

Green Mission News

Jan 2011 Green Mission News

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- **Getting Local Food at Your Local Park**

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- **Submissions: Design the New Food Pyramid**

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- **Searching for Sustenance**

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- **David Suzuki: UN climate talks: Who gives a damn?**

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- **West Oakland Group Wins Major Grant for New Urban Farm and Park**

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- **Study suggests bisphenol A exposure impacts fertility**

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- **New Rodale chief aims to raise institute's profile**

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- **State of the Sustainability Movement 2011**

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###

Published on Wednesday, December 22, 2010 by [The San Francisco Chronicle](#)

Food-Safety Rules Adopted by Congress

by Andrew Aylward

The most significant changes to food safety regulation in 70 years were approved by Congress on Tuesday, giving broad new powers to the Food and Drug Administration to step up inspections aimed at preventing outbreaks of disease in the nation's food production system.

Approved on a 215-144 bipartisan House vote, the new regulations also include FDA-initiated recalls and for the first time hold imported food to the same standards as domestic food. The Senate approved the bill in its final version on Sunday. House approval sends the measure to President Obama for his signature.

The law also exempts small, local growers in California and elsewhere from the strictest of new regulations - an exception that recognizes higher risks of contamination among large food producers and the reality that frequent inspections would be too expensive for small farmers.

Approved on a 215-144 bipartisan House vote, the new regulations also include FDA-initiated recalls and for the first time hold imported food to the same standards as domestic food. The Senate approved the bill in its final version on Sunday. House approval sends the measure to President Obama for his signature.

"It's a victory for the food movement, which was able to draw a line between the specific risks of highly industrialized food production and the narrower but still real risks of producing food on a smaller scale," said Michael Pollan, a UC Berkeley journalism professor and best-selling author.

The bill gives vast authority to the FDA to inspect produce for bacterial contamination that could lead to salmonella or E. coli diseases in a wide array of products.

Peanuts, peppers, spinach, jalapenos and eggs have come under closer scrutiny as the FDA and food producers attempt to head off food-borne illnesses such as a salmonella outbreak last summer that led to the recall of half a billion eggs and sickened hundreds of people across 14 states. The Department of Agriculture continues to have authority over meat, poultry and some dairy products.

According to a study released last week by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 6 Americans gets sick each year from food-borne diseases and about 3,000 of those cases result in fatalities. The report found salmonella to be the leading cause of hospitalization and death among known food pathogens.

The new law gives the FDA the power to initiate food recalls and have access to company records at farms and production centers to help track outbreaks of food-borne illnesses. In addition, the FDA will set quality standards for imported produce, which makes up a higher portion of Americans' diets than ever before.

The bill is expected to cost \$1.4 billion over the next four years, which includes hiring 2,000 FDA inspectors.

Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., added an amendment to the federal legislation that exempts producers with less than \$500,000 in annual sales and who sell either within a state or within 275 miles of their location.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., added an amendment to the Senate version of the bill that would have banned bisphenol-A, the chemical used in cans and other food packaging that has been linked to health problems. The amendment was defeated.

Large agriculture groups were disappointed by passage of the bill, particularly the exemption for small farmers. But the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, a grassroots agriculture group, said it will create "scale-appropriate standards to promote food safety without undermining family farm production, natural resource conservation and local entrepreneurship."

Consumer groups also praised the bill.

"This win is a powerful testament to the people across the country who came to Washington to tell their lawmakers how contaminated food had killed their loved ones or left them horribly sick," said Jean Halloran, director of food policy initiatives at Consumers Union.

###

Published on Monday, December 20, 2010 by [The Washington Post](#)

Probable Carcinogen Hexavalent Chromium Found in Drinking Water of 31 US Cities

by Lyndsey Layton

An environmental group that analyzed the drinking water in 35 cities across the United States, including Bethesda and Washington, found that most contained hexavalent chromium, a probable carcinogen that was made famous by the film "Erin Brockovich."

