



THE RAM'S HORN

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FOOD SYSTEM ANALYSIS

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Lies and Contradictions

Since we started almost 28 years ago, *The Ram's Horn* has been dedicated to looking below the surface of the food system to reveal the way it really works. It is very hard to avoid being mesmerized by the steady stream of reassurances, hype, and downright lies that we are constantly fed.

As we are preparing this issue, we are waiting for



PINNOCHIO

an election call which not only flies in the face of the Harper government's election law, but is based on a ridiculous lie, that the Opposition has rendered Parliament dysfunctional. The truth is that pretty well all of the legislation introduced by this minority government has passed in the House. The dysfunction comes from the Tory contempt for Parliament in

the tactics it has used to bully its agenda through, and ignoring the law, not to mention the public. Harper, for example, has said he will not be deterred by three legal defeats in the past year as it has sought to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. "The bottom line is this – mark my words – western Canadian farmers want this [marketing] freedom and they are going to get it and anybody who stands in their way is going to get walked over." (*WP*, 26/6/08) This election call is based on one of the more egregious lies that we are expected to swallow. This issue will probe into others.

For example (page 2): 13 people have died so far in an outbreak of *Listeria* traced back to a single processed (pre-cooked) meat plant in Toronto – while the government cuts back on funding for the CFIA, which forever proclaims "We have the safest food in the world."

Then (page 7) there is the claim by infant-formula-Nestlé to being the "world's recognized leader in nutrition, health and wellness" – while it joins other bottled water purveyors to form a lobby to 'protect' bottled water from environmental attack.

The biotech industry extols the supposed yield increases brought about by GE crops (page 4-5), but throws a tantrum when Prince Charles articulates the real price of GE crops in a nightmare vision of rural depopulation, contamination, and pollution. In response, the Canadian biotech lobby trots out the old technique of the Big Lie: "GM crops are rigorously tested, reduce pesticide use, increase yields, enhance food security, support small farmers, and are environmentally friendly. GM crops are also a part of Canada's contribution to the world's economy and food prosperity."

Meanwhile (page 4), the salvation promised by global agricultural trade fails to materialize as the Doha round on trade talks under the WTO falls flat; the world's biggest military power fails to get its way; and Monsanto dumps rBGH (page 6) – which it continues to claim is a hot seller – and in turn gets dumped on in court for pushing GE alfalfa.

Along the way (page 6), the debate over food versus agrofuels is laid aside by the new Alliance for Abundant Food and Energy that says there is no contradiction – we can have both, no problem!

And more.....



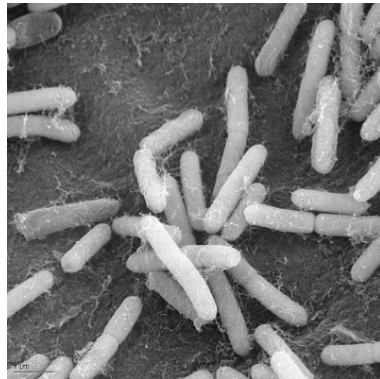
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Fellow Consumers

“Dear Fellow Consumers,” – so started the full page ads in a number of newspapers, presented as “an open letter from Michael H. McCain, president and CEO, Maple Leaf Foods Inc.” The last sentence of the letter reads, “I commit to you that our actions are guided by putting your interests first.”

The outbreak of listeria poisoning that prompted these ads was well reported. Well, almost. What is missing from every story we read so far is any description of the overall structure of the meat industry in Canada. This is, unfortunately, typical. Our reductionist culture does not train us to think structurally, and in this case, it is essential to do so to understand how and why this outbreak occurred.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Maple Leaf Consumer Foods warned the public not to serve or consume a number of ready-to-eat deli meat products [listed on their websites] because these products may be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. These products have been distributed nationally, primarily to food service institutions such as restaurants, hospitals and nursing homes. They are also sold at retail meat and deli counters.



LISTERIA BACTERIA

The proximate source of the listeria-contaminated meat was readily identified and its head, Michael McCain, pleaded *mea culpa*, or more correctly, Maple Leaf Foods *culpa*. For taking full responsibility for the contaminated meat, McCain was rightly praised. The problem, however, is nothing like so simple.

