



Organic Food Quality & Health

Organic Food Quality News

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. Thank you to those who've completed the feedback questionnaire. If you haven't, please visit www.organicfqhresearch.org for a copy. Comments and contributions are welcome, or if you find an item of news that you think should be included, please email shane@freshorganics.com.au

Quote of the month:

'It would be good if the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution report were the start of a fight-back against the pesticide menace. But the chemical industry has a lot of money and a lot of power, and is unlikely to be put off by a matter as trifling as public health'.

Jeff Howell, columnist in the UK's Sunday Telegraph.

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1. PESTICIDES

Netherlands: Unborn babies exposed to chemical cocktail

Babies in the womb are being exposed to cocktails of toxic chemicals according to new research. Their blood is swimming with dangerous compounds found in everyday household cleaners, perfumes and even pans and furniture. The chemicals, passed from the mother through the umbilical cord, have been linked to cancers, genital abnormalities and birth defects. Researchers checked for 35 common chemicals in blood taken from the umbilical cords of 30 newborn babies and from more than 40 new mothers. All the babies had at least five compounds in their blood and some had as many as 14. The study revealed that mothers can pass on up to a third of the pollutants which may have built up in their bodies over long periods. Among the chemicals were phthalates, which are used in soap, make-up and plastics and were shown earlier this year to disrupt the development of baby boys' reproductive organs. The study, by scientists at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, was commissioned by Greenpeace and WWF. (Daily Mail - 8/9)

UK: Free school fruit contains more pesticides

Government testing found over 25% more pesticides in samples of fruit and vegetables supplied to school children, under the official School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS), than in samples of the same fruit and vegetables on sale in shops. Nearly 30% more instances of multiple pesticides were found in the school fruit and vegetable samples. The Soil Association report, 'Pesticides in school children's fruit' shows that in 2004, the Government's Pesticide Residues Committee tested 167 samples of fruit supplied to schools as part of the Government's SFVS scheme. A staggering 84% of samples of fruit and vegetables contained pesticides, with multiple pesticides being detected in 65% of the samples (1). Both figures are far higher than the pesticides found in samples of fruit not destined for the school fruit scheme. Almost all pesticides are present at levels below the Government's 'Maximum Residue Level'. No organic food was sampled in schools. The Pesticide Residues Committee (PRC) also tested 882 samples of the same non-organic fruit and vegetables on sale in shops in 2004. Over half of the samples (57%) contained pesticides and over one third (36%) contained multiple pesticides.

UK: Pesticides harm rural communities

Pesticides Farmer's could be forced to curb spraying of toxic pesticides after a report from leading scientists warning that the chemicals could be poisoning tens of thousands of people living or working in the countryside. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has spent the last year investigating claims that the 31,000 tons of chemicals sprayed on Britain's farms each year are a toxic threat to humans. Until now government scientists and the pesticides industry have dismissed reports of miscarriages, elevated cancer rates and other diseases among those exposed to pesticides. However the RCEP's final report says that such fears could be justified.' (The Sunday Times – 11/9)

US: Going Organic Can Shield Children From Pesticides

Switching to organic foods provides children "dramatic and immediate" protection from pesticides that are widely used on a variety of crops, according to a study by a team of federally funded scientists. Concentrations of two organophosphate pesticides — malathion and chlorpyrifos — declined substantially in the bodies of elementary school-age children during a five-day period when organic foods were substituted for conventional foods. The two chemicals

are the most commonly used insecticides in U.S. agriculture. More than 2 million pounds were applied to California crops in 2003, according to records of the state Department of Pesticide Regulation. The health effects of exposure to minute amounts of pesticides found in food are largely unknown, especially for children. Some research, however, suggests that the residue may harm the developing nervous system.

