



Issue 3: Fall 2008

Go Green!

By: Elizabethtown College SIFE

Define “Organic”!

Written By: Jordan Ridge

Walking the aisles of any supermarket these days means inevitably being bombarded by “organic,” “Fair Trade,” and “100% Vegan” seals on the packages of food products- but what exactly do these labels mean?

The term “organic” has recently become a trend, and a simple way for companies to justify raising the prices of their product. As annoying as the price hikes for organic products can be, hopefully this trend is here to stay- products bearing the USDA seal for organic foods are significantly more environmentally friendly.

In order to bear the official “organic” seal, products must undergo inspection by government-approved organic certifiers. In the case of food, this means inspections of the farm where it is grown or raised. Fruits and vegetables receive the stamp of approval only if they are grown without most conventional pesticides, if their fertilizers are made without synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, and they cannot be grown with the use of bioengineered seeds or ionizing radiation. For animal by-products such as meat, milk, cheese, or eggs, the animals cannot be given any antibiotics or growth hormones. All

food items sold in the U.S., whether they’re local or imported, must meet these requirements in order to boast the official “organic” seal.

Good will is not the only factor fueling the “go organic” trend. Along with the environmental incentive, producers of certified organic products will benefit from potentially lower input costs, a decrease in their reliance on non-renewable resources, the ability to capture high-value markets, and premium pricing options to boost income.

Organic products are better for the environment because they are produced by farmers who avoid the use of harmful chemical pesticides, fungicides, and fertilizers. Farmers who embrace the production of organic products are also more likely to employ renewable and sustainable resources, as well as conserve water and soil for the use of future generations.

While the USDA makes no claims that the consumption of organic foods is healthier than non-organic foods, organic foods have a significantly smaller impact on the environment, making them worth the extra hassle and higher price.



Protecting Our Rainforests

Written By: Sean Burrows

How many trees must development cut down before the rainforests crumble to their knees? The answer, my friend, is showing in the Amazon – in the past several decades a majority of the world’s rainforests, including the lush jungles of the Amazon River Valley of Brazil, have succumbed to development and logging. The paper industry is the culprit in much of this logging, with trees being used for pulp for packaging and paper. With the timely concern of climate change, citizens of Planet Earth should be concerned about the elimination of CO₂-photosynthesizing trees.

While there has been much pro-environmentalist and “green” lifestyle initiative across the U.S. over the last two decades, not enough has been done to preserve our crucial rainforests. Development and tree harvesting to enhance economic status in the economically stunted nations containing the majority of the world’s rainforests continue to result in the destruction of over fifty million acres of rainforest per year. According to the Amazon World Park (UK) web site, deforestation contributes to the extinction of one plant or animal species every hour. Countless species have already disappeared due to deforestation. Forests also help purify the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, which has been implicated in contributing to climate change, while absorbing rainwater before releasing it back into the

environment. Tree roots help contain the water table, the underground water supply which serves as the source of the majority of the world’s drinking water.

While it will take a collective effort to preserve the rainforests, you can contribute by practicing certain behaviors, beginning with refusing to purchase products made from exotic trees. In addition, it is important to recycle paper and use previously recycled paper for packaging and writing paper. Also, avoid buying exotic pets from the jungle such as iguanas which would be better off proliferating in their natural habitat.

There is a ray of light for the protection of the rainforests, as statistics indicate that deforestation in Brazil has decreased annually at rates of between 31 and 47 percent from 2005 to 2007. Despite this, during the closing months of 2007 Brazil’s interior department noted that deforestation was again on the increase. However, cattle ranching and subsistence agriculture continued to account for over ninety percent of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest from 2000 through 2005. Logging, road construction, river damming, and mining contributed on a smaller scale to the problem. It is critical to continue to support anti-deforestation efforts and prevent the destruction of natural habitats for the prevention of our climate and wildlife.

Good-bye Shopping Bags!

Written By: Jamie Alcorn

Paper or plastic? NEITHER!! Recently, it seems that many stores are trying to do their part in reducing pollution caused by paper and plastic bags by selling reusable cloth bags as alternatives. If used two times a week for two years, each reusable bag will save 832 plastic bags, enough petroleum to drive 60 miles, 11 pounds of garbage and \$140 the city spends on disposal. Investing in some reusable bags is a good way to do your part in helping the environment. But until then, become an educated consumer with these facts:

- It takes 70% more global warming gases to make a paper bag instead of a plastic bag.
- The petroleum used to make 14 plastic bags could drive a car 1 mile.
- An estimated 100,000 marine animals are killed annually by plastic bags.
- Cities spend up to 17 cents per bag in disposal costs—wasting millions of tax dollars.
- In some parts of the ocean there are 6 pounds of plastics for every pound of fish.
- Americans use 380 million plastic bags every year.
- Paper bags do not biodegrade in landfills.



<http://www.thegreenloop.com>

Cracking Down on Plastic

Written By: Kristin Dougher

Between 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide each year. As an effort to cut down on plastic bag usage and waste, countries around the world have been inspired by a “green” movement. In response, Ireland has begun charging for the use of each plastic bag that consumers take with them, and instead have started selling cloth bags in stores that can be reused in all stores in which customers typically shop. This movement is also beginning to show its effects within the United States. This includes a potential law being prepared for discussion in California that would require stores to charge 25 cents for each plastic bag that a customer uses. While 25 cents may seem like a lot, this amount will add up over time and may even add up to be quite expensive in a single shopping trip if a consumer purchases a lot.



Please Recycle!

Sources:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/sustainable/living/shopping.htm?wbc_purpose=Basic..

<http://www.green.cusu.cam.ac.uk/resources/littlegreen-book/1997/shop.html>

<http://www.pickyourown.org/organic.htm>

<http://www.onebagatatime.com/index.php?page=misc§ion=solution>



www.etown.edu/SIFE