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Local Food Network

At the end of March there was a "Farm To School" meeting sponsored by the Healthy Active Klamath Coalition. The purpose of the meeting was to explore ways of getting locally grown fresh food into school menus to provide more healthy food to Klamath students.

Farm to School programs throughout the state are connecting school cafeterias with local farmers to improve health of students and support local economies. People from the state Department of Agriculture, Bend school district and local growers shared thoughts on how we can build a food network in the Klamath Basin. The meeting was at Ponderosa middle school and participants were served a typical school lunch.

During the discussion period, several people proposed expanding the concept to include the whole community. Marshall Staunton, a local potato grower, pointed out some of his potatoes are shipped to Portland where they get shipped back to Klamath by some supermarket chains.

"Mike Connelly, owner of the Green Blade bakery, buys flour from Pendleton Flour Mills because there are no local grain milling options. Grain grown here goes to Pendleton for milling, to Portland for distribution and then to his bakery in Klamath."

In the past five years there has been an increasing amount of talk about and work on developing local food production and distribution networks. Given the recent jump in transportation fuel costs, local food networks make more sense than ever.

Klamath Sustainable Communities has agreed to coordinate work on developing a local network which will likely include the Rogue valley because of their longer growing season. Dwight Long will lead this effort along with Patty Case from the OSU Extension and Melissa Klegseth from Klamath County Health Department.

If you would like to participate in this undertaking, Contact Dwight at 884-9942 or oh_otter@charter.net

A Wave of Awareness

What is your idea of a livable planet? We envision a world in which our air, water and food are safe, our children can grow up in healthy, clean communities, and the wonders of our natural resources and open spaces are protected so they can thrive for generations. We envision a world where we are all environmental stewards, from the largest corporation to each individual. As more and more people become aware of the vital connection between their actions and the impact on our environment, we are challenged to change our thinking and our approach to caring for it.

-- From Earthshare

Endocrine Disruptors May Trigger Early Puberty

Some doctors worry that children as young as preschool age are facing a higher risk of early-onset puberty -- including breast growth and pubic-hair development -- due to the increasing prevalence of certain cosmetics, prescription drugs, and environmental contaminants containing endocrine disruptors or hormones. In rare cases, clusters of young children have been found to be experiencing signs of puberty, and some of these outbreaks have been linked to accidental exposures to estrogen, testosterone, and other chemicals in pharmaceutical and personal-care products like shampoos and skin creams. Some flame retardants and phthalates have also been associated with early puberty. In 1996, Congress directed the U.S. EPA to develop a comprehensive screening program for endocrine disruptors within three years, but it has yet to get off the ground. Robert Cooper of EPA's reproductive toxicology division blames the delay on stonewalling by chemical industry reps on an advisory committee for the program. 10-24-07 Grist

Receive KSC Newsletters via Email

This newsletter is now available electronically. To receive it paper free, send an email to Dwight at oh_otter@charter.net and it will be available via the internet.

Joined together, even little things are strong. A mad wild elephant can be restrained with a few straws if the straws are formed into a rope.

A Hindu proverb

Genetically Engineered Sugar

American Crystal, a large Wyoming-based sugar company, who ironically have launched an "organic" line of their sugar and several other leading U.S. sugar providers have announced they will be sourcing their sugar from genetically engineered (GE) sugar beets beginning in 2007 with products arriving in stores during 2008. Like GE corn and GE soy, products containing GE sugar will not be labeled as such. Since half of the granulated sugar in the U.S. comes from sugar beets, a move towards biotech beets marks a dramatic alteration of the U.S. food supply. These sugars, along with GE corn and soy, are found in many conventional food products, so consumers will be exposed to genetically engineered ingredients in just about every non-organic multiple-ingredient product they purchase.

The GE sugar beet is designed to withstand strong doses of Monsanto's controversial broad spectrum Roundup herbicide. Studies indicate farmers planting "Roundup Ready" corn and soy spray large amounts of the herbicide, contaminating both soil and water. Farmers planting GE sugar beets are told they may be able to apply the herbicide up to five times per year. Sugar beets are grown on 1.4 million acres by 12,000 farmers in the U.S. from Oregon to Minnesota.

