



September 2011 Green Mission News

External Article Links:

- O'Brien's TED talk on the food supply

<http://www.robynobrien.com/index.html>

- If you eat watch this; if you don't eat, delete.

<http://organicconnectmag.com/wp/2011/07/gmo-foods-and-the-rise-of-allergies/>

- da future? (video 6:30 min.):

<http://www.postcarbon.org/blog-post/429117-who-killed-growth-an-animated-explanation>

- The Tuna Industry's Dirty Little Secret

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU0Ula4LbMA&feature=player_embedded

<http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/campaigns/oceans/seafood/tuna/>

- Australia's Great Barrier Reef 'at risk from pesticide'

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-14516253>

- The [Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund](http://www.ftcldf.org/) defends the rights and broadens the freedoms of family farms and protects consumer access to raw milk and nutrient dense foods. <http://www.ftcldf.org/>

- The [Weston A Price Foundation](http://www.westonaprice.org/) is dedicated to restoring nutrient-dense foods to the human diet through education, research and activism.

<http://www.westonaprice.org/>

- National Independent Consumers and Farmers Association promotes and preserves unregulated direct farmer-to-consumer trade that fosters availability of locally grown or home-produced food products.

<http://www.nicfa.com/>

The [Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance](http://farmandranchfreedom.org/) works to save family farms and individuals from expensive and unnecessary government regulation.

<http://farmandranchfreedom.org/>

- The [Northeast Organic Farming Association \(NOFA\)](http://www.nofa.org/) is a membership organization of more than 5,000 farmers, gardeners and consumers working to promote health food, organic farming practices and a cleaner environment.

<http://www.nofa.org/>

- The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) is an alliance of grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities.

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/about-us/>

<http://solari.com/>

- Why Plants Make Us Feel Good

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/maureen-k-calamia/biophilia_b_917161.html

Reconnecting Children and Nature

http://yubanet.com/life/Reconnecting-Children-and-Nature_printer.php

- GMO timeline: 1976-2011

<http://newhope360.com/non-gmo/gmo-timeline-1976-2011>

- A Farm with Heart... and Brains

<http://www.gilttaste.com/stories/1066-a-farm-with-heart-and-brains>

- Waste & Opportunity: U.S. Beverage Container Recycling Scorecard and Report, 2011

http://www.asyousow.org/sustainability/bev_survey.shtml

- Can Ecosystem Restoration Businesses Lead the Green Economy?

<http://ecosector.hubpages.com/hub/Can-Ecosystem-Restoration-Lead-the-Green-Economy>

- Bioshelter Market Garden

<http://www.newsociety.com/Books/B/Bioshelter-Market-Garden>

- Pregnant California Women Carry World's Highest Flame Retardant Levels

<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/aug2011/2011-08-10-092.html>

- David Suzuki & Thich Nhat Hanh in Conversation: How Do We Bring About a Collective Awakening? (video: 59 minutes)

<http://vimeo.com/27873038>

- OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO ORGANIC FARMING

<http://news.discovery.com/earth/overcoming-obstacles-to-organic-farming-110225.html>

- National Organic Coalition 2012 DRAFT FARM BILL Recommendations

<http://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/FarmBill/2012%20Farm%20Bill%20Summary%202-pager%208-15-11.pdf>

OPINION: Zero Packaging Can Do More Harm than Good

http://www.brandpackaging.com/Articles/Feature_Articles/BNP_GUID_9-52006_A_10000000000001092363

The New Green Revolution: How Twenty-First-Century Science Can Feed the World

<http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/971>

- ICLEI Development of Local Government Protocols - ICLEI's community GHG emissions protocol is under development

<http://www.icleiusa.org/programs/climate/ghg-protocol/community-greenhouse-gas-emissions-inventory-protocol>

Full Length Articles Below:

- Earth's Systems in Rapid Decline
- Big Food Recalls Once Again Reveal the Hidden Costs of our Big Food System
- French Farmer Advertises Against Advertising
- Thrifty, Green Homeowners May Get a Boost
- An innovative program is bringing Republicans and Democrats together to boost renovations that would conserve energy and trim electric and gas bills.
- Groups Call on Supercommittee to Cut Energy Subsidies
- Expert: GMOs to blame for problems in plants, animals

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Published on Thursday, August 4, 2011 by [Al-Jazeera-English](#)

Earth's Systems in Rapid Decline

by Stephen Leahy

Protecting bits of nature here and there will not prevent humanity from losing our life support system. Even if areas dedicated to conserving plants, animals, and other species that provide Earth's life support system increased tenfold, it would not be enough without dealing with the big issues of the 21st century: population, overconsumption and inefficient resource use. Without dealing with those big issues, humanity will need 27 planet Earths by 2050, a new study estimates. The size and

number of protected areas on land and sea has increased dramatically since the 1980s, now totaling over 100,000 in number and covering 17 million square kilometres of land and two million square kilometres of oceans, a new study reported Thursday.