The Environmental Working Group analyzed the drinking water in 35 cities across the United States, including Bethesda and Washington, found that most contained hexavalent chromium, a probable carcinogen that was made famous by the film "Erin Brockovich." (Image: EWG)

The study, which will be released Monday by the Environmental Working Group, is the first nationwide analysis of hexavalent chromium in drinking water to be made public.

It comes as the Environmental Protection Agency is considering whether to set a limit for hexavalent chromium in tap water. The agency is reviewing the chemical after the National Toxicology Program, part of the National Institutes of Health, deemed it a "probable carcinogen" in 2008.

The federal government restricts the amount of "total chromium" in drinking water and requires water utilities to test for it, but that includes both trivalent chromium, a mineral that humans need to metabolize glucose, and hexavalent chromium, the metal that has caused cancer in laboratory animals.

Last year, California took the first step in limiting the amount of hexavalent chromium in drinking water by proposing a "public health goal" for safe levels of 0.06 parts per billion. If California does set a limit, it would be the first in the nation.

Hexavalent chromium was a commonly used industrial chemical until the early 1990s. It is still used in some industries, such as in chrome plating and the manufacturing of plastics and dyes. The chemical can also leach into groundwater from natural ores.

The new study found hexavalent chromium in the tap water of 31 out of 35 cities sampled. Of those, 25 had levels that exceeded the goal proposed in California.

The highest levels were found in Norman, Okla., where the water contained more than 200 times the California goal. Locally, Bethesda and Washington each had levels of 0.19 parts per billion, more than three times the California goal.

The cities were selected to be a mix of big and smaller communities and included places where local water companies had already detected high levels of "total chromium."

"This chemical has been so widely used by so many industries across the U.S. that this doesn't surprise me," said Erin Brockovich, whose fight on behalf of the residents of Hinkley, Calif., against Pacific Gas & Electric became [the subject of a 2000 film](#). In that case, PG&E was accused of leaking hexavalent chromium into the town's groundwater for more than 30 years. The company paid \$333 million in damages to more than 600 townspeople and pledged to clean up the contamination.

"Our municipal water supplies are in danger all over the U.S.," Brockovich said. "This is a chemical that should be regulated."

Max Costa, who chairs the department of environmental medicine at New York University's School of Medicine and is an expert in hexavalent chromium, called the new findings "disturbing."

"At this point, we should strive to not have any hexavalent chromium in drinking water" or at least limit the amounts to the level proposed by California, Costa wrote in an e-mail.

Hexavalent chromium has long been known to cause lung cancer when inhaled, but scientists only recently found evidence that it causes cancer in laboratory animals when ingested. It has been linked in animals to liver and kidney damage as well as leukemia, stomach cancer and other cancers.

The American Chemistry Council, which represents the chemical industry, says the California goal is unrealistic because some water supplies have naturally occurring hexavalent chromium that is higher than .06 parts per billion.

In a written statement, the group's senior director, Ann Mason, said that "even the most sophisticated analytical methods used by EPA are not able to detect the extremely low levels that California wants to establish."

The group supports a "uniform, national standard for hexavalent chromium in drinking water, based on sound science," Mason wrote. "Research is underway to provide EPA with critical data that will allow for a more informed risk assessment of hexavalent chromium. This data will be complete by mid-2011. Given the potential impact on drinking water supplies, EPA should incorporate this data in its assessment."

Brendan Gilfillan, an EPA spokesman, said that the agency was aware of the new study by the Environmental Working Group and that the findings will be considered as the agency reviews total chromium in drinking water, work that is expected to be completed next year.

[Ken Cook](#), president of the Environmental Working Group, said that water utilities across the country are resistant to the regulation.

"It's not their fault. They didn't cause the contamination. But if a limit is set, it's going to be extraordinarily expensive for them to clean this up," Cook said. "The problem in all of this is that we lose sight of the water drinkers, of the people at the end of the tap. There is tremendous push-back from polluters and from water utilities. The real focus has to be on public health."