For 15 days, a team of environmental health scientists from the University of Washington, Emory University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tested the urine of 23 elementary school-age children in the Seattle area. During the first three days and last seven days, the children ate their normal foods. But during the middle five days, organic items were substituted for most of their diet, including fruits, vegetables, juices and wheat- and corn-based processed items such as cereal and pasta. Average levels of both pesticides in the children "decreased to the nondetect levels immediately after the introduction of organic diets and remained nondetectable until the conventional diets were reintroduced," the researchers reported Thursday in the online version of the scientific journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*. When they ate organic foods, the children on average had zero malathion detected in their urine, with a high of seven parts per billion in one child. But when the children returned to eating conventional foods, one child had as much as 263 parts per billion and the average increased to 1.6 parts per billion. For chlorpyrifos, the children had less than one part per billion when they ate organic foods, but the average increased fivefold as soon as they returned to their previous diet.

The findings suggest that children are exposed to organophosphate chemicals mainly through food, not through spraying in homes or other sources. In 2001, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned most residential uses of chlorpyrifos but has left most agricultural uses unrestricted. Three other organophosphate pesticides that are not widely used on farms and are more highly restricted by the EPA were undetectable in most of the children, according to the study, directed by Emory's Chensheng Lu. "In conclusion," the researchers wrote, "we were able to demonstrate that an organic diet provides a dramatic and immediate protective effect against exposure to organophosphorus pesticides that are commonly used in agricultural production." Margaret Reeves, a staff scientist at the Pesticide Action Network North America, based in San Francisco, said the findings were "not surprising because we know that food is an important source of [organophosphate] exposure. Also, we know that these pesticides don't last very long ... in the body, and you can have a relatively quick response" to a diet change.

Pesticide manufacturers say that while low levels of residue are detectable on many products, there is no evidence that children are harmed by them. They say that pesticides, which are the most highly tested and regulated chemicals in the United States, are vital to providing an affordable and plentiful world food supply. But Reeves said the children's study "is a pretty strong argument that [organic food] is a good way to go, if you have access to it and can afford it." By Marla Cone, Times Staff Writer <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-organic3sep03,1,286626.story?coll=la-headlines-nation&ctrack=1&cset=true>

US: New studies reveal toxicity of roundup

Two new peer-reviewed scientific studies have further confirmed the toxicity of glyphosate, the world's most commonly used herbicide. The June 2005 scientific journal "Environmental Health Perspectives" reports that glyphosate, sold by Monsanto under the brand name "Roundup," damages human placental cells at exposure levels ten times less than what the company claims is safe. A study in the August journal *Ecological Applications* found that even when applied at concentrations that are one-

third of the maximum concentrations typically found in waterways, Roundup still killed up to 71 percent of tadpoles in the study. Similar glyphosate studies around the world have been equally alarming. The American Academy of Family Physicians epidemiological research has now linked exposure to the herbicide with increased risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a life-threatening cancer, while a Canadian study has linked glyphosate exposure with increased risk for miscarriage. A 2002 study linked glyphosate exposure with increased incidence of attention deficit disorder in children. Despite these studies, Monsanto continues to advertise Roundup, sprayed heavily on 140 million acres of genetically engineered crops across the world, as one of the "safest" pesticides on the market.

<http://www.organicconsumers.org/monlink.html>

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2. ADDITIVES

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3. ANTIBIOTICS/FOOD SAFETY

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4. GMOs

Ecuador: GMOs and Human Health

Mae Wan Ho, Plenary lecture to the People's Health Assembly 2, 17-22 July 2005, Cuenca, Ecuador - Except: There has been a string of incidents indicating GM food and feed are far from safe. These include studies carried out by biotech companies producing the GM crops, which they have kept secret under confidential business information.

Kidney and blood abnormalities in rats fed one of Monsanto's GM maize in Monsanto's secret dossier.

Villagers in the south of the Philippines who suffered mysterious illnesses when another GM maize came into flower in a nearby field two years in a row. Antibodies to the Bt protein inserted into the GM maize were found in the villagers.

A dozen cows that died after eating a third GM maize made by Syngenta, and others in the herd had to be slaughtered because of mysterious illnesses. Autopsies failed to be carried out, which is why Greenpeace and farmers are demonstrating in front of the Robert Koch Institute.

