

The Kansas City Food Circle

UPDATE

Summer, 2001

Farmers' Expo a Great Success

The Food Circle's 3rd Annual Farmers' Exhibition held on March 31 at Barstow School drew a record crowd of 800 people, more than twice last year's attendance. We handed out 430 producers' directories. Twenty four farmers and farmers' co-ops exhibited and sold their products. They were joined by four other vendors of related products, including Rainy Day Books who distributed copies of Eric Schlosser's, *Fast Food Nation*, and a number of non-profit sponsors. Stan Slaughter's eco music created a festive atmosphere, and a good time was had by all.

The increased attendance was attributed to several factors: increased public interest in healthy food raised by humane, sustainable methods, postcards we sent out to last year's participants, expanded media advertising and the hard work of Peter Stauffacher, the manager of Barstow School's Organic Farmers Market. Then there was the weather. ... not bad enough to keep people from attending but threatening enough to keep them out of their yards. We are looking forward already to next year. The date is March 30 and the place is Barstow School. We are also discussing the possibility of having a concurrent conference on the food system like we did in 1999.

In addition to Barstow School we want to thank the following non-profit co-sponsors: the Sierra Club, Humane Society of the US, Peace and Justice Office of the Diocese of KC-St. Joseph, Kansas City Greens, Food Circles Networking Project of the Missouri Extension, People for Animal Rights, Social Justice Committee of the Village Presbyterian Church, Solidarity and Unity Now, the Gaia Congregation of the Unitarian-Universalist Church and also Bob and Doris Sherrick for their special contribution and *Wellness Magazine* for providing advertising at a reduced rate. Finally we want to thank all our members who both attended and worked to make this event possible. Phew! Now you know what all it takes to make this event happen.

Messing with Mother Nature Again

A leading expert says unexplained health problems of cloned animals makes cloning for milk and meat unacceptable. Ian Wilmut, who led the team that cloned Dolly the sheep, says Cloning should be sanctioned only when producers have improved their record on animal welfare. He also calls for large-scale, controlled

farm trials before any commercial production is allowed. "If companies start marketing this food and there are problems, it will bring the whole technology into disrepute," he told *New Scientist* magazine. Cattle cloners continue to uncover evidence of severe pregnancy complications and defects caused by cloning, including dramatically oversized calves, enlarged tongues, squashed faces, intestinal blockages, immune deficiencies and diabetes. Even cloned animals that look healthy often have subtle defects or strange characteristics that defy textbooks. A researcher from the University of Hawaii said of cloned lab mice, "all cloned babies have some sort of errors."

Source: *New Scientist Magazine*.

Ed note: Playing God must be hard work!

Drug-Resistant Bacteria in US meat.

The FDA has found relatively high levels of antibiotic resistant bacteria on beef and poultry sold in U.S. supermarkets. Enterococci were found in 67% of chicken samples, 34% of turkey and 66% of beef in a survey of Washington DC area supermarkets. Researchers tested for resistance to 29 different types of antibiotics including 6 commonly used in animal feed. Strains of bacteria taken from either chicken or turkey tended to be "much more resistant to antibiotics," compared with strains taken from beef, said the researchers. The FDA also said the sample was too small to determine the extent of a health threat to the public.

Source: Reuters Health.

Cruelty: not only bad, but unnecessary

While urging U.S. hog producers at the Kansas State Swine Profitability Conference to increase sow productivity, Dr. Kim Friesen of Topeka said large US companies average 21-23 pigs weaned per sow per year, but that's not good enough. "Our English counterparts are weaning 28 pigs per sow per year." European success comes through application of good animal husbandry, management and standard operating procedures. British producers are generating 4-7 pigs more per sow per year despite animal welfare laws that prohibit gestation crates and early weaning. Source: *Feedstuffs Magazine*. Hmmm, maybe there is a difference between sentient creatures and factory widgets after all.

Along those same lines ..

A University of Maryland researcher has described experiments in which pigs were tested on their ability to activate joysticks. "Despite dexterity and visual constraints the pig has the capacity to acquire a video game task," he

said. In another study British animal behavior scientists observed that cognitive abilities affect how animals adapt to housing and husbandry conditions. They concluded that animals' control over aspects of their environment can reduce physiological stress symptoms.
Source: Feedstuffs Magazine.

