

THE MUSHROOM GROWERS' NEWSLETTER

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THIS MONTH

- Bits and Pieces • Worker Verification •
- Canned Mushroom Exports from China •

BITS AND PIECES

Maitake in the U.S.

Maitake production is so low in the U.S. that the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) lumps it with 'other' mushrooms. (i.e. anything except *Agaricus*, shiitake and oyster mushrooms). This category produces considerably less than two tons per day in the U.S. In contrast, The Yukiguni Maitake farm that is proposed for construction in Mamakating, New York will have a capacity of around 33 tons per day. Their five farms in Japan have capacities ranging up to 120 tons per day. To give this another perspective NASS says U.S. production of oyster mushrooms amounts to less than 7.5 tons per day and shiitake production amounts to less than 12.5 tons per day. What will Yukiguni do with all those mushrooms? Will you be able to compete? Stay tuned.

Grants for Romanian Mushrooms

ACT Media News reports, May 9, that increased funding for mushroom farms in Romania became available on April 11. 100,000 euros are available under the SAPARD program (Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development). The program was established in 1999 to provide financial assistance to countries entering the European Union. It is limited to financing agriculture and rural development projects to help these countries, including Romania, be on a solid competitive footing as they join the EU. According to the Romanian Information Center in Brussels, a total of 150 million euros/year is available through the program at up to 2 million euros per project. The funds are provided as grants. The funding will end when Romania enters the EU next January.

Australian Mushroom Promotion

According to *Hospitality*, May 1, Peter Evans, chef for the Hugo Group of restaurants in Sydney is taking the lead in an effort by the Australian mushroom industry to target the food service market. Evans is not only promoting *Agaricus*, but also pine mushrooms, shiitake, shemiji and oyster mushrooms. He also says he is closely watching the development of the morel industry in Tasmania. Per capita mushroom consumption in Australia is about double that in the U.S.

China Dumping in Australia

According to *The Australian*, May 17, Australian Customs is now involved in Windsor Farm's complaint that China has been dumping canned mushrooms on the Australian market. The agency found that the firm's claims were justified and ordered a 20% duty, but now has been directed to re-investigate certain aspects of the case. The World Trade Organization reports that over the last 6 months, 33 countries have started dumping cases against China. China has been accused of dumping more than any other country for the last 11 years.

Stamets Featured

EMagazine (.com) published an online commentary about Paul Stamets on May 12. The article highlights Stamets work with mushrooms as natural pesticides, his ideas on the similarities of various networks, embedding seeds in cardboard boxes to encourage recycling, and his book *Mycelium Running*.

Jaleo Mushroom Event

According to *The Washington Times*, the three Jaleo restaurants in the Washington, DC. area created a mushroom festival in May. Besides featuring mushroom specials each day, the restaurants brought in Chef Llorenç Petras of Barcelona, Spain with his recipes. Petras spoke to visitors to the Penn Quarter Farmfresh Market about cooking with mushrooms. The event ended on May 18 with a wine dinner that paired Spanish mushroom dishes with Spanish wines. It would not be difficult to duplicate this kind of event in your community!

Crime on the Farm

On May 2, United States Attorney Patrick L. Meehan announced the filing of an Information charging defendants Gil Castaneda-Cortez and Eliseo Betancourt with one count of aiding and abetting the possession with intent to distribute 100 kilograms or more (reported in the newspapers as 1,000 pounds with a street value of \$5 million) of marijuana. The charge arose from a sting operation in which Customs and Border Patrol inspectors and special agents from the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement intercepted a tractor-trailer truck containing packaged bulk marijuana as it crossed the Mexico/U.S. border in Laredo, Texas. Agents drove the truck near Reading, PA, where Betancourt helped unload the marijuana and kept watch over the marijuana while it was stored at a mushroom farm in Tulpehocken Township in a storage facility where defendant Castaneda-Cortez lived.