Protecting bits of nature here and there will not prevent humanity from losing our life support system. Even if areas dedicated to conserving plants, animals, and other species that provide Earth's life support system increased tenfold, it would not be enough without dealing with the big issues of the 21st century: population, over-consumption and inefficient resource use. Without dealing with those big issues, humanity will need 27 planet Earths by 2050, a new study estimates.

Dealing with failure But impressive as those numbers look, all indicators reveal species going extinct faster than ever before, despite all the additions of new parks, reserves and other conservation measures, according to the study published in the journal *Marine Ecology Progress Series*. "It is amazing to me that we haven't dealt with this failure of protected areas to slow biodiversity losses," said lead author Camilo Mora of University of Hawaii at Manoa. "We were surprised the evidence from the past 30 years was so clear," Mora said. The ability of protected areas to address the problem of biodiversity loss - the decline in diversity and numbers of all living species - has long been overestimated, the study reported. The reality is that most protected areas are not truly protected. Many are "paper parks", protected in name only. Up to 70 per cent of marine protected areas are paper parks, Mora said. The study shows global expenditures on protected areas today are estimated at \$6bn per year, and many areas are insufficiently funded for effective management. Effectively managing existing protected areas requires an estimated \$24bn per year - four times the current expenditure.

False hopes "Ongoing biodiversity loss and its consequences for humanity's welfare are of great concern and have prompted strong calls for expanding the use of protected areas as a remedy," said co-author Peter Sale, a marine biologist and assistant director of the United Nations University's Institute for Water, Environment and Health.

"Protected areas are a false hope in terms of preventing the loss of biodiversity," Sale said. The authors based their study on existing literature and global data on human threats and biodiversity loss. When asked about the 2010 global biodiversity protection agreement in Nagoya, Japan to put 17 per cent of land and 10 per cent of oceans on the planet under protection by 2020, Sale said it was "very unlikely those

targets will be reached" due to conflicts between growing needs for food and other resources. "Even if those targets were achieved, it is not going to stop the decline in biodiversity," he said. One reason for this is "leakage". Fence off one forest and the logging pressure increases in another. Make one coral reef off limits to fishing and the fishing boats go to the next reef. Another reason protected areas aren't the answer is that fences or patrol boats can't keep out the impacts of pollution or climate change. Finally, the pressures on the planet's resources are escalating so quickly that "the problem is running away from the solution", he said. The loss of biodiversity is a major issue because it is humanity's only life-support system, delivering everything from food, to clean water and air, to recreation and tourism, to novel chemicals that drive our advanced civilisation, said Mora. Right now the dominant strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity is with protected areas. "That's putting all our eggs in one basket," he said. "A major shift is needed to deal with the roots of the problem." The ever-expanding footprint of humanity is the primary cause of global biodiversity loss. When the world's population was 5bn people in 1985, the amount of nature's resources being used or impacted became more than the planet could sustain indefinitely according to many estimates, said Mora. The world population, currently at 7 billion, is well beyond Earth's ability to sustain. By 2050, with a projected population of 10 billion people and without a change in consumption patterns, the cumulative use of natural resources will amount to the productivity of up to 27 planet Earths, the study found. Sustaining the current 7 billion people on the planet requires a major shift in resource use. At present, the average US citizen's ecological footprint is about 10 hectares, while a Haitian's is less than one. The planet could sustain us if everyone's footprint averaged two hectares, Mora said. If there are more people, then there are simply fewer resources available for everyone, so population control will be needed along the lines of "one child per woman", he said. "I'm from Colombia, it blows my mind that some governments in the developing world pay women to have more children," he added. Hardly anyone is focused on the pressing need for a major shift, said Sale. "The awareness of the public about this is shockingly low," he noted. What is needed is for humanity as a mass to change direction, he said. "But can we find the hook, the lever that's needed to make that happen?" Sale asked.

A version of this article first appeared on Inter Press Service news agency.

