised jointly between the Soil Association – the leading organisation promoting and supporting organic food and farming in the UK - and three major European research and development projects. The main project, underpinning the congress is the Integrated Project QualityLowInputFood, which focuses on "improving quality, safety and reduction of cost in the European organic and low-input food supply chain". The QualityLowInputFood project is supplemented by a project on 'Organic HACCP', which aims to identify improved procedures for securing "consumer-oriented food safety and quality of certified organic foods", and by the 'Blight-MOP' project, which focuses on the control of late blight in organic potato production systems. Finally, researchers from other European and nationally funded research projects on organic farming will also use the congress to present and discuss their results. The full congress programme, including information on speakers and a booking form, can be found at <http://www qlif.org>

US: University of California to do research with organic farmers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded the University of California Santa Cruz Environmental Studies Department a \$571,000 grant over four years to bolster scientific knowledge about organic systems and to strengthen the Central Coast network of organic farmers and agricultural researchers. The grant period begins September 15. Experiments will focus on: testing biological alternatives to methyl bromide to suppress *Verticillium dahliae* on

strawberries; developing tools to help organic farmers monitor changes in soil nutrient levels; use of organic pest control to combat pests that prey on strawberries; and testing the applicability of three models to simulate how management changes could impact crop harvests, soil nitrogen availability, and the movement of nutrients under a range of weather conditions and for different types of soils.

US: USDA awards \$4.6 million in grants for organic projects

Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman announced that USDA is awarding \$4,614,980 in grants for 11 projects in seven states that will strengthen the Integrated Organic Program (IOP). The IOP supports research, extension and higher education programs to help organic farmers incorporate new technologies into their operations and to develop innovative marketing strategies. USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) manages the IOP. To learn more about the general CSREES program in organic agriculture, visit www.csrees.usda.gov/organicagriculture.

EU: Organic market data available

The proceedings of the first EISFOM (EU funded project European Information System for Organic Markets) European conference held in Berlin earlier this year are now available from <http://www.fibl.org/english/shop/show.php?sprache=EN&art=1339> and <http://orgprints.org/00002935>. These include more than 50 papers covering all aspects of organic food and farming data.

US: Organic Dairy Research

Researchers to study transition of dairy cattle to organic farming 16 Sep 2004 A project of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine will monitor the transition of dairy cattle from conventional to organic farming to understand changes in animal health, milk quality and milk safety.

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9. PROMOTION

US: Organic foods growing in popularity

According to the 2004 Whole Foods Market Organic Foods Trend Tracker survey released October 21, more than one-quarter of Americans (27 percent) are eating more organic products than just one year ago. The survey also reveals that more than half of Americans (54 percent) have tried organic foods and beverages and nearly one in 10 use organic products regularly or several times per week.

Organic farming better for wildlife

A joint English Nature and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds scientific review comparing evidence about wildlife on organic and equivalent non-organic farms has concluded that organic farms are better for wildlife. The review, published in the journal Biological Conservation, concludes that a wide range of wildlife including birds, bats, insects and wild flowers flourish on

organic farms. The paper 'Does Organic Farming Benefit Biodiversity?' is available from http://www.english-nature.org.uk/news/news_photo/Organic%20farming%20paper.pdf

Russia: Regulation needed

Participants of an international conference "Prospects of the Russian eco products market under expansion of modern technologies" held in Moscow arrived at a conclusion that there are no organic foods in Russia today. About half of Russia's major producers mark their products as "organic" and "environmentally pure", in spite of having no certifications or ecological expertise. This allows such companies to raise prices by 20-30 per cent. These companies go unpunished because Russian legislation provides for no restrictions for usage of the marking; regulations on ecological products certification are to be adopted at the end of 2005.

(Pravda -http://english.pravda.ru/science/19/94/377/14420_Organic.html - 12 October)

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10. POLITICS

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