The report will be available Monday at www.ewg.org

###

Australia claims degradable bag claims are misleading

By [Kate Tilley](#) | PLASTICS NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Posted December 3, 2010

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA (Dec. 3, 2 p.m. ET) -- An Australian plastic bag manufacturer will be penalized next month for falsely claiming its high density polyethylene shopping bags are biodegradable.

An Australian court has declared an Adelaide-based packaging company, Nupak Australia Pty. Ltd., engaged in misleading and deceptive conduct and made false representations about its Goody-branded HDPE bags.

The Federal Court of Australia proceedings resume Dec. 6, when Nupak's penalties will be decided. The maximum fine for such offenses is US\$990,000.

Australia's competition watchdog, the Canberra-based Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC), brought claims against Nupak in July.

ACCC has also taken the supplier of the biodegradable chemical additive used to manufacture the bags, Adelaide-based Goody Environment Pty. Ltd., to court. That trial starts in March.

From at least May 2009, Nupak made claims its Goody-branded bags were biodegradable and compostable.

However, ACCC claimed Nupak's bags did not biodegrade or disintegrate in accordance with Australian Waste Standard criteria and the resin contained molybdenum additive in amounts exceeding the maximum concentration prescribed by the standard.

ACCC said because the bags did not comply with the waste standard, they also did not comply with requirements of South Australia's Plastic Shopping Bags (Waste Avoidance) Act 2008.

South Australia became Australia's first state to ban HDPE bags in May 2009 and its Act prohibits retailers from selling or giving away plastic carry bags less than 35 microns thick. The South Australian law is backed by fines of more than A\$3,000 for retailers who supply banned bags.

Nupak agreed in court to stop making representations about the bags being biodegradable or compostable, unless it had scientific testing supporting its claims.

The Federal Court said Nupak breached the Trade Practices Act 1974 by making false environmental claims. The Act protects consumers and prevents companies engaging in restrictive trade practices.

The court ordered Nupak to:

- c publish corrective notices on its website and in Adelaide's daily newspaper;

- c write to every customer supplied with Goody-brand bags informing them of the court's orders;

- c implement a trade practices compliance and education program; and

- c contribute US\$9,800 to ACCC's legal costs.

In January, ACCC published an online guide explaining potential legal pitfalls in making unsubstantiated claims about the environmental performance of plastic single-use shopping bags. The bags are generally given to supermarket customers to carry groceries home.

The guide warns manufacturers or retailers making false or misleading environmental claims can breach Australia's Trade Practices Act.

The guide said plastic bags should not be described in "vague" terms, such as "environmentally friendly", "environmentally safe", "planet safe", or "green", unless the claims can be supported "by verifiable testing methods."

ACCC said omitting relevant information also risks breaking the law.

"Misleading conduct can include what is not said," the commission warned. "If you put 'recyclable' on a product when it can be recycled only in limited circumstances, this could be a misrepresentation through silence."

The guide said business operators must be careful if claiming their bags meet voluntary or mandatory environmental standards, including the Australian standard on biodegradable plastics (AS4736-2006) or similar benchmarks in Europe (EN13432) or the U.S. (ASTM6400).

"If your product does not meet that standard's requirements or has not been accredited as claimed, you risk breaching the Trade Practices Act," the guide said.

###

Published on Sunday, December 26, 2010 by [The New Internationalist](#)

Back to the Future: When Less Was More

What will life be like if wealthy countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent or more?

by George Marshall

Imagine reducing emissions by 80 per cent. It seems huge and daunting without a technological revolution. But imagine achieving that target just by turning the clock back to the time when emissions were still at that level. For example, how far back would you have to go to reduce by 80 per cent the amount that British people fly?

1972. Yes, 1972. It really isn't so long ago - and if it does seem a long time, consider that to halve flights you only have to go back to 1993.

When we try to envision a low-carbon society we often forget that one is still alive in our collective memories. Nearly half the current population of Britain was alive in 1972 and it was hardly the dark ages. People lived, laughed, and loved just as much as now.