Meanwhile candy companies like Hershey's are urging farmers not to plant GE sugar beets, noting that consumer surveys suggest resistance to the product. In addition the European Union has not approved GE sugar beets for human consumption. OCA - Organic Bytes #117

Diets Impact Environment More Than Cars

13 PERCENT = the percentage of greenhouse gases created by all trucks, SUVs, cars, airplanes, trains and other transportation.

18 PERCENT = the amount of greenhouse gases created by livestock production. Source: United Nations - Organic Bytes #120 10-18-07

Moral of the story: If you are an average U.S. meat eater, reducing your meat consumption to 2 ounces per day is roughly equivalent to doubling your vehicle's fuel efficiency, in terms of greenhouse gas reduction.

Local & Organic Production on Smaller Farms

By DAN BARBER; The New York Times, May 11, 2008

TARRYTOWN, N.Y. - COOKING, like farming, for all its down-home community spirit, is essentially a solitary craft. But lately it's feeling more like a lonely burden. Finding guilt-free food for our menus - food that's clean, green and humane - is about as easy as securing a housing loan. And we're suddenly paying more - 75 percent more in the last six years - to stock our pantries. Around the world, from Cairo to Port-au-Prince, increases in food prices have governments facing riots born of shortages and hunger. It's enough to make you want to toss in the toque.

But here's the good news: if you're a chef, or an eater who cares about where your food comes from (and there are a lot of you out there), we can have a hand in making food for the future downright delicious.

Farming has the potential to go through the greatest upheaval since the Green Revolution, bringing harvests that are more healthful, sustainable and, yes, even more flavorful. The change is being pushed along by market forces that influence how our farmers farm.

Until now, food production has been controlled by Big Agriculture, with its macho fixation on "average tonnage" and "record harvests." But there's a cost to its breadbasket-to-the-world bragging rights. Like those big Industrial Age factories that once billowed black smoke, American agriculture is mired in a mind-set that relies on capital, chemistry and machines. Food production is dependent on oil, in the form of fertilizers and pesticides, in the distances produce travels from farm to plate and in the energy it takes to process it.

For decades, environmentalists and small farmers have claimed that this is several kinds of madness. But industrial agriculture has simply responded that if we're feeding more people more cheaply using less land, how terrible can our food system be?

Now that argument no longer holds true. With the price of oil at more than \$120 a barrel (up from less than \$30 for most of the last 50 years), small and midsize nonpolluting farms, the ones growing the healthiest and best-tasting food, are gaining a competitive advantage. They aren't as reliant on oil, because they use fewer large machines and less pesticide and fertilizer.

In fact, small farms are the most productive on earth. A four-acre farm in the United States nets, on average, \$1,400 per acre; a 1,364-acre farm nets \$39 an acre. Big farms have long compensated for the disequilibrium with sheer quantity. But their economies of scale come from mass distribution, and with diesel fuel costing more than \$4 per gallon in many locations, it's no longer efficient to transport food 1,500 miles from where it's grown.

Biofuels Myths and Facts

The amount of grain it takes to fill an average gas tank with ethanol would be enough to feed a person for a year.

If the US stopped growing food and converted its entire grain harvest into ethanol, it would satisfy less than 16% of its automotive needs.

The majority of US biofuels are produced from pesticide intensive genetically engineered crops (soy, corn).

Increasing portions of biofuels are now produced by monocultures of soy and sugar cane in Latin America and palm oil in Indonesia and Malaysia, which have led to massive deforestation, the loss of invaluable biodiversity, and massive outputs of greenhouse gas.

Increasing fuel efficiency by just 3% would reduce US dependence on foreign oil more than all of the agrofuels combined, yet 500% + in taxpayer money is spent subsidizing ethanol than energy conservation, mass transit, solar, wind, and fuel-efficient technologies.

Consumer Tips and Solutions

_ The average American vehicle's fuel efficiency in 1979 was 20 mpg. It took over a quarter of a century for that number to climb to the present day 21 mpg. Ask your elected officials to mandate serious increases in fuel efficiency.

_ Be a fuel efficient driver. You can improve your gas mileage by up to 30% by avoiding jerky accelerations, driving 5-10 mph below the posted highway speed limit and keeping up with vehicle maintenance (fuel filter, tire pressure, oil change, and alignment).