Senior scientist Arpad Pusztai and colleagues in Scotland found young rats fed GM potatoes ended up with damage in every organ system; the most dramatic being an increase in

thickness of the stomach lining to twice that in controls. Scientists in Egypt found similar effects in mice fed GM potatoes with another gene.

The US Food and Drug Administration had data dating back to early 1990s that rats fed GM tomatoes had developed small holes in their stomach. To cut a long story short, different species of GM food and feed crops with different genes had adversely affected several species of animals. You don't have to be a scientific genius to see that there may be something in the genetic engineering process itself that's harmful. For further information visit the Institute of Science in Society website: www.i-sis.org.uk

Organic Cotton Outperforms GM Cotton

A comparison study of GM BT cotton, in India, with organic cotton grown without pesticides found that organic farmers reported a lower incidence of medium to high infestations and higher incidence of low or no infestations for four traditional cotton pests. The researchers from Centre for Sustainable Agriculture concluded that the organic cotton is more environmentally friendly and better for the health of the community and the local economy than GM cotton. <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/OCBBCL.php>

Canada: Organic farmers can appeal ruling

Saskatchewan organic farmers will get another opportunity to try to launch a class-action lawsuit against Monsanto and Bayer CropScience. The farmers' first attempt to have the case against the two companies certified as a class action was rejected in a 179-page ruling by Justice Gene Anne Smith in May 2005. On Tuesday, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal granted them leave to appeal that decision. Two farmers were named as plaintiffs in the suit, which aims to include all Saskatchewan organic farmers certified from 1996. The producers, supported by the Organic Agriculture Protection Fund, are seeking compensation for losses they say are the result of the introduction of genetically modified canola.

In granting the leave to appeal, Justice Stuart Cameron wrote that the proposed appeal raises "some comparatively new and potentially controversial points of law." Smith had ruled that prerequisites needed to certify an action as a class action -- according to Section 6 of the Class Actions Act -- were not satisfied. Cameron noted the Class Actions Act was enacted fairly recently, and Smith's decision "constitutes the most comprehensive application" of Section 6 of the act undertaken so far in the province. "It stands as the seminal authority in the province on class actions," Cameron wrote. "Without suggesting that Justice Smith's decision is in any respect flawed, I do believe her appreciation and application of the prerequisites of Section 6 raises some issues of sufficient importance generally to warrant consideration by this court." For example, some of the arguments before Cameron centred on the "rigour" Smith applied in considering each of the prerequisites that had to be met to allow the class action, wrote Cameron. On one hand, it was argued the application for certification as a class action was subjected to more exacting standards than called for by the act. On the other, Smith was said to have approached it rigorously "in the sense of carefully and thoroughly." Terry Zakreski, the lawyer representing the farmers, said they will now file documents with the Court of Appeal and wait for an appeal date to be set. Zakreski said he feels the decision shows they raised good arguments for the higher court to consider on the basis the lower court may have "set the bar too high" regarding what's needed in order to be certified as a class action. (by Angela Hall August 31, 2005, The Regina Leader-Post) For the decision and other details of the class action suit, see <http://www.saskorganic.com/oapf/>

UK: GM contamination lingers long

GM crops contaminate the countryside for up to 15 years after they have been harvested, new government research shows. The findings cast a cloud over the prospects of growing the modified crops in Britain, suggesting that farmers who try them out for one season will find fields blighted for a decade and a half. Financed by GM companies and Margaret Beckett's Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the report effectively torpedoes the Government's strategy for introducing GM oilseed rape to this country. The study, published by the Royal Society, examined five sites across England and Scotland where modified oilseed rape has been cultivated, and found significant amounts of GM plants growing even after the sites had been returned to ordinary crops. It concludes that the research reveals "a potentially serious problem associated with the temporal persistence of rape seeds in soil." The researchers found that nine years after a single modified crop, an average of two GM rape plants would grow in every square metre of an affected field. After 15 years, this came down to one plant per square metre - still enough to break the EC limits on permissible GM contamination. (The Independent on Sunday -

<http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/environment/article318238.ece>; Daily Mail - 10 Oct)

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5. BSE

UK: Not all old cows are mad, says UK govt

The nine-year-old ban on the human consumption of beef produced from cattle aged over 30 months is being lifted, the UK government has announced. The ban was imposed after the outbreak of BSE or "mad cow disease". Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett is accepting advice from the Food Standards Agency that it is safe to end the Over Thirty Months (OTM) rule. From 7 November, older cattle will be allowed into the human food chain if they test negative for the disease. But UK cattle born before 1 August 1996 will continue to be excluded from the food chain. There will also be a new legal offence of sending cattle born before August 1996 to abattoirs producing meat for human consumption.