The early 1970s marked the first time in Britain when people's basic needs were largely met. Yes, there were still pockets of absolute poverty, but by and large, people were housed, fed, clothed, and in work. They had weekends off, annual holidays and spare cash for entertainment and leisure. It was not a time of great plenty - but of ample sufficiency.

For every sector, the figures tell the same story - had we chosen to keep that standard of living and applied our ingenuity to making it better, fairer and more efficient, we would not now be facing catastrophic climate change. I feel a deep sadness that we did not make that choice, but some hope in the knowledge that a potentially sustainable society has occurred within my lifetime.

With this in mind I have been re-examining my own memories of 1972, supplemented by the statistical evidence. I want to know how it felt to live with lower consumption and lower expectations. What lessons can we learn, and can we move forward in a way that is intelligently informed by our own recent past?

Home and hearth

Although the first transatlantic jumbo jet had landed at London Heathrow in 1970, no-one in my family flew on one until well into the 1980s. Holidays close to home were just as much fun. Or, in my case, just as wretched. I cannot believe that our acrimonious family holidays would have been any less awful with a long-haul destination. As I now know, the key determinant of a good holiday is choosing the right people to spend it with.

By this reckoning my only decent holidays were spent with my mother's family near the Forest of Dean. My grandparents, Auntie Elsie and Uncle Phil were all crammed into an end-of-terrace council house, surrounded by a large vegetable garden and, beyond that, a pine plantation. My Auntie Joyce worked in an engineering factory during the week and came back every weekend on the bus.

Larger households with multiple adults were more common in the early 1970s. Households are now 30 per cent smaller, meaning we now have six million more homes in Britain to heat and power. The number of single-person households has almost doubled and the number of five-person households has fallen by nearly two-thirds. Nowhere is the change more marked than among the elderly. Whereas my grandmother lived with her children until she died, two out of three elderly women now live alone.

There was only one regular source of heat in their home - the open coal fire in the living room. The rest of the house was freezing in winter. There was no insulation, often thick frost on the inside of the windows and chilblains on the outside of our feet. Baths were a thankfully rare torture. But the compensation was that the living room and the fire became the focus for warmth, entertainment and family life. Everything happened in the one room around a square table with a check tablecloth and teapot, one (just one) pendant light above, the flickering orange fire on one side and the flickering black and white television on the other.

Nearly half of all homes were heated by coal fires in the early 1970s. The extreme inefficiency of this technology was balanced by moderation of its use. The cost of fuel was not a concern for my family - as a retired miner, my grandfather got a free coal allowance - but lugging fuel in from outside by the scuttle-load was a strong disincentive to waste.

By comparison, today's gas central heating is perfectly designed to encourage waste. The gas comes into the house by pipe and the payments go out by direct debit. And because it is so convenient and sends heat to all corners of the house it hugely increases the total heating load. Living rooms are just as warm as they were, but the overall house temperature has risen by nearly six degrees.

Forty years of investment in insulation and boiler efficiency have done little more than keep overall fuel consumption level. Yet, had we maintained our living patterns, insulated our houses thoroughly and installed more efficient heating in a few well-used rooms we could have cut our heating emissions by 80 per cent and still banished the chilblains.

Heating with individual fires concentrates life around a fire in a way that speaks to a very ancient sense of togetherness. The Danes have a wonderful word for this combination of womb-like warmth and family closeness: *hygge*. Nothing in my life has ever been more *hyggelig* and comforting than this living room where, as a child, I felt enveloped by my family's love.

Nonetheless, the benefits were mixed. Concentrated living created family closeness. But it also required compromise, negotiation and the suppression of personal needs. You could not escape to your own space and all activities had to be agreed by consensus. Private conversations or any intimacy could only happen after everyone else had gone to bed or, as my mum puts it, 'down among the ferns'.

