

## **Activists fear agribusiness and biotechnology lobbyists are conspiring to outlaw organic farming and home gardens**

April 4, 2009 · [4 Comments](#)

### **Family Farmers Fear Being Run Over by Food Safety Juggernaut**

#### **Organic and Local Farmers Seek Protections in Washington**

[PRNewswire | Apr 3, 2009](#)

**CORNUCOPIA, Wis., April 3 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ — Momentum is building in Congress for new food safety reforms aimed at addressing the growing cycle of food contamination outbreaks. But concerns are also being raised cautioning legislators not to trample organic farmers, backyard gardeners and consumers of fresh local foods in the rush to fix food safety problems.**

“There is no question that our increasingly industrialized and concentrated food production system needs a new regulatory focus,” said Will Fantle, of The Cornucopia Institute, a Wisconsin-based organic food and agriculture watchdog. “No one disputes that our food safety system is broken,” Fantle added.

In the last several years, contamination of bagged spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, beef and peanuts have sickened thousands of Americans. And currently a massive recall of food products containing pistachios is underway.

After years of industry-friendly regulations and deteriorating inspection budgets, holes in the food safety net have prompted a push for increased federal oversight.

The process has sparked an internet flurry, with some warning that agribusiness and biotechnology lobbyists are conspiring to outlaw organic farming and home gardens. One bill, The Food Safety Modernization Act (HR 875), sponsored by Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), has been a lightning rod for criticism.

Congresswoman DeLauro is scrambling to assure organic advocates that they are not the target of her bill: “The purpose of this bill is to improve the safety of food products derived from large industrial processing facilities by increasing the inspection frequency and safety standards at these plants.”

Added DeLauro: “Organic farmers have a strong record in providing safe, high quality foods to American families and I will continue to work toward making sure that organic farming continues to thrive.”

Hearings have already begun on food safety legislation in the U.S. House. Of the multiple bills being considered, the FDA Globalization Act (HR 759), sponsored by Congressman John Dingell (D-MI), appears most likely to be voted on, with elements of the other bills, including DeLauro’s, possibly incorporated into the bill.

After the 2006 spinach contamination outbreak in California, that affected consumers across the country, the state adopted a regulatory model that has economically injured growers producing a diverse selection of fresh foods for local markets.

Organic farmer Eve Kaplan-Walbrecht, of Riverhead, NY, is critical of this type of plan. “They are burdening produce growers with the impossible task of ‘sterilizing’ their farms. We need good regulatory oversight that doesn’t penalize smaller-scale owner-operated farms of farmers and marketers like me.”

Ronnie Cummins of the Organic Consumers Association said that citizens, who are seeking safer and nutritionally-superior food are willing to pay a premium for organics, “In order for consumers to have continued access to this high quality food family size farmers must be protected from regressive regulation.”

The Cornucopia Institute is calling on farmers and consumers to stand up for and protect organic and sustainable local farmers. An action alert with talking points and guidance can be found at:

<http://www.cornucopia.org/2009/03/action-alert-critical-pending-food-safety-legislation/>