(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4248564.stm>)

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6. NUTRIENT CONTENT

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7. HEALTH & DIET

US: French Fries lead to Cancer

The International Journal of Cancer has published a new study indicating women who ate french fries regularly as children were more likely to get breast cancer later on in life. A study of American nurses found that one additional serving of fries per week at ages three to five

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increased breast cancer risk by 27 percent. “Researchers are finding more evidence that diet early in life could play a role in the development of diseases in women later in life,” said Dr. Karin Michels, of Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston and Harvard Medical School, who led the study. One of the reasons could be the levels of Acrylamide that occur in foods fried at high temperature. Acrylamide is has been shown to cause cancer and is one the so called ‘inert’ products found in some brands of the common herbicide glyphosate.

<http://www.organicconsumers.org/school/french-fries.cfm>

US: Food pyramid turned on it’s head

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns has unveiled a child-friendly version of the new *MyPyramid* Food Guidance System called *MyPyramid for Kids*. Johanns visited Samuel Tucker Elementary School to unveil the new graphic symbol, lesson plans for grades 1-6 and an interactive game. “This is a fun approach to addressing the very serious problem of childhood obesity,” said Johanns. “As teachers take advantage of the lesson plans and children learn what it takes to win the game, messages about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity will take hold. We know that *MyPyramid* captured America’s attention and our hope is that *MyPyramid for Kids* will inspire the same level of interest and help to improve the health of America’s kids.” *MyPyramid for Kids* provides age-appropriate information about the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the *MyPyramid* Food Guidance System released earlier this year. The new *MyPyramid for Kids* symbol represents the recommended proportion of food from each food group and focuses on the importance of making smart food choices every day. Daily physical activity is prominent in *MyPyramid for Kids*. Through an interactive game, lesson plans, colorful posters and flyers, worksheets, and valuable tips for families, *MyPyramid for Kids* encourages children, teachers, and parents to work together to make healthier food choices and be active every day. The interactive computer game, called *MyPyramid Blast Off*, involves a rocket that needs fuel to blast off. The game reinforces the key concepts of *MyPyramid for Kids* by challenging students to select a healthy variety of foods and physical activities to fuel their rockets. The *MyPyramid for Kids* lesson plans provide nutrition and physical activity information that can be included in Math, Science, Health, Language Arts and Physical Education curriculum for elementary school students. Students participate in active learning assignments and handouts are provided for students to share with their families. The *MyPyramid for Kids* slogan for children is “Eat Right. Exercise. Have Fun”. The key messages of *MyPyramid for Kids* are:

- * *Be physically active every day* – The child climbing the steps reminds children that physical activity should be done every day.
- * *Choose healthier foods from each group* – Every food group has foods that you should eat more often than others.
- * *Eat more of some food groups than others* – The different size stripes suggest how much food you should choose from each group.
- * *Eat foods from every food group every day* – The different colors of the pyramid represent the five different food groups plus oils.
- * *Make the right choices for you* – MyPyramid.gov gives everyone in the family personal ideas on how to eat better and exercise more.
- * *Take it one step at a time* – Start with one new, good thing a day, and continue to add another new one every day.

The *MyPyramid* Food Guidance System website, MyPyramid.gov, has experienced more than 800-million hits and *MyPyramid Tracker*, a personalized assessment tool that provides information on diet quality, now has nearly 480,000 registered users. The *MyPyramid for Kids* activities for children and classroom materials for educators are also available on the web at

MyPyramid.gov. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and consumer brochure are available at www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines.