But central heating systems also come at a cost, because they enable - indeed encourage - people to disperse throughout the house. From the extreme of forced association, we have moved to another extreme of forced disassociation that weakens social ties and undermines our sense of identity.

Many families don't even meet for meals now, and 25 per cent of children regularly eat in their bedroom.² Individual bedrooms become mini living rooms that have to be separately lit and kitted out with electronic equipment. When I was growing up I didn't know anyone - even my richest friends - who had more than one television in the home. Now 75 per cent of children have a TV or games console in their rooms.³ Is it

any surprise that home electricity consumption has doubled since 1970 - again overwhelming the enormous improvements in the efficiency of lighting and electronics?

Efficiency gains wiped out

This process of endless acquisition and multiplication started in the 1970s. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s most families acquired the modern appliances that could transform housework - the vacuum cleaner, refrigerator, washing-machine and cooker. Since then, progress has brought ever diminishing returns - upgrading to new models or buying duplicates or even triplicates.

There is a similar pattern with car ownership. By the 1970s the huge post-war increase in car ownership had levelled off and half of all households had the use of a car. Since then, most of the increase has been one of multiplication - to two or three cars in a household and travelling ever greater distances. Back in 1972, only Auntie Elsie had transport. Her Ford Anglia offered potentially unlimited mobility but in reality rarely went further than Ross-on-Wye.

Even with the opportunity of mobility, the mental framework was still one of locality. Most people still walked, cycled or took the bus to work. Almost all children made their own way to school. Virtually nothing my grandparents ate came from further than 20 miles away - local beef and lamb, vegetables from the garden, local apples in season (and homemade scrumpy cider from the windfalls).

It may have been a healthy low carbon diet, but it could have benefited from some spices and a modern cookbook. Food was, in traditional English style, bland and overcooked, and occasionally disturbing. My Uncle Phil would treat himself to a fry-up of worm-like elvers (infant eels that are now critically endangered). Supper sometimes consisted of slices from half a boiled pig's head that sat in the middle of the table staring at me.

In 1972 such meals were a cultural echo of the absolute poverty of the recent past, and people looked forward to the continuing improvement in their income. Then as now, consumption, energy use and emissions were directly related to affluence. In the past four decades household income has more than doubled in real terms, tracked closely by energy demand. The vast investment in new technology has done little more than muffle the resulting explosion in emissions - and transport emissions have doubled regardless.

The path to happiness

Looking back, we have paid a high price - in terms of climate change - for the decision to keep going for more and more. And while the continued increase in living standards has brought many benefits and new opportunities, has it made us any happier?

Surveys asking people to report their state of satisfaction have recorded a slight but steady fall since 1970.⁴ A major study by the University of Sheffield⁵ reported that perceived loneliness has increased nationally by 40 per cent since 1971. Professor Tim Jackson has combined social and environmental indicators to produce a Measure of Domestic Progress that he argues peaked in 1976.⁶ It seems that four decades of rapid growth in wealth - and emissions - has not converted into a proportional increase in happiness.

People's state of wellbeing is a subjective evaluation measured against their expectations of what factors constitute personal happiness and whether or not those are increasing. My family had come through the

grinding poverty of the 1930s, the War, and post-War austerity and it anticipated that things would keep getting better. It is easy to be happy when things are looking up. But no-one will ever take kindly to going backwards, especially if it may require limiting ambitions, mobility and personal freedom.

The challenge then is whether we can select some lessons from the past and incorporate them into a progressive and appealing vision of the future. And again, 1972 has much to teach us. In some ways it offered the best of all worlds - the strong linkages of community and extended family, combined with sufficient mobility and consumer products to meet people's needs. It is this balance that we have lost and can seek to restore.

We know, from our own experience, that we can live perfectly well with less. We have doubled our real income since 1972 but our average working hours have only fallen by 14 per cent.⁷ Surely a progressive solution to climate change is to encourage and reward people for reducing their working hours and exchanging part of their income and consumption for more time with their family and friends?