For example, one has to ask, What was the source of the meat Maple Leaf was processing? Where did the listeria pathogens come from? Where was the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that is responsible for the public safety of foods? Why is so much of the processed meat in Canada coming from one plant?

To answer these questions, one has to look at the structure of the meat industry in Canada and at how the CFIA understands its place in the food industry. There is an intimate relationship between the ideology of the CFIA and its government bosses and the rationality (or irrationality) of the food industry.

Maple Leaf Foods Inc., headquartered in Toronto, employs approximately 23,000 people at its operations across Canada and in the United States, Europe and Asia. The Company had sales of \$5.2 billion in 2007.

Maple Leaf Foods' Barton Road plant in Toronto produces over 220 kinds and brands of processed meat and 80% of the deli meat sold in Canada. Because the product is distributed nationally and exported to the USA, the plant must use meat from federally inspected slaughter facilities. It has a supply of pork from its own hogs, raised in Manitoba and butchered in its plant in Brandon, Manitoba, while its beef comes from Cargill's Better Beef plant in Guelph, Ontario.

Maple Leaf's dominant position in pork is the result of its purchase in 2003 of Schneiders, its major competitor in pork products, with government approval, though it continues to use the Schneider label. Since then Maple Leaf has radically restructured its pork business, eliminating five processing plants and selling its interest in over 4 million hogs. Now it is down to the one plant in Brandon, processing 0.8 - 1.0 million of its Manitoba-raised hogs annually to meet its own needs, including the production of deli meats under the Maple Leaf and Schneiders brands.

Cargill's Better Beef plant slaughters 1,400 cattle per day, supplying 98% of the federally inspected beef in Ontario. One can reasonably conclude that all the beef processed by Maple Leaf Foods comes from the one source, Better Beef, yet

I have yet to see any mention of this in any report on the listeria outbreak.



LISTERIA HYSTERIA

Cargill, the largest beef packer in Canada, has another facility in Ontario, Trillium meats in Toronto, which produces 'case ready' beef, that is, meat which is cut and wrapped and ready for pricing, display and sale in retail stores. That beef comes primarily from the largest slaughter plant in Canada, Cargill Meats in High River, Alberta. This plant kills 4,000-5,000 head per day, with 60% of the product exported and 40% sold domestically.

So what we have is an incredibly concentrated and centralized meat system. A problem in one place upstream can very rapidly move and spread downstream. It is a very vulnerable, delicate system, one that the public could reasonably expect the CFIA to monitor very closely. Obviously it does not.

Another aspect of centralization is the type of factory that must be built to manage the intake of raw meat and manufacture the huge daily volumes of 'product' that it does. Very much like an automobile factory, a lot of the work is done with big, complex machinery that operates at high speeds – like the 84 slicing machines in the Barton Road plant which, it now appears, were providing refuge for the notorious bacterium to propagate prolifically as bacteria do, in the innermost parts of these machines, beyond reach of the sanitizers. Such machines, and the risks they pose, would not be found in a decentralized system of many small plants.

The Harper regime is bent on delivering what it calls "relief from the regulatory burden": the CFIA is to engage in oversight only, leaving it to the corporations to regulate and police themselves. To facilitate this self-regulation, the Harper regime ordered the CFIA to cut its budget 5% with the result that the CFIA cannot do a proper job even if it wanted to.

All this makes for a very foolish and very vulnerable food system, requiring a gullible and passive consuming public – "fellow consumers" in Michael McCain's words.

Fortunately, the city of Toronto has its own health officials, and it was they, and not the CFIA or Maple Leaf, that first became concerned about listeria in the Barton Road plant back in July, and who informed the CFIA of the problem when test results on Aug 5 confirmed the presence of Listeria.