EU: PCBs damage sperm

Toxic chemicals found in food can make men less fertile scientists warned yesterday in an EU-backed study published in the journal Human Reproduction. Men exposed to high levels of the pollutants called PCBs were found to be 60 percent more likely to have damaged sperm. The study showed that the chemicals were a major threat to those with existing fertility problems. The toxins are found in food such as oily fish, meat and dairy products. The study will add to fears that environmental pollutants could be to blame for growing fertility problems. (Daily Mail – 13/10)

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8. RESEARCH

Denmark: Differences in element content between organic and conventional milk

Organic raw milk contains more Molybdenum and less Barium, Europium, Manganese and Zinc than conventional milk. For 34 other elements the screening of 20 Danish herds showed no differences between the farming systems. Individual trace elements seem insufficient as indicators of organic origin, but the profile of trace elements may hold this potential. The importance of microelements in food, including elements occurring in ultra low concentrations, has been increasingly acknowledged in relation to positive as well as negative health aspects. However, due to difficulties in measuring elements with ultra low concentrations limited knowledge exists on the content of and sources of variation of microelements in food, including milk. New analytical methods have been developed and this gives us an opportunity to study such relations in more detail.

By means of high-resolution inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry the concentration of 45 trace elements and 6 major elements were quantified in milk from 10 organic dairy herds and 10 conventional ones in Denmark. Each group of herds included 7 herds of Danish Holstein and 3 herds of Jersey cows, and samples were collected 8 times per herd during one year. To our knowledge this is the most comprehensive determination of trace elements in milk, and in particular regarding possible difference between organically or conventionally produced milk. For a number of trace elements the concentration was affected by breed and system. The differences related to system are given in Table 1. The concentration of Mo was significantly elevated in organic milk whereas the concentrations of Ba, Eu, Mn, and Zn were significantly reduced compared with conventional milk. The differences in Mo and Ba between organic and conventional milk is in particular interesting since the system-related variation was much higher than the variation related to herd within system or time of sampling, and even higher than the variation related to breed. The explanation for this difference is not obvious, but it is known that the concentration of Mo is dependent on dietary intake. In addition antagonistic interaction between minerals regarding uptake by the cow may be an explanation. For instance the content of copper tended to be lowered in organic milk (54 vs 60 ppm $P < 0.10$) and it is well known that antagonistic interactions exists between these two elements.

In a huge number of trace elements no significant differences related to system were observed. These were: Al, As, Au, Bi, Ce, Cr, Cs, Dy, Er, Fe, Ga, Gd, In, La, Lu, Nb, Nd, Pb, Pr, Rb, Sb,

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Se, Si, Sm, Sr, Tb, Te, Th, Ti, Tl, U, V, Y, Zr. Although the differences between organic and conventional milk measured for certain trace elements – in particular Mo and Ba - were highly significant, none of these trace elements in itself seems sufficient to use as indicators of organic origin, but it might be anticipated that the profile of trace element concentrations could be used at least for screening purposes. This, however, remains to be verified. Further reading: Hermansen, J.E., Badsberg, J.H., Kristensen, T. and Gundersen, V. 2005. Major and trace elements in organically or conventionally produced milk. J. Dairy Res. 72 362-368.
<http://www.darcof.dk/enews/sep05/>

Australia: Organic World Congress a success

More than 1000 delegates from 72 countries participated in three days of the World Congress, featuring 360 papers, numerous workshops and three concurrent conferences – The IFOAM World Conference, the ISO FAR Scientific Conference and the Organic Viticulture and Wine Conference. A broad range of issues were covered that included improved production methods, development policies, biodiversity, climate change, fossil fuel depletion, carbon sequestration, fair trade, social justice, food security, organic food quality, animal husbandry, animal welfare, national perspectives and organic agriculture's contribution to rural development. The 8th International IFOAM Organic Viticulture and Wine Conference saw several of the world's experts on organic viticulture discuss the many challenges and opportunities for improving the production, quality and marketing of organic wine. The International Scientific Conference on Organic Agriculture delved into the latest research and technical advances in organic agriculture. Organized by the International Society for organic Agricultural Research (ISO FAR), the newly established global scientific research authority for organic agriculture, the conference advanced the global cooperation in research, methodological development, education and knowledge exchange. The scientific nature of the congress and multitude of research presented substantiates the claims in support of organic agriculture. The keynote speakers covered a wide range of interesting topics, however if there was an overall theme it was the importance of embracing diversity and sustainability. As part of the environmental sustainability delegates contributed to a greenhouse carbon levy to pay for planting of trees that will sequester the greenhouse gases generated by the conference and associated conference travel.