Mushrooms on Tea Waste

The Chinese economy has been growing at an annual 10% rate over the last three years. According to Gunter Pauli as reported by Xinhua News Agency, May 8, that rate of expansion can be maintained by growing mushrooms on tea waste. Pauli has long promoted use of all wastes with his organization, the Zero Emissions Research and Initiative Foundation (ZERI). His point is that a lot of vegetative material is wasted during the production process. If that waste can be returned to productive use, the economy will benefit without use of more natural resources. Pauli suggested that China incorporate the notion of a recycling economy into its educational system.

Namibia Node of Excellence

According to *All Africa Global Media*, University of Namibia's Unam's Research Center at Henties Bay has been designated as a regional node of excellence for its work with mushrooms. The effort is associated with New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Zero Emissions Research and Initiative Foundation (ZERI). Research at the Center and at the Biology Department at the main campus has focused on evaluating the suitability of locally available substrates (particularly seaweed) for culture of Oyster Mushrooms.

As additional facilities become available, research will be extended to include: identification of indigenous mushroom species for cultivation at the coast and evaluation of different designs of low-cost mushroom houses.

Shiitake Meat Substitute

The *Gazette-Mail* of Charleston, West Virginia, May 7, carried an article about mushrooms as a substitute for meat. The authors reject portabella and point to shiitake as a better option. The article outlines the history of shiitake cultivation and offers cooking suggestions. The otherwise good article ultimately goes off on a tangent about the reason for 'shiitake' having two i's. The suggestion is that this was a marketing move to make the term more delicate to the English language. About two seconds of research would have revealed the relationship of the shii tree (*Castanopsis cuspidata*) to the mushroom that adopted its name. Apparently the authors didn't bother to check, but report they "couldn't find an authoritative answer anywhere."

Omega Mushrooms

The *Bradenton Herald*, Florida, May 14, carried an article about organic farms in central Florida. Among them is Omega Mushrooms. May and C.L. Chang produce certified organic shiitake on their 12 acre farm. They've been in operation since 1995 and ship their product to restaurants and grocery stores on the east coast. The Changs say they "follow a recipe of mixing Chinese tradition, Japanese know-how and American engineering and science." The report says there were 10,000 blocks in the first of several greenhouses at the farm. Omega's website can found at:

www.omegamushrooms.com

Elm Oyster for your Face

Essence Magazine, May 1, highlights three mushroom-based beauty products being promoted by Dr. Andrew Weil for Origins Natural Resources. Weil is the director of the program in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona. The products are "Plantidote Mega-Mushroom Supplement," "Plantidote Mega-Mushroom Face Serum" and "Plantidote Mega-Mushroom Face Cream." Weil reports the face serum contains *Hypsizygyus ulmarius* with *Cordyceps* and reishi mushrooms, ginger, turmeric, holy basil, resveratrol and argan nut oil. More info: www.origins.com and www.drweil.com.

Arctic Mushrooms

The April issue of *Ecology* includes a study of the relationship between mushrooms and nitrogen transfer to plants in the Arctic. The study quantified the well-know process of nitrogen transfer from symbiotic mushrooms to their plant hosts and highlighted the importance of fungi in Arctic regions.

Farmers' Market Notes

- Mushroom Cap will be a new vender at the Kennett Square, Pennsylvania market.
- Bruno Pretto of Fun Guy Mushrooms is selling mushrooms at the Riverdale Farm Farmers' market in Toronto, Canada.
- Dave and Dee Scheer of Dave and Dee's Homegrown Mushrooms drives 91 miles from Franklin, Virginia to the 17th Street Farmers' Market in Richmond every Thursday. Overall they travel 600 to 800 miles per week delivering their oyster mushrooms. They are considering raising their prices to offset rising gasoline prices
- Solano Mushrooms presented their exotic array at the St. Helena and Napa Downtown Farmers' Markets.

