



Pesticides Linked to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mohammed Abou-Donia, Ph.D., a professor at Duke University School of Medicine who has published several groundbreaking studies linking pesticides to neurological diseases over the last several years, announced at a conference in Sydney, Australia that chronic fatigue syndrome may be caused by exposure to common household pesticides, such as head lice treatments and insect repellents. Dr. Abou-Donia studied rats exposed to repellents and insecticides together. The rats suffered brain cell death that he says is consistent with "muscle weakness, joint pain and problems with the central nervous system." Dr. Abou-Donia stresses that more research is needed on multiple chemical exposures. He feels the government should strictly regulate household chemicals since little is known about their interaction with other chemicals to which humans are regularly exposed, including over-the-counter medicine. Dr. Abou-Donia explains that stress causes further susceptibility to chemical injury by breaking down the blood-brain barrier, allowing damaging chemicals easier access to the brain, resulting in chronic fatigue syndrome. In 1996, he studied the synergistic effects of the insecticide permethrin and the insect repellent DEET (*Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health*,

48: 35-56, 1996). This work has serious implications for communities combating West Nile virus and other insect-borne diseases, or those spraying for nuisance control. *Professor Mohammed Abou-Donia will be speaking at the 20th National Pesticide Forum, Streams to Schools: Finding Alternatives to Pesticides, April 26-28 in Seattle, WA. His talk will address synergistic effects and the link between pesticides and neurological diseases. For more information or to register for the conference, visit www.beyondpesticides.org or call Beyond Pesticides (see back cover).*

Organic Farmers Fight Back

According to the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate (SOD), Canadian organic farmers faced with the risk of losing their most lucrative crop, filed a class-action lawsuit against Monsanto and Aventis, asking for millions in damages due to lost organic markets from the drift of genetically engineered (GE) canola. Determining the actual amount of damages will be an ongoing process as the suit continues, said lawyer Terry Sakreski, who is representing SOD. All 1,000 organic farmers in Saskatchewan are part of the suit, and organic farmers in other parts of Canada may opt in. Organic growers who comply with growing standards that include no GE varieties

and no pesticides have argued for years that pollen from GE canola is contaminating fields across the prairies. Many organic farmers who have given up growing canola because they cannot assure customers the crops are GE-free, identify Roundup Ready and Liberty Link canola as the organic canola market destroyers. The lawsuit also requests that the court impose an injunction against the release of GE wheat, which could potentially cause even more damage than the GE canola. According to SOD president Arnold Taylor, the release of GE wheat would be devastating, since wheat is organic producers' largest export in Saskatchewan. The suit states that the genetic modifications amount to pollutants, which have damaged organic farming through being discharged into the environment, under the *Environmental Management Protection Act* of Saskatchewan. It also claims that farmers buying Roundup Ready or Liberty Link seed were not warned about the potential harm to neighboring crops and that farmers were not warned to provide buffer zones between GE and other crops. For more information on organic agriculture, drift or the link between genetic engineering and pesticides, contact Beyond Pesticides.



Environmental Groups Sue EPA for Bird Deaths

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC), Defenders of Wildlife and Biodiversity Legal Foundation have joined forces on behalf of the birds. On January 28, 2002, the three organizations filed a notice of intent to sue the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for violations of the *Endangered Species Act*, *Migratory Bird Treaty Act*, and *Administrative Procedure Act* to ban the use of the organophosphate pesticide fenthion for adult mosquito control in Florida. Fenthion, which is toxic