



Green Mission News

December 2011 Green Mission News

External Article Links:

- Fishy Farms: The Government's Push for Factory Farming in Our Oceans.

<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/reports/fishy-farms/>

- Green Labels or Greenwashing?

<http://ecopreneurist.com/2011/11/02/green-labels-or-greenwashing/>

- Will Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Move Everything Toward the Zero Waste Paradigm?

http://ncrarecycles.org/NNHotOffThePress2011_10A

- Plastic Recyclers Support Replacing Caps on Bottles Prior to Recycling

http://www.plasticsrecycling.org/images/stories/doc/apr_caps_on_press_release_june_202010.pdf?

- Bee-ware Of The Disappearing Honey Bees

<http://gmo-journal.com/index.php/2011/10/31/bee-ware-of-the-disappearing-honey-bees/>

- A cardinal mistake on climate science

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/3611206.html>

- €400b solar energy, wind power projects planned in MENA

http://www.evwind.es/noticias.php?id_not=14498

- The Natural Step Date submitted: 1 Nov 2011

Proposing a Unifying Framework for Sustainable Development

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=510&nr=319&menu=20>

http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/content/documents/319TNS_InputsforDraft%20Zero_Rio20_1Nov2011.pdf

- The Four System Conditions

<http://thenaturalstep.org/the-system-conditions>

- Indoor Window Farm for \$35

<http://www.puppetgov.com/2011/11/22/diy-indoor-window-farm-35/>

- Taming Unruly Wind Power

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/05/business/energy-environment/as-wind-energy-use-grows-utilities-seek-to-stabilize-power-grid.html?_r=1&src=me&ref=general

"You cannot wake a man who is pretending to sleep."

Jason Clay: How big brands can help save biodiversity . (A TED Talk -20 minutes)

"Sustainability is a precompetitive issue, and we need collaboration to address it."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcp5vvxtEaU>

- Is Local Food Affordable for Ordinary Folks?

A Comparison of Farmers Markets and Supermarkets in Nineteen Communities in the Southeast

<http://www.ruralscale.com/resources/downloads/farmers-market-study.pdf>

- Insects Developing Resistance to GM Bt Crops

GM Freeze, 10 Nov 2011

<http://www.gmfreeze.org/news-releases/171/>

- "Hope in a Changing Climate": (video- 29 minutes)

<https://www.yousendit.com/download/MFo3Zm1RMm1Fd2MwTVE9PQ> (download link)

- "Rwanda-Forests of Hope" (video- 27 minutes)

<https://www.yousendit.com/download/UnIDRGwrK3hvQnMwTVE9PQ> (download link)

Full Length Articles Below:

- Processed Food Industry Shows USDA Who's Boss in the Cafeteria
- Ticking Greenhouse Gas Time Bomb: Melting Permafrost
- BPA Spikes 1,200 Per Cent after Eating Canned Soup: A Study
- Greenhouse Gases Rise by Record Amount

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Published on Friday, November 18, 2011

Processed Food Industry Shows USDA Who's Boss in the Cafeteria

by [Ed Bruske](#)

First it was potatoes. Now it's pizza. The processed food industry is reaching out to its friends in Congress to scuttle new USDA guidelines that were supposed to make school meals healthier.

[Politico reports](#) that House and Senate negotiators are likely to approve agriculture appropriations language that would allow the tomato paste on pizza to be counted as a vegetable serving under the USDA's new school meal guidelines. Count this as the result of lobbying efforts by processed food giants ConAgra and Schwan Food. Schwan is one of the world's largest purveyors of frozen pizza and pitching for its sauce is Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Democrat of Minnesota, where Schwan is based.

The new pizza rule comes quick on the heels of a [Senate amendment](#) prohibiting the USDA from limiting the amount of potatoes served in school meals. That was pushed by senators from potato producing states Maine and Colorado.

These latest broadsides against the USDA rule-making process—inserting Congress as micro-manager and protector of economic interests over kids' health—point up the pitfalls of trying to use meal standards written in Washington as a way to dictate what kids eat. It also provides a vivid illustration of what happens when you go after the foods kids most love in the lunch line.

Pizza is the all-time favorite school lunch food, followed by potatoes in all their guises. Essentially, the proposed new guidelines would sharply cut back on foods kids really like, and replace them with things they hate: vegetables, beans and whole grains. Turns out there are huge amounts of money at stake behind the foods beloved by the 32 million children who participate in the national school lunch program. Frozen food

companies are protecting their share the best way they know how: using their clout with their local congressman.

