

Journey School Food Community CSA Newsletter

Week 16: May 5, 2007

The news has given me the blues. Or rather, the lack of news. The past couple of weeks have been very edgy for me – there is so much media coverage of the crisis in industrial bee-keeping, and subsequently in industrial agriculture, as well as continuous notation of international climate change studies. Surely, I thought, something will shift in our crazy world culture now. But the bad news just keeps coming without an accumulative “Ah Ha” article connecting the dots. After several bad dreams last night, I scanned the news sites fully expecting coverage of multiple natural or military disasters. Jeff asked “Any big news?” I couldn’t answer “No” in the face of this headline and excerpt from yahoo news...

US Hesitant About Goals in Reducing Global Warming Emissions

Washington- The United States Friday emphasized the importance of the latest international report on global warming, but said it would not adopt corrective actions that would seriously damage the economy. A team of US government climate experts were reacting to the third phase report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released earlier in the day in Bangkok.

The cost estimates to prevent global warming ranged "as high as 3 per cent (of gross domestic product) to achieve certain scenarios. Well that would, of course, cause a global recession," Jim Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, told reporters. "No leader in the world ... is going to be pursuing a strategy that would drive their economies into a deep recession."

Are world leaders more comfortable compromising their watersheds, their food security, the health of the air they cannot live without for even ten minutes? I realize that this is seriously cranky. Zoe said I should type a warning on the newsletter this week - “Contains politically sensitive material”. Jeff told her our Food Community probably has already recognized that about our newsletters. But I’m afraid that every bite of food we put in our mouths has become a political statement. And I’m scared that no amount of vigilance can reveal the full political statement of each seed and each farm input.

Inside the newsletter this week are two articles. The first was published on Tuesday. The second was published in Canada in the Summer of 2002. Both articles discuss animal feed, particularly for commercial poultry production. We purchase our feed from In-Season Farms in British Columbia, the subject of the second article. Please read each article critically – not just to feel bad or to feel good but to find clues about how we can make a difference in our crazy world. As your farmer, I’m feeling overwhelmed and under-active. What can we do together to stop the rush towards becoming wealthy dead people?

Swiss Chard Artalie

2 Tablespoons Olive Oil

4 Cloves Garlic

1 teaspoon finely chopped Fresh Red Chili Pepper

2 Large Bunches (or 1 picked just for this recipe!) Swiss Chard, coarsely chopped

3 Medium Tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and coarsely chopped (about ¾ pound)

Salt and Pepper

1. In a large sauté pan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and chili pepper and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant and lightly browned, 2 to 3 minutes.

2. Stir in the chard in batches, allowing each batch to wilt down a bit before adding more. Stir in the tomatoes, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the chard is tender, about 15 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve right away. From: “Gardeners’ Community Cookbook” compiled and edited by Victoria Wise

FDA: Tainted feed is minor threat to humans

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press Writer
Tuesday May 1, 7:16 PM ET

Federal health investigators suspect that they will find more farms that received tainted animal feed but stressed Tuesday that the threat to people is minimal.

The investigators are trying to get a handle on just how much pet food tainted with an industrial chemical called melamine made its way into products consumed by pets as well as by hogs and chickens.

On Monday, they announced that byproducts from tainted pet food had been used in chicken feed on some farms in Indiana. A few days earlier, they said that hog farms in six states may have received tainted pet food for use as feed.

The pet food in question could be to blame for a wave of dog and cat deaths in March due to kidney failure. However, Dr. David Acheson, an assistant commissioner for the Food and Drug Administration, said the threat level to pets is greater than to livestock or humans.

"It was only a small portion of what the poultry was fed, and human consumers will only use poultry as a small portion of their diet," Acheson said.

By contrast, pets often eat the same product exclusively, he said. "The dilution factors here are enormous," he said.

Officials said that as many as 3 million young chickens out of 9 billion slaughtered annually may have eaten feed that potentially included an ingredient containing the melamine. They have already been slaughtered for human consumption, but because there is no evidence that consumption is unsafe, no recall has been issued.

Acheson said that the investigation tracking contaminated pet food is complex and sweeping, which is why it could lead to the discovery of new states that are affected.

"There is a distinct possibility that it will broaden," Acheson said. "I'm not saying that it will, but we need to be prepared for that to happen."

The pet food scare as well as earlier discoveries of E. coli in spinach and salmonella in peanut butter has led to concerns about the safety of the nation's food supply.

The FDA reacted to that concern Tuesday by naming Acheson as assistant commissioner for food protection. One of his first projects will be to develop a strategy that identifies potential gaps in the food safety system and what is necessary to address those gaps.

Meanwhile, Democratic lawmakers announced their own plans Tuesday for addressing food safety. Two lawmakers introduced legislation that would give the FDA the power to order mandatory recalls of adulterated food products, plus establish fines for companies that don't promptly report contaminated products.

"The evidence is clear our food safety system is collapsing and one of the main agencies charged with protecting it, is asleep," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro (news, bio, voting record), the Connecticut Democrat and sponsor of the bill in the House. "This needs to change immediately. It is time to transform the FDA from the toothless agency it has become to one that takes the proactive steps necessary to protect our food supply and the public health."

Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., is the lead sponsor of the bill in the Senate. Lawmakers' concerns about the FDA also led to another hearing on Capitol Hill Tuesday as three former commissioners testified that the agency needs more money for inspectors and more regulatory authority over producers and suppliers.

"The fact is that food is a second-tier priority within the FDA," said Dr. David Kessler, who served as FDA commissioner in the administrations of the first President Bush and President Clinton.

Kessler said the federal government has more authority to halt the distribution of dangerous toys than it has over unsafe food products. And, the agency has no ability to impose fines on companies that are slow to remove unsafe foods.

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