UUFVB Social Justice Committee News – January 2017

A Probable Carcinogen Is Now the Most Heavily Used Weed Killer in History

One of the promises made at the beginning of Monsanto's biotech revolution some 20 years ago was that planting crops genetically engineered to withstand weed killer applications would dramatically reduce the amount of chemicals farmers used. So why are we virtually drowning in herbicide today?

An analysis published last February in the journal *Environmental Sciences Europe* finds that, rather than a future where farmers had to rely less on chemical herbicides, broad adoption of Monsanto GMO crops designed to withstand the herbicide **glyphosate** appears to have instead led to a chemical deluge. Today, glyphosate, which Monsanto markets under the brand name **Roundup**, stands as "the most widely and heavily applied weed-killer in the history of chemical agriculture in both the U.S. and globally," according to a statement released by the Environmental Working Group.

Last year the International Agency for Research on Cancer, an arm of the World Health Organization, made news when it classified glyphosate as a probable human carcinogen, raising significant concerns about the safety for the farmworkers around the world who are charged with applying massive amounts of the herbicide to fields, as well as the health of agricultural communities where use is heaviest.

Despite the withdrawal of the approval of the EPA late last year, Dow remains committed to getting its Enlist Duo system to market, while Monsanto is developing Xtend, or what might be dubbed "Roundup Ready 2.0." In an effort to combat the scourge of super weeds, both companies have developed powerful herbicides that pair more chemicals with—you guessed it—more glyphosate.

[Excerpted from: www.takepart.com/article/2016/02/02/glyphosate-use-study?cmpid=tpdaily-eml-2016-11-30 by Jason Best]

EPA Restricts Use of Pesticides That Are Harming Endangered Species

Rare tortoises, squirrels, and prairie dogs will benefit from the decision of the federal EPA to regulate the use of eight poisons used to kill burrowing animals. One of the biggest users of these now-restricted pesticides is a little-known program of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture called Wildlife Services, which kills millions of animals a year to protect farming and ranching interests. Environmentalist groups have often called Wildlife Services a "rogue agency" because of its secretiveness and lack of public oversight.

The new restrictions do not become enforceable until June 2017, well into the incoming Trump administration, which has already made clear its plans to limit the EPA's effectiveness. That may not affect these new rules because this is a final action; i.e., the EPA has made the changes to the pesticide labels, so the rules hopefully can't be rolled back.

[Excerpted from: www.takepart.com/article/2016/12/13/epa-restricts-use-pesticides-help-protect-endangered-species?cmpid=tpdaily-eml-2016-12-13 by John R. Platt]

Audubon Florida Releases Latest State of the Everglades Report

It's been a tough year for America's greatest wetland. While environmentalists made progress on authorizing and funding restoration projects, twin tragedies in Florida Bay and the Indian River Lagoon shocked Florida and the nation. Read more news in this edition of the ***State of the Everglades*** by clicking this link while holding down the CTRL key.

Water Saving Tips for Landscaping –

1. **Water early in the morning or in the evening when wind and evaporation are lowest.**
2. **Install an automatic rain shut-off device on sprinkler systems.**

Buying the Healthiest Canned Tuna & Salmon

Seafood is a good source of healthy omega-3 fats, and the USDA and the American Heart Association both recommend eating at least 8 ounces a week (2-3 servings). Both tuna and salmon have the potential to be good for the body, but not so great for the environment.

Check the label to find light tuna caught by troll or pole-and-line. It's the most environmentally sustainable option, according to Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Program. Or look for the blue Certified Sustainable Seafood label from the Marine Stewardship Council. For salmon, wild-caught from Alaska is the best choice for the environment, according to Seafood Watch. Farmed salmon, including Atlantic, should be avoided, as it endangers the wild salmon population.

Canned tuna comes in "light and "white" and, like all fish and shellfish, contains some mercury. Mercury comes from industrial pollution, which runs off into water, and builds up in fish. Light tuna tends to have less mercury than white, but you should check the label. Make sure your "light" tuna comes from skipjack, which is lower in mercury. Yellowfin is less commonly found in cans but is also considered "light" and has a higher mercury level, similar to that of albacore (which is labeled "white").

[Excerpted from: www.eatingwell.com/blogs/healthy_cooking_blog/3_tips_for_buying_the_healthiest_canned_tuna_and_salmon_and_the_best_t by Hilary Meyer

Oregon Finds Switching From Coal to Renewable Energy Is a Bargain

Replacing coal-fired electricity with ever-cheaper wind and solar power will raise utility rates in Oregon by just 0.1 % by 2030. Earlier this year the state passed legislation that requires utilities to stop generating electricity from coal by 2030. At the time, one of Oregon's two main energy utilities, Pacific Power, predicted that the switch to renewables would come with a fairly high cost, hitting customers with a rate increase of 0.8 % per year through 2030. That's a cumulative increase of about 12 % over the next 14 years.

Since then, however, things have changed. After the legislation passed, Pacific Power put out a request for bids for renewable energy projects, and developers came back with prices much lower than expected. How low? Try 0.1 % through the year 2028. That's not per year, like the previous estimate. It's the projected rate increase for the entire time period. That amounts to a 10-cent rate increase for every current $100 in electricity costs.

[Excerpted from: www.takepart.com/article/2016/08/11/switching-coal-renewable-energy-bargain-oregon?cmpid=tpdaily-eml-2016-12-01 by John R. Platt]

Can't Afford Organic? Eat These Fruits & Veggies

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) is a non-profit that advocates for policies that protect global and individual health. One of one of its most valuable pieces of research is its *Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce*. The following "Clean 15" foods had the lowest pesticide load, and consequently are the safest conventionally grown crops to consume from the standpoint of pesticide contamination:

The Clean 15

- Avocados
- Sweet corn
- Pineapples
- Cabbage
- Sweet peas (frozen)
- Onions
- Asparagus
- Mangoes
- Papayas
- Kiwi
- Eggplant
- Honeydew melon
- Grapefruit
- Cantaloupe
- Cauliflower

[Excerpted from: www.drweil.com/diet-nutrition/anti-inflammatory-diet-pyramid/foods-you-dont-have-to-buy-organic/ by Andrew Weil

Good News from Union of Concerned Scientists:

1) This past summer, the EPA announced the strongest ever fuel efficiency and emissions standards for heavy-duty trucks that will cut 1.1 billion tons of global warming emissions over the lifetime of these trucks.
2) Despite strong opposition from the food industry, UCS successfully pushed to update the Nutrition Facts label on packaged food to include the amount of added sugars these foods contain.