Ironically, it was Congress back in 2004 that called on the USDA to re-write the nutrition guidelines for school meals so that they would align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which call for more balance in the way we eat. In other words, fewer potatoes and more vegetables, legumes and whole grains. The USDA contracted the work of writing those guidelines to a scientific panel at the Institute of Medicine. The IOM's guidelines were first released in October 2009. The USDA now is in the process of writing final new rules, to go into effect possibly in the fall of 2012.

Other efforts to mess with pizza also have failed. [In Berkeley](#), for instance, elementary school children get a rectangular pizza made with a locally-produced whole wheat crust. Middle schoolers, however, insist on a round pizza, which has to be sourced through a wholesale food distributor. But Berkeley found a way to make the sauce healthier by cooking it from scratch using all kinds of vegetables in addition to tomatoes.

Last I checked, pizza was still being served twice a week in Berkeley schools, and that was after famed school meal reformer Ann Cooper took over. Cooper tried to remove nachos from the menu entirely. But she was forced to reinstate them in a healthier version—meaning no processed cheese out of a can—after students went on strike, refusing to eat in the cafeteria.

As I've learned sitting in on meals at my daughter's school the past two years here in the District of Columbia, children will go to great lengths to avoid the foods adults consider "healthy." Vegetables, beans and whole grains—they typically get dumped in the trash. Kids will spend inordinate time picking the spinach out of fresh-cooked lasagna, for instance, before wolfing down the pasta.

Since most schools no longer cook food from scratch, the frozen food industry has gained a huge stake in what children eat at school. Politico reports that "both Schwan and ConAgra have quietly helped to finance the 'Coalition for Sustainable School Meal Programs' which maintains a red-white-blue – and yes green – [website](#) with the heading 'Fix the Reg.' " Illustrating just how mixed up and incestuous the business of feeding children has become, the coalition is being managed, Politico reports, by Barry Sackin, a former longtime lobbyist for the School Nutrition Association.

The SNA, while claiming to represent the interests of children and thousands of the nation's school food service directors, is driven by money from the processed food industry—including Schwan and ConAgra.

The last time we talked to Sackin, he'd been [barred](#) from a conference hosted by the

American Association of School Administrators. The Service Employees International Union, which also got the boot, had enlisted Sackin to give a presentation on how schools can better deal with food rebates in their contracts with food service companies. Corporate sponsors of the event—which included Aramark and Chartwells—objected. Apparently, Sacking plays for both sides.

Like other processed food purveyors, Schwan and ConAgra spend enormous sums as “rebates” to entice schools and food service companies to place their products in cafeterias. As I [reported recently](#), ConAgra placed seventh and Schwan eighth among companies that paid the most in rebates to Chartwells as part of its contract to serve kids in D.C. Public Schools.

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Ed Bruske, a former Washington Post reporter, now tends his “urban farm” about a mile from the White House in the District of Columbia. He was a co-founder of the group [D.C. Urban Gardeners](#) and lectures on composting, kitchen gardening, food preservation, and other related topics. He sits on the advisory board of the [D.C. Farm to School Network](#) and contributes to food policy blogs such as [Grist](#) and [La Vida Locavore](#), as well as the gardening blog [Garden Rant](#). He is a contributing editor for the food access blog, [DC Food for All](#).

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Published on Thursday, December 1, 2011 by [the Associated Press](#)

Ticking Greenhouse Gas Time Bomb: Melting Permafrost

by Seth Borenstein

<http://www.adn.com/2011/11/30/2195732/thawing-permafrost-vents-gases.html>

WASHINGTON - Massive amounts of greenhouse gases trapped below thawing permafrost will likely seep into the air over the next several decades, accelerating and amplifying global warming, scientists warn.

This handout photo, taken in 2009, provided by University of Alaska, Fairbanks, shows research assistant professor Katey Walter Anthony igniting trapped methane from under the ice in a pond on the Fairbanks campus. (AP Photo/Todd Paris, University of Alaska, Fairbanks).

Those heat-trapping gases under the frozen Arctic ground may be a bigger factor in global warming than the cutting down of forests, and a scenario that climate scientists hadn't quite accounted for, according to a group of permafrost experts. The gases won't contribute as much as pollution from power plants, cars, trucks and planes, though.

The permafrost scientists predict that over the next three decades a total of about 45 billion metric tons of carbon from methane and carbon dioxide will seep into the atmosphere when permafrost thaws during summers. That's about the same amount of heat-trapping gas the world spews during five years of burning coal, gas and other fossil fuels.