Reishi for Allergies

The *Townsend Letter for Doctors and Patients*, May 1, reprinted an article from *The Nutrition Practitioner Journal* entitled "The Use of *Ganoderma lucidum* (Reishi) in the management of histamine-mediated allergic responses." While the article takes a scientific tone, it lacks real substance. Most of the article recounts the history of reishi as a medicinal and outlines some of the past research on the mushroom. The new information amounts to two case studies of hay fever sufferers who reported general abatement of symptoms after starting to take a reishi supplement. A male adult was given six 500 mg tablets per day and a five-year-old male was given two 500 mg tablets per day. The form of the reishi (water extract, dried mycelium, ground fruit etc.) was not revealed. The success of the treatment was based upon interviews of the patients who knew they were taking a reishi supplement. The experiment was uncontrolled. The conclusion provided by the author is accurate: "Ganoderma supplementation may have a role to play in the management of histamine-induced immune responses." From a scientific standpoint, the report offers a potential area for serious study. From a marketing standpoint, the report amounts to a pair of solicited testimonials. If you suffer from hay fever, it wouldn't hurt to try a reishi supplement - it might work for you.

Perchlorate Mystery

The Gilroy (California) *Dispatch* reported on May 4, that water board officials there found that they lack sufficient information to claim that perchlorate contamination in northeast Morgan Hill is caused by Olin Corporation's former road flare manufacturing operation. Likewise they are unable to tie the contamination to the use of chlorine on mushroom farms, treatment of municipal water wells or natural causes.

Immigrant Policy Marches

Marches in support of immigrant workers in the U.S. occurred across the country on Monday, May 1. Many mushroom farms employ hispanic immigrant workers and were affected. According to *Ventura County Star*, the United Farm Workers Union made an arrangement with California Mushroom that allowed their workers to have the day off in exchange for working extra hours over the weekend. According to the *Tallahassee Democrat*, Sylvan's Quincy mushroom farm made a similar arrangement for its workers. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, there was no picking at many Kennett Square mushroom farms. Apparently only 8 of 120 workers at Pietro Industries showed up for work. According to vice president Christopher Alonzo, that firm lost between \$10,000 and \$20,000 as a result.

SPSS Software Helps Monterey

According to a press release from SPSS Inc, the firm is providing Monterey Mushrooms with software that allows them to closely track key business parameters including revenues and margins. Monterey's Senior Programmer/Analyst Andrew Burnham is quoted as saying: "Because of SPSS, we're able to see our data as we've never seen it before. We're able to view it from different angles and perspectives. That allows us to better analyze our margin of profitability and highlight exceptions quickly, which, in turn, allows us to make better business decisions."

Worker Verification

The Reading (Pennsylvania) *Eagle* reported on May 7 that Mark Gaspari of Gino Gaspari and Sons mushrooms found out one of his

employees was an illegal immigrant when the employee advised a judge of that fact when he was making arrangements to pay a fine through a payment plan. Typically these workers are not proud of being illegal, but very proud of being working. Thus, this worker was happy to provide the judge with evidence that he was working. The article noted that, after reviewing his personnel file, Gaspari concluded the man would have to be fired. Employers, like Christopher DeGrucci, general manager of Monterey's Temple farm, carefully check potential employee's credentials, but aren't required to verify social security numbers. Other growers are suspected of supplying false Social Security numbers to illegal workers.

According to the Dickinson School of Law at Pennsylvania State University, an employer subject to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 must do six things:

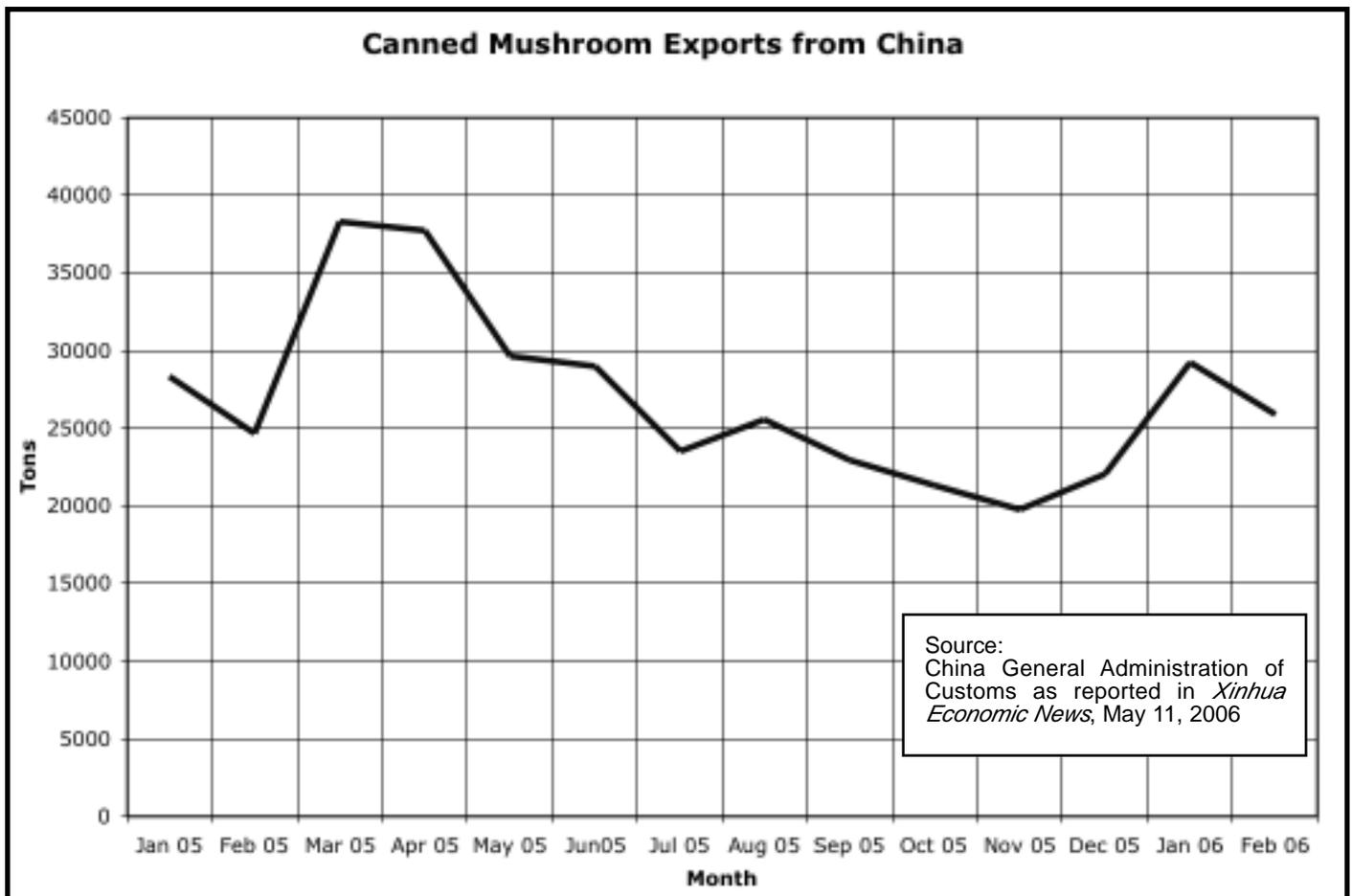
1. Obtain a copy of the individual's Social Security number, if the individual has been issued a Social Security Number, or an authorization number established by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.
2. Have employees complete part 1 of the employment eligibility verification form, known as form I-9.
3. Check documents, submitted by the employee, that establish the employee's identity and eligibility to work in the United States. Employees state their citizenship status in these documents. Identification Accepted: United States Passport, Resident Alien Card, or other documentation authorized by the Attorney General.
4. Complete the employer's portion of form I-9.
5. Retain the completed form for at least 3 years or 1 year more than the employee's period of employment, whichever is longer.
6. Present the filed form I-9 to an officer of the Department of

Labor or the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS, now Citizenship and Immigration Services Bureau) who is making an inspection.