The latest twist (or more accurately, spin) is Prime Minister Harper's move to launch an "independent investigation . . . to make sure we get to the bottom, on the government and bureaucratic side, of exactly what transpired and to make sure as we go forward we make changes to our system to make sure this kind of thing cannot happen again." We should not expect anything to come from such an 'investigation' given Harper's commitment to 'self-regulation' as is clear from his order, months ago, for a shift from "full time CFIA meat inspection presence to an oversight role, allowing industry to implement food-safety control programs and to manage key risks." – source: *Ottawa Citizen*, 4/9/08

A parallel to the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP – referred to by inspectors as "Have A Cup of Coffee and Pray") self-regulation of the meat industry has surfaced in the oil business.

"A study by the Alberta Research Council that investigated the plume of contaminants emanating from a Canadian oil refinery using high-tech sniffing equipment found the facility dramatically underestimated its releases of dangerous air pollutants. The refinery re-

leased 19 times more cancer-causing benzene than it reported under Environment Canada disclosure regulations, about 15 times more smog-causing volatile organic compounds, and nine times more methane, a greenhouse gas, according to the study. The testing is believed to be the first at a North American refinery using the sophisticated technology relying on lasers, and is considered state-of-the art. The technology, developed by British Petroleum, has been in widespread use in Europe for nearly two decades. . .

It is likely that all refineries in Canada and the United States are seriously undercounting emissions because they follow an estimating protocol developed by the Washington-based American Petroleum Institute and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Under the protocol, refineries don't calculate their actual emissions, but try to reach approximate figures using technical assumptions and mathematical equations."

– *Mittelstaedt, G&M, 6/9/08*

It is inevitable that corporate concentration and food system centralization combined with the effective withdrawal of federal inspection will lead to (another) tragic outcome. The pathogens are just waiting to pounce, so it's none too soon to start planning for next year's garden and contacting the farmer who might be able to supply you with meat and eggs, and the fruit and veggies you cannot grow yourself.

We may now hope that the Canadian people are no longer prepared to passively accept the corporate designation of consumer and instead, as citizens, demand and work for the dismemberment of the centralized, globalized industrial food system so long favoured by capital and its state agents.

Long Reach

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has warned people who shop in Happy Valley-Goose Bay that Canex Maple Leaf Bologna bologna may be contaminated with listeria. The agency warns that food contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* may not look or smell spoiled. Consumption may cause listeriosis, which can cause high fever, severe headache, neck stiffness and nausea. Individuals who have weakened immune systems, the elderly, pregnant women and young children are most at risk, according to the public agency.

Public health officials have said listeriosis was involved in the deaths of 13 Canadians this summer, after a nationwide recall of meat products. Officials have also said the outbreak seems to have subsided in recent days.

– *CBC News, 5/9/08*

GOOD NEWS Doha is Dead

The corporatizing globalizers may weep, but justice smiles, if even only briefly. The reversal of the fortunes of the WTO that began with the Battle of Seattle in 1999 may have been completed with the demise of the Doha round of trade talks in July. Certainly we must be allowed at least a brief celebration before we resume the battle against the plethora of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements being pursued by the USA, Canada and others. – B.K.

The fact that the proposed negotiating mandate for an amendment to the Trade Related Intellectual Property (TRIPS) Agreement regarding biodiversity got “washed away” with the collapse of WTO talks in Geneva the last week of July is good news.

The proposal to amend TRIPS, first tabled in 2006 and now supported by over 100 countries, has no social backing, as far as we know, and goes in the completely wrong direction. Rather than roll back the patent system from its illegitimate incursion into the very basis of food production – seeds and breeds, not to mention microorganisms – it would reinforce it. As part of the unrelenting stampede of privatisation, the amendment aims to inject some “balance” into TRIPS by saying “OK, you can patent biodiversity and traditional knowledge – as long as you pay for it!”, with the cheques presumably expected to be made out to developing countries governments. This would constitute a clear and resounding “yes” to patents on life by nearly 160 governments under binding international trade law, with no room for backsliding. It would also extend the scope of the WTO TRIPS Agreement to traditional knowledge.

The political meaning of this proposal should not be taken lightly. Rather than respect the rights of farmers, indigenous peoples and rural communities, for whom traditional seeds, native livestock, indigenous knowledge and the local cultures they are intertwined with constitute a collective heritage, it would turn them into corporate property at the highest level yet. And because it amounts to saying “yes, if”, this move would signal the end of any resistance towards the patenting of life by nearly all governments.

