

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Spring 2009 / Week 7 of 13

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Planned harvest: Cilantro, Lettuce (Heads), Purple Cosmic Carrots, P'ittoi Onions, Chioggia Beets, Red LaSoda Potatoes, Valencia Oranges and Artichokes.

Two Congressional Bills that may affect Small Farmers and Organic and Beyond Food Production – by Carolyn Cook, PhD

What is the importance of a food safety bill **HR 875 and S 425**, recently introduced to Congress? The internet is abuzz with debate over what the bill actually means. The apparent goal is to improve food safety, but rumors and myths abound regarding what this will do to harm organic farmers and home gardeners.

The first alert I received linked the bills with Monsanto and since it is an American multinational agricultural biotechnology corporation this of course sounded alarms. Monsanto is the world's leading producer of the herbicide glyphosate, marketed as "Roundup". It is also by far the leading producer of genetically engineered (GE) seed, holding 70%–100% market share for various crops. Monsanto's development and marketing of genetically engineered seed and bovine growth hormone, as well as its aggressive litigation and political lobbying practices, have made the company controversial around the world and a primary target of the anti-globalization movement and environmental activists. Thus, it was natural for many of us who use and promote the use of pesticide and herbicide-free agriculture to be up in arms. However, as far as I can tell, no large agribusiness companies have expressed support for this bill.

When I read the Senate and House Bills myself, I found them to be very ambiguous and I could not find any direct passages that were specific to organic farmers or beyond-organic farmers, much less home gardeners. Upon further research, I found that others had come to the same conclusion and felt that perhaps the public was overreacting to a poorly written bill. However, since the bills are open to interpretation, there is a slight danger that "food producers" could be interpreted to mean any and every food producer. Ohio's Scioto County Director of the Farm Service Agency, John Fetters, says most of the responses he has seen to the bill on the internet seem to him to be overly concerned about the impact it could have on small farms, to the point that they felt like the bill was targeting small farmers, organic farmers and backyard gardeners, but that is "obviously not the target of the bill." He agrees that the way wording is now doesn't eliminate those people, and he would feel better if it did, but obviously the target is the big producers, the wholesalers and importers of food, which have been the sources of this contamination, causing many people in many states to get sick.

What can we do? What should we do? We can write to our congressional leaders and ask them to make sure that whatever the final legislation looks like, it **must make clear** that it is the **intent of Congress** to ensure that ensuing regulations will **not disproportionately burden small-scale family farm producers and farmstead businesses** that are the backbone of the local, sustainable and organic food movement. To locate your representatives in Congress, and send them a message through their website, click on this link:

<http://www.congress.org/congressorg/officials/congress/>

Or you can call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for your senators' and/or representative's office.

(Editors' note: as Carolyn noted, there is a great deal of information about this issue on the internet. For a detailed discussion of the "myths" and "facts" relating to the issue, see e.g.

http://www.change.org/ideas/6133/view_blog/hr_875s_425_farm_to_fork_food_fascism_comes_to_america)

RECIPES ETC.

Nina's Wheat Berry Pudding (as seen at last week's demonstration/tasting)

2 cups pre-soaked wheat berries
5 cups milk (dairy or non-dairy of choice)
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
5 cardamom pods, pressed to slightly open
1 Tbs. powdered cinnamon (or half stick)
1 pinch salt
½ Tbs. butter
1 Tbs. orange zest
2 Tbs. brown sugar (or other sweetener of choice)

Grind the wheat berries until they turn into a coarse meal. Put them into a pot and add the milk and the other ingredients as you bring it to a boil, then reduce the heat and gently simmer for about 15 to 20 minutes. Keep stirring, especially along the bottom of the pot. Serve warm or chilled, sprinkled with cinnamon, sugar or cocoa.

Nina's Wheat Berry Chili (as seen at last week's demonstration/tasting)

1 cup cooked wheat berries
3 cups cooked beans (any type will do)
1 onion, sliced
1 sweet potato, sliced
1 CSA portion of roasted chiles (5-7 green chiles, roasted and skin peeled, or substitute with 1 fresh red or green pepper), sliced
2 cloves garlic, sliced and diced
1 Muir Glen Fire Roasted Diced Tomatoes, 28 oz. (or any other type)
2 Tbs. cumin seeds, ground
2 Tbs. dried oregano
2 Tbs. canola oil
Salt, to taste

Warm up the oil, add the onions and gently sauté for 5 min, add the wheat berries, beans, sweet potato, chiles or pepper, and the spices, sauté for a few more minutes, then add the tomatoes and cook for at least 15 minutes. Adjust the spicing, and serve. Alternatively, put all the ingredients in a slow cooker, and cook for 6-8 hours on low.

Curried Sweet Potato and Carrot Soup
(submitted by Stephanie Doerries)

3 sweet potatoes, diced
½ bunch of CSA carrots, sliced
3 I'toi onions, chopped
3 cups vegetable stock (made with 2 cubes)
1 tsp curry powder or paste
salt and pepper
milk/soy milk

Put all ingredients but the milk into a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, part-cover, and simmer for about 15 min or until vegetables are really soft. Strain off stock into a bowl. Mash (or blend) the vegetables well, then stir in stock again. Thin with milk/soy milk, if desired. Taste and re-season if necessary. Reheat and serve!

Earth Day 2009: Think Globally, Eat Locally! It is a time to celebrate our planet, and all the life giving natural resources and beauty that the Earth provides, and which we too often take for granted! Since 1970, April 22 has been dedicated to raising environmental consciousness and awareness of environmental problems and solutions. Global climate change and the search for sustainable fuel systems, economy and consumption remain at the forefront of the world-wide concerns. So what can individuals do? For one, we, the consumers, can get smarter about where opportunities for change lie, and see these opportunities, for example, in every bite we eat, or as Frances Moore Lappé, the author of the acclaimed *Diet For a Small Planet*, once said: "The act of putting into your mouth what the earth has grown is perhaps your most direct interaction with the earth." So when you sit down to your dinner on Wednesday, perhaps take a moment to reflect on where each ingredient on your table comes from. Who grew the food? How was it grown? Where was it grown? When was it harvested, and how long did it take to reach your plate? How much fossil fuel was used in the production and distribution of your food? Were people or the ecosystem hurt in the process of growing it? Eating your CSA veggies and fruit, you not only know the answers to all of these questions, but you can also feel good about them.