If you properly complete a Form I-9 and it is later discovered that your employee is not actually authorized to work, you cannot be charged with a verification violation; however, you cannot knowingly continue to employ this individual. That's why Gaspari was forced to fire the employee mentioned above. If you do the same, you will have a good faith defense against the imposition of employer sanctions penalties for knowingly hiring an unauthorized alien unless the government can prove you had actual knowledge of the unauthorized status of the employee. Thus, if you provide an employee with a Social Security number, you can get in big trouble. The penalty for document fraud is a civil penalty of \$275 to \$2200 for each fraudulent document for the first offense and \$2200 to \$5500 for subsequent offenses (8 CFR 270.3).

You must examine the documents provided by your potential employee and, if they reasonably appear on their face to be genuine and to relate to the person presenting them, you must accept them. To do otherwise could be an unfair immigration-related employment practice. If a document does not reasonably appear on its face to be genuine and to relate to the person presenting it, you must not accept it.

Naturally, we can't provide legal advice, but perhaps this article will induce you to get further information and the required forms at the website of the Homeland Security Department's Citizenship and Immigration Services Bureau (formerly Immigration and Naturalization Service) at www.uscis.gov. You may wish to contact your attorney for more advice.





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A Message For Shiitake Growers

Accurate, up-to-date, detailed information about markets is crucial for the success of any business. Market research and evaluation can be challenging and difficult to accomplish. The shiitake mushroom market is a specialized niche market and not much information is available for the market as a whole.

As part of its ongoing niche market research focus, the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry (UMCA)* is launching a nationwide survey including all individuals and businesses that are active participants in the shiitake mushroom market within the United States. Once completed, we will send you the results of our research. The information in the report will help you better identify market opportunities and problems, generate, refine and evaluate your marketing actions, and monitor your marketing performance.

In order to do that, we need your participation (not your money), just 25-30 minutes of your time. In turn, after the completion of the study, we'll provide you not only with a snapshot of the market but also with a moving picture that describes the trends in the market over the next five years.

In a couple of weeks, if you are a shiitake mushroom producer, you should receive a survey in the mail and a market directory form. We ask that you complete the survey and return it together with the market directory form in the enclosed envelope. If you are a shiitake mushroom producer and have not received a survey, please contact us at the addresses listed below and we'll mail one to you.

Thank you very much for your participation. We are looking forward to receiving your completed surveys and we wish you good luck in your business. If you like, check us out on the web (see top of page) to view other market studies and directories we have recently completed on the Chinese chestnut and eastern red cedar.

Sincerely,

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Mushroom Market Research Project Team

Ina Mihaela Cernusca, MBA
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Mushroom Market Research Project Team

*UMCA works with landowners to implement agroforestry, land use practices that combine trees, crops and/or animals for both production and conservation benefits. For a select group of products of potential value in agroforestry enterprises, UMCA conducts research to identify and describe the product value chain. UMCA hopes to link individuals involved in the specialty mushroom value chain, from producers through processing to retail sales. Through detailed market research and by organizing events that increase consumer awareness towards shiitake mushrooms, UMCA's goal is to broaden market opportunities for all individuals and businesses in the shiitake mushroom market.

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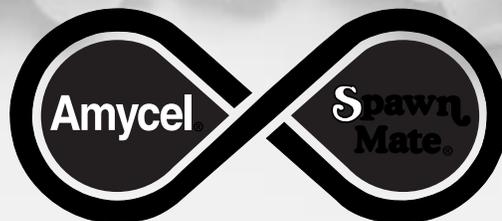
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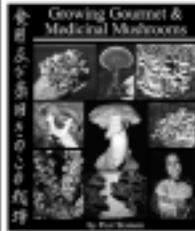
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