Rather than amend TRIPS to embrace patents on life and traditional knowledge by putting a price on them, TRIPS should be amended to make patents and similar forms of monopolies on biodiversity and people’s associated knowledge absolutely illegal. It’s either yes or no. . . .
– *Comment from GRAIN, 6/8/08*

Corn of Many Colours

I sit earthed in the Painted Mountain Corn Patch
randommed with sunflower bursts of Good Cheer
back-dropped by sky blue and
understried by carpet lush green
thankful for a night of replenishing rain.

Millennia of genes express themselves around me
passed down through the hands of time
selected to survive in marginal places
and give nurture to the dispossessed.

“Grain with a handle” – protein, lysine,
multi-hued anthocyanins for the
hungry of body and beauty.

While overhead, the Air Show planes

sever the skies and thrill the crowds
in denial that neighbouring RoundUp Ready fields
threaten to contaminate us all.

Susan Davidson, 10 August 2008

But where is the Yield Gene?

Seed Today, mouthpiece of the industrial seed industry, offers a rather pathetic defense of its claims that GE increases crop yields.



PHOTO BY TINEKE D'HAASE

“The anti-biotechnology crowd has adopted a new talking point, claiming that biotechnology does not increase yields. Activist groups are highly skilled at finding a fact and distorting it for their agenda. For this new talking point, they have twisted an April 2006 report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The report overall is supportive of biotechnology, but the activists found part of one paragraph they could exploit. Here’s the quote they like to cite:

‘Currently available (genetically engineered) crops do not increase the yield potential of a hybrid variety. In fact, yield may even decrease if the varieties used to carry the herbicide-tolerant or insect-resistant genes are not the highest yielding cultivars.’

"They ignore the rest of the paragraph, which states:

"However, by protecting the plant from certain pests, GE crops can prevent yield losses compared with non-GE hybrids, particularly when pest infestation is high."



"The point is that biotechnology helps prevent yield loss to ensure that corn hybrids and soybean varieties produce to their full potential. It is true that no current biotech seed contains a 'yield' gene as such, but there is no question that the improved weed control and insect protection do a better job of protecting yields than other forms of pest control." — *Seed Today*, 22/8/08

nightmare vision, a world in which millions of small farmers 'are driven off their land [by global conglomerates] into unsustainable, unmanageable, degraded and dysfunctional conurbations of unmentionable awfulness.' If that's how it's going to be, he says, 'count me out.' We are missing the point. We should be discussing 'food security not food production.'

"Without naming names, he goes after the 'clever' genetic engineers who have put us on course for the 'biggest disaster environmentally of all time'. We should be working, he says, 'with Nature. We have gone working against Nature for too long.' But these corporate monsters have engaged in 'an experiment that's gone seriously wrong, causing untold problems which become very expensive and very difficult to undo.'"

— *The Daily Telegraph*, 12,13/8/08

"Can't see another way out"

Martin Taylor, chairman of the board of Syngenta, told a group of farm leaders and agricultural journalists in Guelph that "The world has to choose between technology, deforestation and hunger. I can't see another way out." He decried "the move towards mediaeval agriculture, especially in Europe," where he says hostility towards agricultural technology "is extraordinarily pronounced." — *Better Farming, USA*, 4/06/08

An African comment, from Dr George Ogola (teaching at the University of Central Lancashire, UK.)

"In an interview with the *Telegraph* last week, Prince Charles reignited the controversial debate on the environmental safety of GM crops. . . His statement predictably elicited consternation . . . but it was the umbrage it caused, particularly to the pro-GM lobby including the British Environment minister Phil Woolas, that has lead many to reflect more critically on the interview and what the reaction it evoked revealed.

Common Sense from Royalty

Jeff Randall reports on his interview with Prince Charles:

" . . . isn't this trying to turn back the clock? It's a nice thought that we might be able to feed the poor from family-run units where the animals live like residents at the Ritz, but in the real world Old MacDonald's Farm has come and gone. The solution, surely, is mass production?"