1972 is a notional year, but the arguments are equally strong for 1982 or 1992. I am not holding up the world of 1972 as a model for the future. I am not ignoring the many social improvements we have made since then - not least in our tolerance and openness. Nor am I denying that many people have gained from the increased mobility and affluence. But I am suggesting that, faced with an urgent need to reduce our emissions, our personal experience contains clear evidence that we can be happy and satisfied with lower emissions and, if we select carefully, we have within our collective memory some thoroughly tried and tested models for how to do it.

Reclaim the future – information and action

UK

www.biofuelwatch.org.uk

www.coalaction.org.uk

www.no-tar-sands.org

www.neweconomics.org

www.climatecamp.org.uk

www.campaigncc.org

www.risingtide.org.uk

www.artnoil.org.uk

North America

www.oilwatch.org

www.coal-is-dirty.com

www.actforclimatejustice.org

www.350.org

www.risingtidenorthamerica.org

www.oilsandstruth.org

www.energyaction.net

www.climateactionnetwork.ca

www.greenpeace.ca

Australia

www.risingtide.org.au

www.climatecamp.org.au

www.cana.net.au

www.climatemovement.org.au

www.foe.org.au

New Zealand / Aotearoa

www.savehappyvalley.org.nz

www.climatecamp.org.nz

Global

www.ienearth.org

www.viacampesina.org

www.ran.org

www.transitionnetwork.org

www.greennewdealgroup.org

www.climate-justice-action.org

www.climate-justice-now.org

www.pwccc.wordpress.com

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George Marshall is founder of [Climate Outreach Information Network \(COIN\)](#) and author of *Carbon Detox: Your step-by-step guide to getting real about climate change, 2007*.

###

Published on Friday, December 31, 2010 by [Grist](#)

Obama Admin Takes Aim at China's Renewable-Energy Subsidies

by Lucia Green-Weiskel and Tina Gerhardt

Last week, in a move that pits American labor against China's green-technology industry, the Obama administration filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization over China's wind-power subsidies.

The U.S. move challenges China's rapid growth in the renewable-energy market, and also throws the weight of the administration behind the unions, elevating concern about Chinese competition to the level of official U.S. policy.

The complaint falls on the heels of a 5,800-page filing made in September by the United Steelworkers against China, arguing that its renewable-energy subsidies violate international trade regulations. According to that filing, China defied trade agreements by providing land grants and low-interest loans in order to produce clean technology at artificially low prices.

Both complaints ignore the fact that energy industries all over the world benefit from government subsidies. In the U.S. and Europe, the nuclear and fossil-fuel industries get massive public subsidies. And

as a percentage of GDP, Spain and the U.K. pump funding at levels similar to China's into green subsidies.

China sharply rejects allegations that its rapidly growing solar-panel and wind-turbine manufacturing efforts defy WTO trade regulations.

Beijing dismisses the attacks as another example of China-bashing, which rose to new heights in the U.S. during the recent 2010 midterm elections, when no fewer than [29 congressional and gubernatorial candidates](#) pushed anti-China messages in campaign ads. In October, [The Wall Street Journal reported](#) that "China is emerging as a bogeyman this campaign season, with candidates across the American political spectrum seizing on anxieties about the country's growing economic might to pummel each other on trade, outsourcing and the deficit."

The Obama administration appears to be taking a cue from this surge of protectionist scapegoating.

China, for its part, feels it is being presented with a damned-if-you-do-and-damned-if-you-don't set of options. If the country invests in clean technology, U.S. officials claim China is engaging in "unfair" trade practices. If it does not, U.S. lawmakers threaten to slap a high-carbon tariff on Chinese imports. It's a no-win situation.

China is actually doing the world a favor. Its renewable-energy subsidies, which have made it a leading producer of wind and solar technology, are one of the most encouraging signs of progress in the global fight against climate change. China is currently the only country producing green technology at a scale that could dramatically bring down the price of goods like solar panels and wind turbines, making them affordable for both the developed and developing world. These advances could not have been brought about without government subsidies.