The IFOAM General Assembly saw 250 IFOAM member organisations discuss and vote upon on a range of issues. The most significant being the elections of the new world board and the adoption of a revised set of organic principles being: Health, Ecology, Fairness and Care. A new IFOAM World Board was elected by the General Assembly who in turn elected Gerald A. Herrmann, Germany, as its President and Mette Meldgaard, Denmark, and Alberto (Pipo) Lernoud, Argentina, as Vice Presidents.

The 15th IFOAM Organic World Congress passed a Congress Declaration that calls upon governments worldwide to actively endorse and practically support organic agriculture. The complete text of the Adelaide Declaration can be found in the politics section below. More information is available at

http://www.ifoam.org/press/press/Organic_World_Congress_Results.html

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9. PROMOTION

UK: Taste key motivator for organic consumers

Consumers opt to buy organic food because it tastes better, according to a recent survey from the UK's organic body the Soil Association. The poll of 813 people showed 95 per cent of respondents are buying organic to avoid pesticides and food additives; taste, it would appear, is equally important. According to the poll, fruit and vegetable scored particularly high on taste, with 72 per cent of respondents saying they taste better than non-organic. Meat also scored at the top, with 71 per cent saying they preferred the taste of organic meat. "A recent survey by the UK government's DEFRA found that after taste and health, locality was the third driving force for consumer purchases of organic foods," says Simon Wright, a consultant on organic foods.

EU: Fruit and veg driving European organic market

With the organic fruit and vegetable market continuing to dominate organic sales, it is the continued popularity of this segment that is contributing to a growth rate of 26 per cent for the European organic food industry between 2001 and 2004. Datamonitor estimates that in 2004, the total market for organic food in Europe was worth 20.7 billion, while the market for fruit and vegetables came in at \$5.8 billion. In particular it is organic bananas that are showing the most demand, as consumers seek to make both organic and fair-trade products a more regular part of their shopping basket. The Research and Markets report shows that of the 80,000 tonnes of organic bananas now sold in Europe, approximately half of these sales occur in the UK. In line with this figure, sales of organic fruit in the UK now total 330 million a year, making it the largest in Europe. Over the years it is the UK and Germany that have grown to dominate the European organic food market, which jointly represent more than half of all the organic fruit and veg sales in Europe. In particular it is Germany that has the highest volume growth in this sector, which last year ran at 14 per cent. On a European-wide basis, there is a distinct northern-southern European divide with regards development. In line with the strength of the market in both the UK and Germany, the report finds that the highest percentage of organic fruit and vegetables are actually purchased in Scandinavia and the Alpine countries. Bearing testimony to this is the fact that sales of organic vegetables in Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden currently account for more than 6 per cent of total sales, whereas this figure is still less than 1 per cent in Spain.

A major driving force for the increase in both countries has been the introduction of organic products by mainstream retailers, with a growing number of supermarket and discount chains increasing the shelf space for a variety of fresh organic produce. In line with the growth in demand for organic produce, there has been a significant increase in the production of organic fruit and vegetables across Europe. In 1985, just 100,000 hectares of EU farm land was certified organic less than 0.1 per cent of total farm land. By the end of 2002, this figure had risen to 4.4 million ha or 3.3 per cent of total farm land with market worth around 10 billion. However, the rise in interest for off-season and tropical products mean that imports represented 22 per cent of the total volume of European sales in 2004.

Looking at the retail side, organic food shops are expanding in line with the demand, with some 40 new organic-focused supermarkets opening up in Europe during the course of 2004. Currently supermarkets account for 48 per cent of organic food sales in Europe, but this figure is falling as the sector broadens. Food Navigator - France By Simon Pitman.