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Published on Thursday, August 4, 2011 by [Food & Water Watch](#)

Big Food Recalls Once Again Reveal the Hidden Costs of our Big Food System

by Rich Bindell

Back in March, we tried to imagine through [a short video](#) what it would be like if the President got a wake-up call about his proposed food safety budget cuts and how they might affect one his favorite meals: a hamburger. On second thought, make that a turkey burger. Cargill Value Added Meats Retail, a subsidiary of Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation, just recalled [36 MILLION POUNDS of ground turkey](#) products because of possible Salmonella contamination. This is exactly why [it's not a good idea to cut critical food and safety protections](#) from the federal budget.

Massive consolidation in our food system means that a few big processors handle the majority of our widely distributed food. This makes it harder to trace back the origins of food contamination like Salmonella Heidelberg.

Cargill, [the third largest turkey processor in the United States](#), is recalling the turkey products because of a strain of bacteria called Salmonella Heidelberg, which has sickened 76 consumers and caused one death. The fact that Salmonella Heidelberg is antibiotic-resistant certainly reinforces the need for ending the overuse of antibiotics in livestock production.

Tracing the contamination back to its source — no easy task when you're talking about [36 million pounds of processed food distributed to 26 states](#) — has been the task of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in conjunction with USDA and state health agencies. In case you're wondering how long it takes to figure out where food contamination originated, in this case it took five months since the first reported case of food illness was reported until they linked the public health threat to Cargill's ground turkey.

Food recalls like this one have become typical in an age of consolidation in agriculture and food — when 58 percent of the poultry market is controlled by the top four firms. Big firms like Cargill brag about their market share in their quarterly reports, but this type of

marketplace domination is putting consumers at risk and farmers out of business. There are hidden costs to doing business this big, and one of them is public health. And, we can only rely so much on our federal agencies to provide food safety if their budgets are being cut. They are strained now; what will their challenges be like next year if they have less funding and more responsibility?

This is the reason our Food & Water Watch organizers are currently out on the road, [covering 20 states in 34 days](#), and talking to people about the [Farm Bill](#). If we want to fix this broken food system — one that is controlled by food processing middle men, not farmers — we need to make better farm and food policy, and to fund critical programs that protect consumers.

As you sit down to dinner tonight, think about where you want your food to come from: a grower in your region of the country or a processing plant on the other side of it that's handling millions of pounds of your dinner.

We'd love to know what you think about how this food recall relates to our efforts to improve our food system through the [Farm Bill](#) in 2012. Please go to [our Facebook page](#) and share your thoughts!

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Published on Friday, August 12, 2011 by [Agence France-Presse](#)

French Farmer Advertises Against Advertising

"Advertising is manipulating you - React!"

AGEN, France — A French organic farmer has forked out 3,000 euros (4,300 dollars) for a series of billboard advertisements that denounce the evils of advertising.

Twenty-five of the giant ads went up this week across the southwestern town of Agen showing a human brain stuffed with advertising images and carrying the slogan "Advertising is manipulating you - React!"

Fifty-six-year-old farmer Pierre Kung explained that he was implementing the martial arts technique of "using the strength of the adversary to floor him."

"My aim is simply to get people to ask themselves questions. Because we've been brainwashed into thinking that happiness lies in consuming ever more," he told AFP.

Kung said he sympathized with but was not a member of an 'anti-advertising' militant group in Paris who attack billboards and other advertising they say blight the landscape and render the population consumerist sheep.

an excellent pair of articles was posted at The Oil Drum on the energy side of this topic:

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Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, we have seen an impressive and sustained growth in the scale of energy consumption by human civilization. Plotting data from the Energy Information Agency on U.S. energy use since 1650 (1635-1945, 1949-2009, including wood, biomass, fossil fuels, hydro, nuclear, etc.) shows a remarkably steady growth trajectory, characterized by an annual growth rate of 2.9% (see figure). It is important to understand the future trajectory of energy growth because governments and organizations everywhere make assumptions based on the expectation that the growth trend will continue as it has for centuries

Part 1: <http://www.theoil drum.com/node/8155>

Part 2: <http://www.theoil drum.com/node/8185>

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Published on Wednesday, August 24, 2011 by [OtherWords](#)

Thrifty, Green Homeowners May Get a Boost

An innovative program is bringing Republicans and Democrats together to boost renovations that would conserve energy and trim electric and gas bills.

by [Andrew Korfhage](#)

While it might seem rare these days for Republicans and Democrats to work together on anything, two Republican members of the House of Representatives recently joined

with one of their colleagues in the Democratic Party to introduce an important new piece of renewable energy legislation.

Reps. Nan Hayworth (R-NY), Rep. Dan Lungren (R-CA), and Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA) have proposed a bill this summer that would create new green jobs while reducing homeowners' electric and gas bills. The legislation is designed to protect the ability of local communities to adopt an innovative clean-energy financing strategy that has attracted bipartisan support from coast to coast — and with good reason.

