

Consumer News in Brief

Organic Dining Hits College Campuses

This spring, the University of California at Berkley became the first college campus in the United States to establish a certified organic kitchen in which to prepare meals for its students. Currently offered in one of its dining halls, UC Berkley expects to serve certified organic vegetables, fruits, and other foods in all four of the dining halls managed by Cal Dining by Spring 2007. Non-organic foods such as bread or soups are served as well but are located at the far end of the serving counter. While many colleges across the country serve organic foods, UC Berkley is the first to have organic foods certified to the standards of the USDA National Organic Program according to CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers), a USDA approved certifying agency for organic foods and other products.

USDA Organic Research Program Gets Additional Funding Boost

In May 2006, The U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved an amendment to the FY2007 Agriculture Appropriations Bill boosting the number of dollars that the USDA Organic Research Transitions Program will receive from \$1.8 to \$5 million. The purpose of the Organic Research Transitions Program is to provide funding in the form of grants to farmers to "meet the challenges of modern organic production and marketing," according to a press release issued by the Organic Farming Research Foundation. This was a major coup for the organic farming community in light of anticipated spending cuts for agricultural programs in general. It is up to the Senate to develop its own version of the bill, and for the two groups to iron out any differences before the bill is passed along to President Bush for signature.

upholstery fabrics and linens without the use of synthetic dyes, chemicals, or other toxins. Look for items made from recycled bamboo chopsticks, detergent bottles, and plywood recycled from construction sites, as well as 100% natural rubber mattresses and 100% organic cotton linens.

Washington State University Offers Organic Agriculture Degree

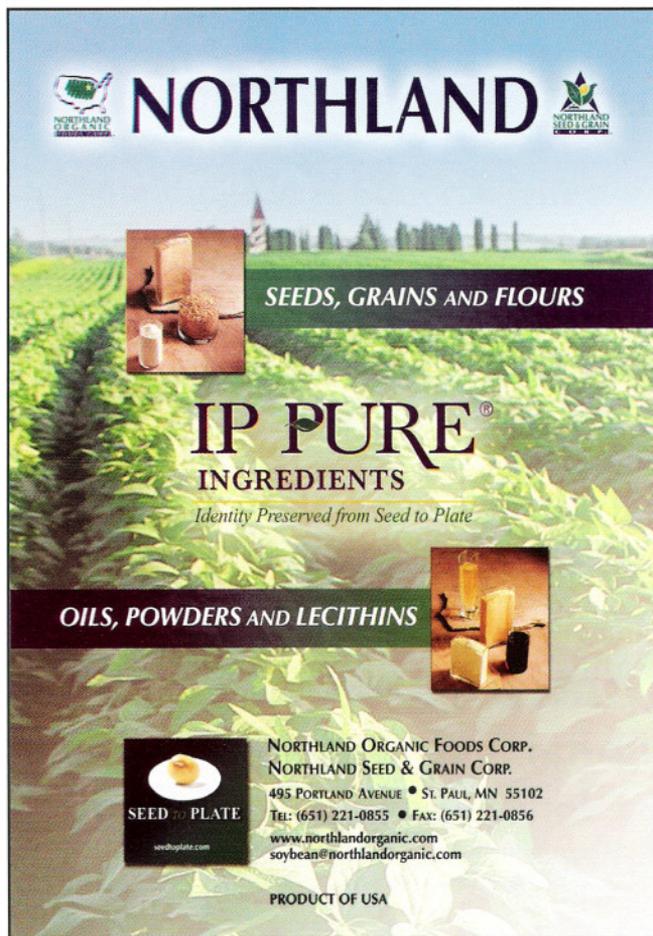
Washington State University (WSU) is gearing up to offer the first organic agriculture degree in the United States. The Bachelor's of Science degree in Agriculture and Food Systems, which includes a major in organic agriculture systems was approved by the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board this spring. According to Cathy Perillo, coordinator of the new degree program, the Organic Agriculture Systems major will appeal to students interested in organic farming as well as related industries, such as global marketing, direct marketing, and organic foods. WSU is one of many land-grant universities in the United States, which also include Texas A & M, Cornell, and Penn State, and is a fore-runner in recognizing the importance of organic agriculture.

Organic Furniture Coming to a Store Near You

With organic food, clothing, and other natural products fast becoming household words, could organic furniture be far behind? A segment on CBS's The Early Show on May 30, 2006 with House & Garden Special Project's Editor Susannah Salk, gave the viewing public a glimpse of what organic furniture is all about. Made from sustainable, natural, and certified organic materials, organic furniture and accessories are popular among those who prefer a greener lifestyle as well as those with allergies and chemical sensitivities. Natural and organically grown fibers such as cotton, flax, and hemp are used to make

Natural and Organic Foods Expected to Soar Into the Future

According to market researcher Packaged Foods, sales in the natural food industry are expected to soar to \$46 billion, an increase of 63%, by the year 2010, in part driven by the fact that natural and organic foods are going mainstream. Big box retailer Wal-mart, along with supermarkets chains Safeway, SuperValu Inc., and Stop-n-Shop are entering the organic food market in full swing. By rolling out private label organic foods such as Wal-mart's "Member's Mark", these retailers are hoping to cut costs on organic foods making them more accessible to the public. Private-label foods, are often priced 10 to 15% below national organic brands such as Garden of Eatin' or foods sold at specialty retailers like Whole Foods Markets, Inc. due to lower advertising costs. 



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