"Trapped in debilitating poverty, Africa has traditionally been a breeding ground for various experiments. . . Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina metaphorically captures the continent's vulnerability thus: "A windup radio. A magic laptop. These pure products are meant to solve everything. They almost always fail, but they satisfy the giver...; a product built to serve the needs of the needy assumes the needy have measured themselves as the product has measured them... I am sure the One Laptop per Child initiative will bring glory to its architects. The IMF will smile. Mr Negroponte will win a prize or two or ten."

"At this point, something snaps; the Prince can take no more. Throughout our conversation he has been calm, measured and disinclined to rubbish the supermarket chains which, I suspect, he regards as doers of the devil's work. . . . But my suggestion that Big Food, industrial-scale operators, are the way ahead sends him whizzing off piste. Jabbing his finger at me, he lets rip: 'What, all run by gigantic corporations? Is that really the answer? I think not. That would be the absolute destruction of everything and... the classic way of ensuring that there is no food in the future.'

"Wainana's piece is not a mischievous jab at Western inventions, rather it is a powerful counter-discourse to the narrative of magnanimity so easily sold to the continent by corporations from the West who routinely deny legitimacy to opposing viewpoints. . . Prince Charles raised some useful points for debate. Indeed, it was Woolas' criticism that sounded more like the views of a Monsanto company salesman. Rather than counter the Prince's position through argument, Woolas quickly dismissed Prince Charles' attitude as 'entirely Luddite' and then in typical condescending attitude, invoked the potential benefits of GM crops to the Third World."

"Bouncing in his chair, the Prince sets out his

— *Business Daily, Kenya* 22/8/08

Hubris

Never fear, brothers and sisters, we are here to deliver abundance – not just life abundant, but abundant food and energy! Just believe, and it will be yours, for ever and ever, amen.

Biblically, hubris – over-weening pride – is considered sin. Whether the creators of the Alliance for Abundant Food and Energy are believing Christians or not is not important. Their arrogance, and that of their clients, is indeed sinful. The sponsoring corporations are setting themselves up as divine deliverers, the gods of science, technology and capital.

“Leaders from across the agriculture value chain joined together to form the Alliance for Abundant Food and Energy, an alliance designed to promote their understanding that through innovation, agriculture can sustainably meet the growing global demand for food and renewable forms of energy. Founding members of the Alliance include the Archer Daniels Midland Company, DuPont, John Deere, Monsanto and the Renewable Fuels Association. According to Mark Kornblau, executive director of the Alliance, ‘With growing global demand for grain, it’s critically important that policy leaders start thinking about how we can grow our way to a solution. Innovation is part of the American DNA. Through greater support for agricultural innovation, we can produce enough crops to supply both our food and energy needs worldwide.’”

– Alliance for Abundant Food and Energy, 24/7/08, <www.foodandenergy.org>

Even within the industry, this view that technological improvements will continue to boost crop yields and prevent demand for renewable fuels from crowding out food supplies is fiercely opposed. Tyson Foods, for one, has called for US ethanol subsidies to be dropped as its profits have been eroded by higher feed costs for its poultry, pork and beef processing business.

On the other hand, ADM, Monsanto and others have seen their profits soar in recent years as booming demand for agricultural products in emerging markets has pushed up commodity prices and spurred additional production. They do not see a supply problem. “From a production perspective, we have abundance [of food],” said Rob Fraley, Monsanto’s chief technology officer. He said the “challenges” were in distribution and access to food because of wealth distribution.

The new coalition faces tough opposition, notably from the food producers’ lobby in the US, which has been calling for the scrapping or reduction of subsidies

to the ethanol industry. “While improvements in global agriculture are vital, this work must not distract us from the fact that while we wait, millions of people will be pushed deeper into hunger and poverty because we are diverting more and more food and feed supplies to producing ethanol,” said a statement from the Grocery Manufacturers’ Association. – *Chicago Tribune*, 25/07/08

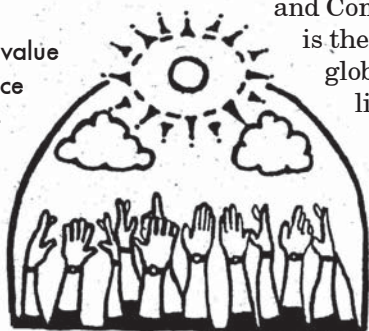
Eli Lilly to buy rBGH

Monsanto has agreed to sell its POSILAC bovine somatotropin (rBGH) brand and related business to Eli Lilly and Company. Lilly’s animal health division, Elanco, is the seventh largest animal health company on a global sales basis. Lilly will purchase assets and liabilities of Monsanto associated with the POSILAC brand and related business. Elanco has been marketing recombinant bovine somatotropin for Monsanto over the last decade outside the United States, primarily in Mexico, Brazil and South Africa. POSILAC was first sold in the United States in 1994.