No other property assessment project increases homeowners' financial stability the way the installation of a clean-energy system does. (Tai Viinikka / Flickr)

This financing strategy, known as "property assessed clean energy," or PACE, allows homeowners to finance the up-front costs of installing residential clean-energy systems through city partnerships that spread out the payments as an add-on to their property taxes for as long as 20 years.

As a way to encourage homeowners to invest in cleaner energy without high up-front costs, PACE programs have proven popular with cities working hard to stimulate their local economies and create green jobs. Since 2008, 27 state legislatures have enabled cities and counties to set up PACE assessments. PACE legislation has passed in state legislatures with both Democratic and Republican majorities. Republicans in Virginia, Missouri, and Texas, as well as Democrats in Oregon, Minnesota, and New Hampshire have approved these initiatives.

Despite this groundswell of bipartisan support, PACE programs ground to a halt last summer when the Federal Housing Finance Agency directed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to stop financing mortgages associated with a PACE assessment. This move, which has baffled some lawmakers, resulted from concerns that PACE loans might have to be paid back first if a property owner goes into foreclosure.

The new House legislation would clearly define in law that PACE assessments aren't loans (and don't become due in full in the case of foreclosure), and would prohibit Fannie and Freddie from discriminating against PACE-associated homeowners. At the same time, the bill seeks to quell the mortgage lenders' fears by limiting their risk through a series of national program standards.

For example, the legislation caps the cost of clean-energy projects at 10 percent of home value, and limits participation to homeowners with a solid tax-payment history and at least 15 percent equity in their home. In addition, to qualify for a PACE assessment, homeowners must undergo energy audits of their properties that show how their projects will pay for themselves in lowered energy bills over the course of the assessment.

This last requirement simply demonstrates what PACE enthusiasts have been telling Fannie and Freddie all along: No other property assessment project increases homeowners' financial stability the way the installation of a clean-energy system does.

In fact, a recent study by the economic consulting firm ECONorthwest found that PACE assessments tend to reduce homeowner default rates, making them a boon rather than a burden to Fannie and Freddie.

Looking at four municipalities that enacted some of the earliest PACE programs, ECONorthwest found a default rate of 0.1 percent amongst PACE-assessed homeowners, versus a 3.2 percent default rate for non-PACE homeowners in the same areas over the same time period.

In these politically contentious times, any program that can bring Republicans and Democrats together to boost both clean-energy installations and job creation deserves to be protected. That this same program can shift the country toward renewable energy, strengthen local communities, save homeowners money during an economic downturn, and help blunt the foreclosure crisis makes it a program that simply must be saved.

Andrew Korfhage is Green America's online and special projects editor.

www.greenamerica.org

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Published on Wednesday, August 24, 2011 by [The Hill](#)

Groups Call on Supercommittee to Cut Energy Subsidies

by Andrew Restuccia

A major environmental group has teamed up with a conservative think tank and others

to urge the congressional supercommittee to slash oil, coal, ethanol and nuclear subsidies — a move the groups say would save \$380 billion over the next five years.

Friends of the Earth, the Heartland Institute, Public Citizen and Taxpayers for Common Sense released [a report](#) Wednesday, dubbed “Green Scissors 2011,” that casts the cuts as benefiting both the environment and the economy. “While all four groups have different missions, histories, goals and ideas about the role of government, we all agree that we can begin to overcome our nation’s budgetary and environmental woes by tackling spending that is not only wasteful but environmentally harmful,” the groups said in the report. The groups noted that the report’s cuts amount to about one-fourth of the \$1.5 trillion in debt reduction the supercommittee, which was formed as part of a deal to raise the debt ceiling, is charged with finding. The 12-member panel has until Nov. 23 to come up with a proposal.

While some Democrats have said they will push for the supercommittee to eliminate oil industry tax breaks, the move faces resistance from Republicans, who have taken tax increases off the table.

Still, Taxpayers for Common Sense President Ryan Alexander said eliminating energy tax breaks is an easy way to meet the supercommittee’s debt-reduction goal.

“These common-sense cuts represent the lowest of the low-hanging budgetary fruit,” Alexander said. “Lawmakers across the political spectrum should be scrambling to eliminate these examples of wasteful spending and unnecessary tax breaks that are squandering our precious tax dollars while the nation is staring into a chasm of debt.”

Former Rep. Bob Inglis (R-S.C.) echoed Alexander’s sentiments.

“These subsidies really hold back innovation because they protect grandfathered fuels and grandfathered technologies that keep the new fuels from coming to market,” he said Wednesday on a call with reporters about the report.