<http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=61874-organic>

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10. POLITICS

IFOAM: ADELAIDE DECLARATION

The 15th Organic World Congress of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) calls upon governments worldwide:

- * to actively endorse and practically support organic agriculture
- * further, it calls on individual governments to allocate budgetary funds for investment into organic agriculture. The minimum must be proportionate to the organic sector's production in their countries
- * internalize social and environmental costs in the prices of agricultural products and remunerate organic farmers for ecosystem services.

It also calls on international agribusiness to listen to the consumer and to embrace more organic principles, and thus develop truly sustainable agricultural and food systems.

The 1,000 delegates from over 70 countries supported this declaration at the 15th Organic World Congress held in Adelaide, Australia from September 20th – 23rd 2005. The Congress presented 360 papers on a broad range of issues including development policies, contributions of organic agriculture to biodiversity, climate change, fossil fuel depletion and carbon sequestration, social justice, food security and quality, animal husbandry and animal welfare, and national perspectives of organic agriculture's contribution to rural development.

The associated scientific conference underpinned the organic perspective with data to support and prove the claims made.

Organic agriculture is a comprehensive system affecting all levels of sustainability –ecological, social and economic. Organic practices enable farmers to improve soil fertility and prevent soil degradation, one of the world's main agricultural problems.

The safety and security of food are enhanced by the integrated and traceable approach to production which draws on century old traditions and the latest best practice ecological sciences to work in balance with nature and biodiversity. Organic agriculture concerns itself with more than output. It values the input of those who produce the food and the health and wellbeing of those who eat it – people. Other farming systems claim to be sustainable, but offer only partial solutions, sometimes creating new problems without addressing systemic issues.

Organic agriculture has the leading role in shaping sustainable systems.
Sept 2005

Ethiopia: Organic Farming Solution to Africa's Famine

African nations are increasingly turning to organic farming practices. Tewolde Berhan, head of the Environmental Protection Authority of Ethiopia, believes that organic farming is the solution to Africa's famine.

Farmers implementing simple organic soil amending techniques are witnessing higher yields without the chemicals or the cost. According to Berhan, "When well managed, and as fertility builds over years, organic agriculture isn't inferior in yield. Now, farmers don't want chemical fertilisers. They say, 'Why should we pay for something we can get for free?'"

<http://www.organicconsumers.org/ge/famine062705.cfm>

UK: New FSA chief interviewed

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Deidre Hutton, John Krebs's successor at the Food Standards Agency, is interviewed in the Observer: 'At the end of five years I want to see the trend in childhood obesity reversed,' she said in her first interview since taking over the new job. 'I want the "healthy option" to be the mainstream option, and I want to get to the stage where people enjoy food more and worry about it less.' The task will be momentous. New figures today reveal that the British are eating more ready meals than ever before. In the last year we spent more than £900 million on quick-fix dinners, many of which are known to be deceptively high in saturated fat, salt and sugar. That is an extra 60,000 packs sold every month compared to two years ago. Instead of taking the ready meals out of people's diets, Hutton is going to persuade the producers to take the salt, fat and sugar out of the ready meals. 'About 75 per cent of salts we eat come from processed food, so even small changes in that will bring about significant reduction for people.' But Hutton admitted that salt was the easy one: 'Salt is an additive, you can take it out, you don't have to have it. Fat and sugar are tougher to crack, as they are often an integral part of food. '

The answer, she said, was not necessarily organic food: 'I think the important thing is to get fresh fruit and vegetable rather than to worry about whether it is organic.' Hutton agreed with her predecessor, Sir John Krebs, saying that at the moment the 'evidence does not exist' to show that organic food is nutritionally superior. She said the FSA was keeping an eye on a big study in Newcastle into whether it was better for people and would 'keep an open mind'. In addition she said that scientific studies 'had not shown' that genetically modified foods were unsafe, but the agency would continually review its position when it came to new evidence. (The Observer - <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,5304884-102285,00.html>)

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