For more background on rBGH, see www.ramshorn.ca/getit.php?w=farmageddon

Journalist Rick North managed to get on a Monsanto conference call announcing their intent to sell their rBGH business and reported that Monsanto’s spokeswoman, Christie Chavis, said in the call that the reason they’re divesting rBGH is to concentrate on their core priorities of seeds and traits in soybeans, corn, vegetables and cotton. She also said their sales figures were up over last year, in both domestic and overseas markets, but refused to say what their sales were. One reporter on the call said that it defied logic that their sales were up when so many large companies like Starbucks, Kroger and Wal-Mart had moved away from rBGH. Chavis’ response was that fluid milk is only 25% of the market (we believe it’s closer to 30-35%), while cheese is 50%, and most of the rejection of rBGH is fluid milk.

North brought up the recent American Medical Association president’s statement and the American Nurses Association resolution opposing rBGH, to which Chavis responded that this had nothing to do with their decision. “I also brought up the Oct. 2007 USDA figure that only 17% of cows were estimated on rBGH and that it’s lower now because so many companies have gone rBGH-free since then. I asked about the discrepancy between these figures and Monsanto’s typical ‘one-third of all herds’ statement, and her response was that she didn’t know how USDA arrived at those figures. (Note: This may be the last time I’m ever on a Monsanto conference call.)” – <hrnorth@hevanet.com>, 6/08/08



Ban on GE Alfalfa

The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has upheld a nationwide ban on the planting of genetically-engineered (GE) Roundup Ready alfalfa pending a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Court determined that the planting of genetically modified alfalfa can result in potentially irreversible harm to organic and conventional varieties of crops, damage to the environment, and economic harm to farmers.

Although the suit was brought against United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); Forage Genetics and Monsanto Company entered into the suit as Defendant-Intervenors. In her opinion, Circuit Judge Mary M. Schroeder held that "Monsanto and Forage Genetics contend that the District Court disregarded their financial losses, but the district court considered those economic losses and simply concluded that the harm to growers and consumers who wanted non-genetically engineered alfalfa outweighed the financial hardships to Monsanto and Forage Genetics and their growers."

The decision upholds District Court Judge Charles Breyer's earlier ruling of May 2007, in which he found that the USDA failed to address concerns that Roundup Ready alfalfa will contaminate conventional and organic alfalfa. Judge Schroeder's decision affirms that USDA violated national environmental laws by approving GE alfalfa without a full Environmental Impact Statement. It also affirms that USDA failed to address the problem of Roundup-resistant "superweeds" that could follow commercial planting of GE alfalfa. – *Center For Food Safety, 2/9/08*

Seed Industry News

Monsanto and China National Seed Group Corporation have agreed to expand their investments in the companies' existing Chinese joint venture company, CNSGC-DEKALB Seed Company Ltd. (CNDK), formed in 2001. The investments will enable CNDK to expand its existing corn seed business by combining CNDK's business operations with the corn seed business of China Seed and providing CNDK access to elite corn seed hybrids developed by Monsanto and China Seed. China Seed will continue to hold a 51% ownership interest in CNDK while Monsanto will continue to hold a 49% ownership interest in the joint venture. China is the world's second largest corn growing region. – *Monsanto Press Release 21/08/08*

Nestlé Re-Positions Itself

Nestlé Group chief executive officer Paul Burke says that Nestlé's move towards becoming a nutrition and wellness company, particularly in food and beverage production, would help it to realize full year profitability. "Nestlé's drive to become the world's recognised leader in nutrition, health and wellness, its strong billionaire brands and its focus on speed and discipline in execution have allowed the company to further accelerate its performance under difficult economic conditions," he stated.