_ Drive Less: Carpool, consolidate trips, walk, bus, bike, train.

The Organic Consumers Association (OCA) supports the production of biofuels from recycled waste (such as used vegetable oil, manure or sewage) and biomass sustainably grown and harvested for the benefit of local communities, the current focus on subsidizing big-agribusiness with billions of dollars of funding for inefficient fuels, while ignoring energy conservation, is a recipe for disaster.

These misguided funding priorities have taken tens of billions of dollars of funding away from essential greenhouse gas reduction policies, such as energy conservation, solar and wind power, fuel-efficiency technologies, and mass transit. Many of the current methods of industrial-scale biofuel production are also causing food shortages and worsening global warming by increasing deforestation and degradation of peatlands and soils.

Organic Consumers Alliance

America's Chemically Dependent & Toxic Laws

- 67 million pounds of pesticides are applied to roughly 30 million acres of lawns in the U.S. each year.
- The #1 most water intensive crop in the United States is lawn grass. The average lawn is doused with 10,000 gallons of water each year (in addition to rainfall).
- Synthetic fertilizers run off into streets and local waterways, choking aquatic life and polluting our water.
- The EPA estimates that a mower emits as much pollution in one hour as a car emits in driving 20 miles.
- Numerous studies have linked common household herbicides and pesticides to asthma, cancer, reduced fertility and neurological harm to fetuses, infants and children.

Best Looking Organic Lawn On The Block

- *Relax:* Don't be afraid to let your average lawn height be higher than the local putting green. Taller grass has deeper roots, which requires less watering.
- *Seed:* You get what you pay for. If you need to seed bare spots in your lawn, be aware that cheaper grass seeds tend to have more weed contamination than higher-end products.
- *Weed:* Use a dandelion digging fork instead of purchasing dangerous pesticides.
- *Mulch:* Grass clippings can provide the majority of nutrients needed by a lawn.
- *Fertilize:* For yards that require fertilization, most garden centers now carry organic fertilizers that are better for your lawn and the environment.
- *Mow:* Use electric, rechargeable or push mowers. Mow grass when it's dry and make sure the blade is sharp to reduce damage to grass. Read the "Citizen's Guide to Organic Lawn Care" for more info:
http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_5997.cfm

Even greater conservation can be achieved by transitioning your grass lawn into a low maintenance and diverse landscape of native plants - called "naturescaping. For those interested in taking their lawn beyond organic grass, <http://www.plantnative.org> is an excellent website about naturescaping, including an excellent how-to section and directory of native plant nurseries.

KSC Annual Meeting ☺☺☺ Membership Dues

Sustainable Communities fiscal year is from May 1 to April 30. Each year our annual meeting is held in May. This year's meeting had 23 people in attendance – the largest turnout ever. Drafted officers are Leslie Lowe – President; Juanita Hodges – VP; Allan Lowe – Secretary; Dwight Long - Treasurer. The name of the non-profit is being changed with the state from the Coalition to Klamath Sustainable Communities.

Membership renewal takes place in May at the annual meeting although people can renew or become members any time of the year. KSC has two levels of membership; core partners with dues of \$25 for an individual or household and \$50 for an organization or business. Core partners have the right to vote at meetings. Associate members do not have voting privileges with dues of \$7.50 for an individual or household and \$12.50 for organizations and businesses. In-kind memberships are also available for donations of materials or labor.

To arrange an in-kind membership contact Leslie at 882-6509. Send membership payments to Dwight Long; 6523 Valhalla Avenue, Klamath Falls, OR 97603.

Plastic Continent in the Pacific

The University of Hawaii is set to launch an expedition with the goal of confirming a new trash "continent" in the Pacific Ocean. A vast expanse of floating trash has been collecting in the Pacific Ocean into a mass that scientists are now referring to as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

The thick mass of plastic soup, located approximately 500 miles east of California, is now reported to be twice the size of the United States. The collection of debris comes as no surprise to experts in this area.

According to a recent report from the UN Environment Programme, on a global level, each square mile of ocean water contains an average of 46,000 pieces of floating garbage.

Learn more: http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_10831.cfm
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