And the picture is even more alarming for the end of the century. The scientists calculate that about 300 billion metric tons of carbon will belch from the thawing Earth from now until 2100.

Adding in that gas means that warming would happen "20 to 30 percent faster than from fossil fuel emissions alone," said Edward Schuur of the University of Florida. "You are significantly speeding things up by releasing this carbon."

Usually the first few to several inches of permafrost thaw in the summer, but scientists are now looking at up to 10 feet of soft unfrozen ground because of warmer temperatures, he said. The gases come from decaying plants that have been stuck below frozen ground for millennia.

Schuur and 40 other scientists in the Permafrost Carbon Research Network met this summer and jointly wrote up their findings, which were published in the journal *Nature* on Wednesday.

"The survey provides an important warning that global climate warming is likely to be worse than expected," said Jay Zwally, a NASA polar scientist who wasn't part of the study. "Arctic permafrost has been like a wild card."

When the Nobel Prize-winning panel of climate scientists issued its last full report in 2007, it didn't even factor in trapped methane and carbon dioxide from beneath the permafrost. Diplomats are meeting this week in South Africa to find ways of curbing human-made climate change.

Schuur and others said increasing amounts of greenhouse gas are seeping out of permafrost each year. Some is methane, which is 25 times stronger than carbon dioxide in trapping heat.

In a recent video, University of Alaska Fairbanks professor Katey Walter Anthony, a study co-author, is shown setting leaking methane gas on fire with flames shooting far above her head.

"Places like that are all around," Anthony said in a phone interview. "We're tapping into old carbon that has been locked up in the ground for 30,000 to 40,000 years."

That triggers what Anthony and other scientists call a feedback cycle. The world warms, mostly because of human-made greenhouse gases. That thaws permafrost, releasing more natural greenhouse gas, augmenting the warming.

There are lots of unknowns and a large margin of error because this is a relatively new issue with limited data available, the scientists acknowledge.

"It's very much a seat-of-the-pants expert assessment," said Stanford University's Chris Field, who wasn't involved in the new report.

The World Meteorological Organization this week said the worst of the warming in 2011 was in the northern areas - where there is permafrost - and especially Russia. Since 1970, the Arctic has warmed at a rate twice as fast as the rest of the globe.

The thawing permafrost also causes trees to lean - scientists call them "drunken trees" - and roads to buckle. Study co-author F. Stuart Chapin III said when he first moved to Fairbanks the road from his house to the University of Alaska had to be resurfaced once a decade.

"Now it gets resurfaced every year due to thawing permafrost," Chapin said.

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Published on Wednesday, November 23, 2011 by [Agence France Presse](#)

BPA Spikes 1,200 Per Cent After Eating Canned Soup: A Study

WASHINGTON - People who ate canned soup for five days straight saw their urinary levels of the chemical bisphenol A spike 1,200 per cent compared to those who ate fresh soup, U.S. researchers said on Tuesday.

The randomized study, described as "one of the first to quantify BPA levels in humans after ingestion of canned foods," was done by Harvard University researchers and appears in the Journal of the American Medical Association's November 23 issue.

"[This study suggests](#) that canned foods may be an even greater concern, especially given their wide use," said lead author Jenny Carwile, a doctoral student in the Department of Epidemiology at Harvard School of Public Health.

"We've known for a while that drinking beverages that have been stored in certain hard

plastics can increase the amount of BPA in your body,"

The chemical BPA is an endocrine disruptor that has been shown to interfere with reproductive development in animal studies at levels of 50 micrograms per kilogram of body weight and higher, though it remains uncertain if the same effects cross over to humans, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

This study did not measure BPA levels by micrograms per kilogram of body weight, but rather by micrograms per liter of urine, so a direct comparison to the EPA-cited danger level in animals was not possible.

However, previous studies have linked BPA at lower levels than those found in the Harvard study to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity in humans, Carwile told AFP in an email.

BPA is found in the lining of canned foods, cash register receipts, dental fillings, some plastics and polycarbonate bottles marked with the number 7.

Seventy-five people took part in the study, eating a 12-ounce serving of either fresh or canned soup for five days in a row. They were advised not to otherwise alter their regular eating habits.

After a two-day break, the groups switched and ate the opposite type of canned soup. A urine analysis showed the canned soup eaters had 1,221 per cent higher levels of BPA than those who ate the fresh soup.

BPA is typically eliminated in the urine and so any spike is usually considered temporary. The researchers did not measure how long elevated BPA stayed in the body, saying more study would be needed to examine that question.

