

# Organic Family

A smiling woman with long, wavy red hair and bangs stands in front of a brick wall covered in green vines. She is wearing a blue and yellow patterned t-shirt and blue jeans. Her arms are crossed, and she has a watch on her left wrist.

Number 10

An Organic Mother in  
a Conventional World

Eating as a Spiritual  
Discipline

Immune System Boosters

Companion Planting

Socially Responsible  
Investing

Kids in the Kitchen

Raising Imaginative  
Children

# Before you Buy Organic Dairy, Read This

By Alyssa Kagel



If you buy store-brand organic milk products from Wal-Mart, Trader Joe's, Safeway, or several other outlets, you might not be getting your money's worth. According to the nonprofit Cornucopia Institute, an organic watchdog group, two corporations – representing some 70 percent of the market share of the organic dairy industry – violate organic food laws.

The Institute plans to sue the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for refusing to act against almost all of these violators. The impending lawsuit continues a seven-year battle between organic family farmers and the USDA. After six years of continuous inaction by USDA to address violators, the Institute last year developed an organic "scorecard." That scorecard prompted many retailers to remove

some of the most egregiously offending brands – including the popular Horizon brand-from supermarket shelves. Lucky for consumers, 90 percent of all brands scored by Cornucopia uphold what the Institute calls "high organic ideals." Still, with 70 percent of the market share dominated by companies employing questionable organic practices, it's best to consult the scorecard before buying your favorite organic cheese, yogurt, or milk. Meanwhile, Cornucopia plans to officially file a lawsuit within the next few months, after a "narrow window of opportunity" in which an agreement over an acceptable enforcement timeline may be reached. But the Institute seems doubtful that any real action will be taken by the USDA.

Some of the "5 Cow" or "Outstanding" organic milk product brands include Animal Farm, Radiance Dairy, and Green Hills Harvest. "1 Cow" or "Ethically Challenged" brands include Costco, Wild Oats, and Aurora Organic Dairy.

Find your brand among the 70 listed on the Cornucopia website. Visit

<http://cornucopia.org/dairysurvey/index.html>

*Alyssa Kagel's writing has appeared in The Dollar Stretcher, The Electricity Journal, Washington Current Newspaper, Starry Night Review, Renewable Energy Access, Geothermal Resources Bulletin, Chemistry and Numbers, and others. My work is forthcoming in the Washington City Paper.*