The Real Way to Feed the World

In the largest study of its kind, Jules Pretty of the Univ. of Essex in England reports that sustainable agriculture is now defying its reputation as a worthy enterprise with little chance of feeding millions of starving people. He says sustainable farming has been the most effective way in the past decade of raising farm yields, typically 40 to 100%. Sustainable farming lowers man made inputs such as chemicals while maximizing nature's inputs. It replaces fertilizers with plants that fix nitrogen and pesticides with natural enemies of pests. "It is cheap, uses locally available technology and often improves the environment," he says. "Above all it mostly helps the people who need it poor farmers and their families who make up the majority of the world's hungry people."
Source: New Scientist Magazine.

Golden Rice: GMO Poster Child

Golden Rice is frequently touted by advocates of genetic engineering of foods. They state that golden rice, engineered to contain beta carotene, a precursor to Vitamin A, will help alleviate vitamin A deficiency and blindness among children in developing countries. In a letter to the New York Times, Dr. Marion Nestle, head of the nutrition and food studies department of New York Univ. states, "Conversion of beta carotene to Vitamin A, and transport in the body to the tissues that use Vitamin A require diets adequate in fat and protein. People whose diets lack these nutrients or who have intestinal diarrheal diseases common in developing countries - cannot obtain vitamin A from golden rice. Golden rice represents sophisticated genetic engineering. But it will not conquer the main causes of vitamin A deficiency-malnutrition and poor sanitation. Conquering these problems requires more challenging interventions than a single high-tech product."

Stop Making Sense!

In March a Canadian federal judge ordered a Canadian farmer to pay Monsanto thousands of dollars because the company's genetically engineered canola plants were found growing on his field, apparently after pollen from modified plants had blown onto his property from nearby farms. Dozens of similar suits have been filed against farmers around the United States, but the Canadian case is the first to go to trial.

"I've been using my own seed for years and now farmers like me are being told we can't do that anymore if our neighbors are growing (genetically modified) crops that " blow in, " said Percy

Schmeiser, 70, the farmer from Saskatchewan sued by Monsanto. "Basically the right to use our own seed has been taken away."

The judge ruled that it didn't matter that the Mr. Schmeiser had not taken advantage of the patented gene.

Margaret Mellon of the Union of Concerned Scientists called the ruling "stunning. This means that people who are in the neighborhood of genetically modified crops will have to pay royalties to the companies for products they never purchased and got no benefits from." Source: The Washington Post. Ed. note, Food fascism may become a leading civil liberties issue.

Standing up for Luddites

Prof. Ann Clark of the University of Guelph writes in the Toronto Star that proponents of GM agriculture try to paint the opposition as ill-informed malcontents and Luddites. Yet one of the opposition's key arguments has been the near absence of credible scientific evidence upon which to assess environmental and food safety risks. Last June, the prestigious Journal, Science, reported that a detailed database search had found a grand total of just eight peer reviewed journal articles dealing with any aspect of the safety of GM foods. The eight included only four actual (lab animal) feeding trials, of which, three were from by Monsanto."

Mutant Milk

Monsanto, maker of the genetically engineered hormone rBGH, says its drug is injected into about 30% of U.S. dairy cows to produce more milk. The FDA says this milk is safe and can be distributed without labeling as to rBGH treatment. However in April a reporter for MSNBC interviewed Shiv Chopra, one of five government scientists at Canada's Health Protection Branch who had found evidence that FDA had overlooked in their approval of rBGH. The use of rBGH is banned in Canada. He spoke to MSNBC shortly after a gag order was lifted on his speaking to the media.

Chopra said, "I'm afraid to say that despite all that is known about the adverse reactions that cows have to the drug, and ample evidence of human health concerns as well, that the U.S. government took an expedient route to approval of this drug."

In their report, the Canadian scientists found that not only was orally administered rBGH absorbed into the bloodstream of laboratory rats but it also weakened their immune systems. They pointed to the need for long-term toxicology studies to ascertain human safety. They also noted farmers' tendency to administer antibiotics to cows to counteract the drug's propensity to induce udder swelling (mastitis) in dairy cows.
Source MSNBC.

This is a re-mastered copy – you can find the whole KCFC archive at www.KCFoodCircle.org