China's leaders have also committed to ambitious carbon-reducing policies. The country is aiming to cut its greenhouse gas emissions per unit of GDP by 40 to 45 percent from 2005 levels by 2020. And it is committed to deriving at least 15 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2020.

China is now the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, but it still ranks far below the U.S. in terms of per capita emissions and historical emissions. And almost one-quarter of China's emissions come from products that are made for export. To the extent the country becomes a major exporter of wind turbines, solar panels, fuel cells, and electric vehicles -- all of which are energy-intensive to produce -- it will be taking on an emissions burden from other countries.

If the U.S. wants to get serious about renewable energy, it should ramp up its own subsidies for clean technology, not quibble over China's.

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Lucia Green-Weiskel is project manager of the climate change program at the Beijing-based independent Innovation Center for Energy and Transportation. She appeared on Democracy Now during the COP 15 in Copenhagen and the COP 16 in Cancun, and her work has been published in The Nation.

Tina Gerhardt is an independent journalist and academic who covers climate change and environmental politics. Her work has appeared in Alternet, Grist, The Huffington Post, In These Times, The Nation, and Salon. Most recently, she covered the COP 16 climate meeting in Cancun for Alternet and The Nation.

#

Published on Friday, December 31, 2010 by [OtherWords](#)

It's Time to Protect Consumers from Toxic Chemicals

Because BPA is in canned food and receipts and on our money, it's virtually impossible to avoid.

by Lindsay Dahl

When most people hear the word "hormones," they have a flashback to high school science class or think of their adolescent children. But rarely do we think about staples of our everyday lives such as receipts, water bottles, and baby bottles. So what do hormones have to do with a host of consumer products?

It turns out there are three sources for hormones. They can naturally occur in our bodies, or you can wind up with them inadvertently through prescription drugs or consumer products. Yes, that's right--consumer products.

The chemical bisphenol A (generally referred to as BPA) has caught the public's attention recently, mainly due to its use in baby bottles, sippy cups, and canned food. BPA is a chemical that acts like a hormone, mimicking estrogen in our bodies. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), over 93 percent of Americans have BPA in their bodies at levels that have shown to cause harm in laboratory studies.

By mimicking naturally occurring hormones, BPA can disrupt the body's normal functions. Because of this, it has been linked to a host of health effects: breast and prostate cancer, insulin resistance, early onset of puberty, and ADD/ADHD, as well as disrupting thyroid function and the body's production of other hormones.

A [recent study](#) by Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families and the Washington Toxics Coalition called "On the Money" found that large amounts of BPA were found in receipts, which can transfer the chemical onto our skin. Even if you handle receipts carefully, they're contaminating the money we use everyday, making it virtually impossible to avoid BPA exposure.

So how did we get here? How is it that every day there seems to be a new chemical--in a different product--that could harm us? Unfortunately, our federal system for overseeing chemical safety is sorely broken. Last updated in the 1970s, our federal laws fail to ensure chemicals are safe before they end up on the market. The result has been widespread exposure to toxic chemicals in our homes.

There's formaldehyde in wrinkle-free clothes, lead in children's toys, BPA in receipts--the list is endless. For a consumer, it can be very overwhelming--what's safe to use and what's not? The good news is that there's a solution to the problem that doesn't involve buying more expensive products or having to carry a "products-to-avoid" list to your local retailer.

In the last session of Congress, champions of this issue introduced a bill that would require the government to update federal law governing chemicals in consumer products. The Safe Chemicals Act of 2010 (S 3209/ HR 5820) would take the burden off consumers and would instead require companies to ensure chemicals are safe before they enter our workplaces and homes. Even with the new political landscape, I'm hopeful that this new Congress will put commonsense limits on toxic chemicals.

We're all exposed to chemicals that act like hormones. We should collectively work toward a future where the only hormones in our bodies are those that our bodies naturally produce. I encourage you to call your

members of Congress to ask them to support the Safe Chemicals Act in 2011. With leadership from our federal government, we can ensure that commonsense limits on toxic chemicals protect our families and health.