The report calls for eliminating a series of tax breaks for the oil industry, as well as a 45-cents-per-gallon ethanol tax credit. It also recommends cutting incentives for carbon capture and sequestration at coal plants, as well as loan guarantees for the nuclear

industry.

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Expert: GMOs to blame for problems in plants, animals

Jefferson Dodge

Boulder Weekly, August 11 2011

<http://www.boulderweekly.com/article-6211-expert-gmos-to-blame-for-problems-in-plants-animals.html>

One of the experts set to testify at Wednesday's long-awaited meeting about the county's policy for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on open space says scientists are seeing new, alarming patterns in plants and animals due to increased use of the herbicide Roundup.

Michael McNeill is an agronomist who owns Ag Advisory Ltd. in Algona, Iowa. He received his Ph.D. in quantitative genetics and plant pathology from Iowa State University in 1969 and has been a crop consultant since 1983. He was among three experts invited by county officials to testify at the Aug. 10 meeting of the Cropland Policy Advisory Group (CPAG).

CPAG, which has been meeting since February, serves as a sounding board for the county's parks and open space staff as they develop a new cropland policy on matters like what may be grown on county land. The group has only touched briefly on the hot-button GMO issue in its past meetings; the Aug. 10 meeting was devoted entirely to the subject.

McNeill told Boulder Weekly before the meeting that he and his colleagues in the industry are seeing serious, negative effects produced by the use of glyphosate, which is the primary ingredient in Roundup weed killer. (Monsanto, the company that makes Roundup, has generated controversy by genetically altering crops to

make them resistant to the herbicide.)

McNeill says that in the Midwest and other areas of the country, such as Louisiana and Mississippi, weeds like water hemp, giant ragweed, lamb's quarter and velvet weed have become Roundup resistant through natural selection, due to a particular genetic mutation that survived the poison and therefore reproduced successfully and wildly.

The problem is, farmers' natural reaction has been to simply apply more Roundup to their crops, which is having deleterious impacts, McNeill says.

"Used judiciously, it can be a useful product, but as with anything, if you abuse it, it can have negative effects," he says.

McNeill explains that glyphosate is a chelating agent, which means it clamps onto molecules that are valuable to a plant, like iron, calcium, manganese and zinc.

"When you spray glyphosate on a plant, it's like giving it AIDS," he says.

The farmers' increased use of Roundup is actually harming their crops, according to McNeill, because it is killing micronutrients in the soil that they need, a development that has been documented in several scientific papers by the nation's leading experts in the field. For example, he says, harmful fungi and parasites like fusarium, phytophthora and pythium are on the rise as a result of the poison, while beneficial fungi and other organisms that help plants reduce minerals to a usable state are on the decline.

He explains that the overuse of glyphosate means that oxidizing agents are on the rise, creating oxides that plants can't use, leading to lower yields and higher susceptibility to disease.

McNeill acknowledges that Monsanto could simply find a new chemical that kills the newly resistant weeds, but the weeds will simply find a way around it again.

"It's mother nature's plant breeding program," he says. "It's very widespread, and it's a serious problem."

McNeill says the situation is causing "sudden death syndrome" in soybeans, which means they are dying at increased rates when they go into their reproductive phase. He adds that corn is showing a higher incidence of Goss's wilt, which has been a problem in Colorado since the early 1970s, and studies show that glyphosate causes a rise in both diseases.

And the problems are not limited to plants, it's extending to the animals that eat them, according to McNeill.

He says he and his colleagues are seeing a higher incidence of infertility and early-term abortion in cattle and hogs that are fed on GMO crops. He adds that poultry fed on the suspect crops have been exhibiting reduced fertility rates.

McNeill, who works with universities, the federal government and private companies, says his advice to his farmer clients is to rotate chemicals - or don't use them at all. While it is more labor-intensive, organic farmers usually cut their weeds as an alternative to herbicides. He says he consults for about 160,000 acres of conventional farmland and 5,000 to 6,000 acres of organically farmed land.

"My clients are my farmers, and I want what's best for them," he says. "And my clients are the consumers who consume the farmers products, and I want what's best for them."

McNeill compares the Roundup situation to the way science eventually caught up to another poison: Just as DDT was initially hailed as a miracle pesticide and later banned, researchers are beginning to discover serious problems with glyphosate.

"Some issues are starting to arise with technologies that probably needed more research before we started using them," he says. "It's a moving target."

The other two experts invited to the CPAG meeting, Kent Davis of Crop Quest and Phillip Westra of Colorado State University, did not return calls by press time.