The U.S. government's health and environmental agencies are considering whether "further action is needed to address human health risks resulting from non-food-packaging uses of BPA," according to the EPA.

France's Agency for Food Health Safety (Anses) in September called for tougher preventive measures, warning that even "low doses" of the chemical had had a "confirmed" effect on lab animals and a "suspected" effect on humans.

Preventing exposure to BPA among infants, pregnant or nursing women was a "priority goal," Anses said.

Meanwhile, the Harvard study authors said their findings should encourage people who eat a lot of canned foods to opt for fresh instead, and should serve as a red flag to manufacturers who use BPA to make cans.

"The magnitude of the rise in urinary BPA we observed after just one serving of soup was unexpected and may be of concern among individuals who regularly consume foods from cans or drink several canned beverages daily," said senior author Karin Michels.

"It may be advisable for manufacturers to consider eliminating BPA from can linings."

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Published Associated Press guardian.co.uk, Thursday 3 November 2011 23.03 EDT

Greenhouse Gases Rise by Record Amount

Levels of greenhouse gases are higher than the worst case scenario outlined by climate experts just four years ago. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/nov/04/greenhouse-gases-rise-record-levels>

Emissions from a coal-fired power station. The output of greenhouse gases has jumped by the highest amount on record. Photograph: John Giles/PA

The global output of heat-trapping carbon dioxide has jumped by a record amount, according to the US department of energy, a sign of how feeble the world's efforts are at slowing man-made global warming.

The figures for 2010 mean that levels of greenhouse gases are higher than the worst case scenario outlined by climate experts just four years ago.

"The more we talk about the need to control emissions, the more they are growing," said John Reilly, the co-director of MIT's Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change.

The world pumped about 564m more tons (512m metric tons) of carbon into the air in 2010 than it did in 2009, an increase of 6%. That amount of extra pollution eclipses the individual emissions of all but three countries, China, the US and India, the world's top producers of greenhouse gases.

It is a "monster" increase that is unheard of, said Gregg Marland, a professor of geology

at Appalachian State University, who has helped calculate department of energy figures in the past.

Extra pollution in China and the US account for more than half the increase in emissions last year, Marland said.

"It's a big jump," said Tom Boden, the director of the energy department's Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center at Oak Ridge National Lab. "From an emissions standpoint, the global financial crisis seems to be over."

Boden said that in 2010 people were travelling, and manufacturing was back up worldwide, spurring the use of fossil fuels, the chief contributor of man-made [climate change](#).

India and China are huge users of coal. Burning coal is the biggest carbon source worldwide and emissions from that jumped nearly 8% in 2010.

"The good news is that these economies are growing rapidly so everyone ought to be for that, right?" Reilly said. "Broader economic improvements in poor countries has been bringing living improvements to people. Doing it with increasing reliance on coal is imperiling the world."

In 2007, when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its last large report on global warming, it used different scenarios for carbon dioxide pollution and said the rate of warming would be based on the rate of pollution. Boden said the latest figures put global emissions higher than the worst case projections from the climate panel. Those forecast global temperatures rising between 4 and 11 degrees Fahrenheit (2.4-6.4 Celsius) by the end of the century with the best estimate at 7.5 degrees (4 Celsius).

Even though global warming sceptics have criticised the climate change panel as being too alarmist, scientists have generally found their predictions too conservative, Reilly said. He said his university worked on emissions scenarios, their likelihood, and what would happen. The IPCC's worst case scenario was only about in the middle of what MIT calculated are likely scenarios.

Chris Field of Stanford University, head of one of the IPCC's working groups, said the panel's emissions scenarios are intended to be more accurate in the long term and are less so in earlier years. He said the question now among scientists is whether the future is the panel's worst case scenario "or something more extreme".

"Really dismaying," Granger Morgan, head of the engineering and public policy department at Carnegie Mellon University, said of the new figures. "We are building up a horrible legacy for our children and grandchildren."

But Reilly and University of Victoria climate scientist Andrew Weaver found something good in recent emissions figures. The developed countries that ratified the 1997 Kyoto Protocol greenhouse gas limiting treaty have reduced their emissions overall since then and have achieved their goals of cutting emissions to about 8% below 1990 levels. The US did not ratify the agreement.

In 1990, developed countries produced about 60% of the world's greenhouse gases, now it's probably less than 50%, Reilly said.

"We really need to get the developing world because if we don't, the problem is going to be running away from us," Weaver said. "And the problem is pretty close from running away from us."