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Lindsay Dahl is the deputy director of Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families, a coalition dedicated to protect the public from toxic chemicals. For more information on BPA and its effects on our health, visit the coalition's website, www.saferchemicals.org.

###

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 30, 2010

1:33 PM

CONTACT: [Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive](#)

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Student Food Co-op Revolution on Campus: Going National in 2011!

CoFed to Launch National Program Empowering Cooperative Student Access to Sustainable Food, on College Campuses Across the USA

BERKELEY, CA - December 30 - Successful university movement for "real food" is launching nationally in January 2011 with support from Michael Pollan, Bill McKibben, Slow Money, and students everywhere.

WHAT: National training for student cooperative food activists to be held January 10-20, 2011 in Sebastopol, CA, followed by launch of CoFed national programming and membership drive.

BACKGROUND - Student leaders from regions around the USA are gathering January 2011 in California to receive training from the Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive (CoFed) in how to create ethically-sourced, student-run local storefronts and cafés on college campuses throughout their regions.

On January 20th, as CoFed's freshly "inspiregized" and newly hired [inaugural team of six regional directors](#) begins advancing the student cooperative food movement across the West Coast, Southwest, and East Coast, CoFed will simultaneously launch a national membership and publicity drive to support them.

The original catalyst for CoFed, the Berkeley Student Food Collective, grew out of a successful campaign to block the first fast food chain restaurant from opening on the University of California's Berkeley campus. Instead, the Berkeley student food co-op opened on Nov. 15, 2010 to sell "real food" - local, sustainable, healthful, and ethical - at affordable prices.

CoFed's Launch Committee includes author Michael Pollan, 350.org founder Bill McKibben, Slow Food USA President Josh Viertel, and the Northern California chapter of Slow Money. Within the next few

years, CoFed is projected to grow exponentially, with dozens of new storefronts opening, in every region of the US - reaching the mouths and minds of over 700,000 college students.

CoFed looks to be one of the most dynamic and innovative forces in the new food cooperative movement now sweeping the USA. By taking a training-the-trainers approach and facilitating regional student networks, CoFed aims to maximize its collective impact and empower students with a sense of local creativity and autonomy over their projects. Already in 2010, CoFed quickly grew to encompass [6 leadership teams starting student run cafes](#) on West Coast college campuses, from Santa Barbara to Seattle.

YES! Magazine calls "cooperatives mak[ing] a comeback" one of the 10 most hopeful stories of 2010. (1) *Good Food World* sees a "new food movement" in action, as hundreds of new co-ops are in development across America. (2) With localized food and cooperative enterprise growing in popularity more each year, plus rising student interest in all things green, CoFed possesses real potential to help lead a sustainable transformation of food culture on college campuses throughout the USA.

To learn more about CoFed, schedule an interview, or reserve space for your media representative to attend a portion of our January 10th-20th national training in Sebastopol, CA please contact:

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Quotes:

"CoFed not only taught us and provided us with the resources to start a student run food collective on our college campus, but created an inspirational atmosphere that left everyone with the determination and empowerment to make our vision a reality!" - Brooke, UCSB student.

"CoFed is powerful - it will train a new generation of leaders with experience creating good, clean, fair food businesses and a new generation of eaters who believe in the power of community to create their own food choices that nourish their bodies, their values, and their planet." - Josh Viertel, President of Slow Food USA.

"Colleges around the country are figuring out that they educate their students three times a day about either good food or bad - about a world where local matters, or where food is just a plate full of calories to get you through class. CoFed has the potential to be a crucial part of that process." - Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org.

Notes:

(1) Van Gelder, Sarah. 10 Most Hopeful Stories of 2010. *YES! Magazine*. December 22, 2010. www.yesmagazine.org.

(2) Nickel-Kailing, Gail. Food Co-ops Grow Up. *Good Food World*. December 9, 2010. www.goodfoodworld.com.