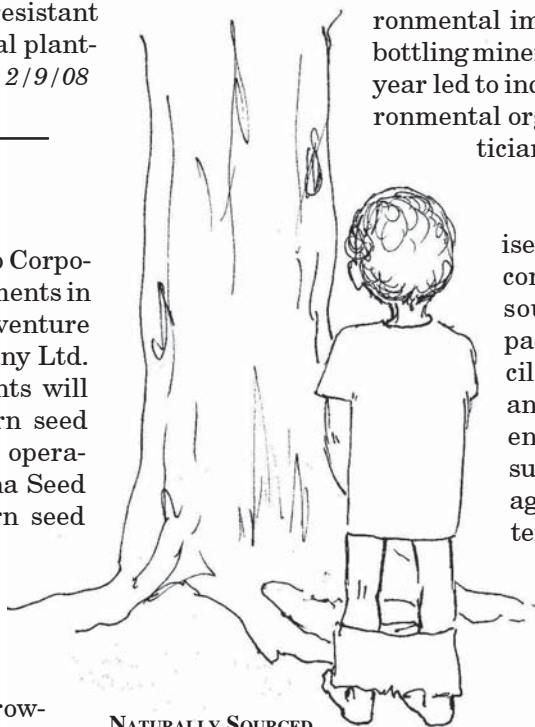
Difficulty in its bottle water operations on the back of higher output costs and recent environmental criticisms resulted in a 1.1% decline in segment sales on an organic basis. However, growing demand within its nutrition segment and for added-value ice cream products helped push sales growth over the period, the company said. – *foodproductiondaily 8/8/08*

'Protecting' bottled water

The three leading UK suppliers of bottled water have created a new group designed to spread the word on the economic and social value of their product. Danone Waters, Highland Spring and Nestlé Waters said the new Natural Hydration Council will provide "authoritative" information and advice for researchers, government, industry and consumers.

Concerns over the perceived environmental impacts of transporting and bottling mineral water have over the last year led to increasing attacks from environmental organisations and some politicians around the world.

"Not many people realise that natural bottled water comes from fully sustainable sources and in recyclable packaging. We need the Council to undertake new research and communicate the facts to ensure fully informed consumer choices," said the managing director of Nestlé Waters UK. The Natural Hydration Council will provide Consumers "with an informed choice on the health and sustainability



NATURALLY SOURCED



aspects of naturally sourced water," added the managing director of Danone Waters UK & Ireland.

Global consumption of bottled water is expected to grow to 251bn litres by 2011 from 187bn litres in 2006. This potential is coming in part from growing innovation within the bottled water market, particular for added-value waters that claim to offer nutritional or cosmetic benefits. *—foodproductiondaily.com, 1/9/08*

Urban Organic Farming

The grand opening of the new Guelph Centre for Urban Organic Farming (GCUOF), took place on September 4th. The GCUOF will offer experiential learning of year-around, organic food production practices, within the broader context of energy and water conservation. Inter-generational learning will be emphasized, starting with the children of the campus Child Care and Learning Centre and U of G students, as well as the broader Guelph community.

Contact: Joan Knox, Child Care & Learning Centre,
jknox@uoguelph.ca 519-824-4120 x58292

GMO GPS

Whoever wants to know exactly where GM crops are grown in Germany need only take a look at the Internet. Since the beginning of July, the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) has completed its public register of commercially-grown or trial-released genetically modified organisms with an interactive map.

While allowing easy orientation in the geographical distribution of GM crops country-wide, the resolution also may be sharpened even to the community level. Cultivation areas are listed separately on additional spreadsheets and users may choose between the read-out of commercial or trial fields. Detailed information on individual fields are given via links to a data base that begins the first introduction of the official register in 2005. The new map also features the possibility of checking for GM cultivation in a given community by entering its postal code.

Canada could provide this, though Monsanto might object.

Official index map on GM cultivation in Germany
(Legend in German only) http://194.95.226.237/stareg_visual_web/data.do?cachefoi=yes

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