

Consumer News & Views

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Consumer Confidence Dips in March. Rising gas prices and weeks of a snow and harsh weather caused the consumer confidence level in March to decline, according to the Surveys Of Consumers, March report from the University of Michigan.

Consumer optimism hit a 10-year peak in the first quarter of 2015, according to the report, but a March 2015 score of 93 on the consumer sentiment index was still a dip from February's 95.4 index score.



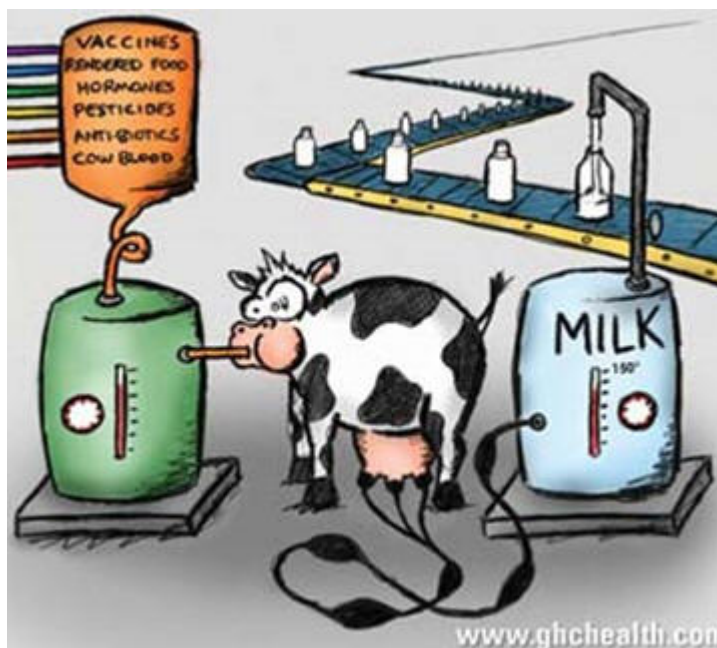
The decline also was attributed to lower income households, a rising increase in gas prices and a very harsh winter that limited consumer spending and confidence.

Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization, stated, "We have seen strong growth in jobs and consumer spending in the sunshine states, but the harsh winter across the Midwest and east coast hurt the economy as well as consumer spending."

Hinton added, "We expect this dip to be countered in April as spring arrives and better weather creates more jobs and better economic opportunities for consumers."

Should Consumers be Concerned about Hormones in Food? A salmon that grows to market size twice as fast as normal. Dairy cows that produce 15% more milk. Beef cows that grow 20% faster... According to an article in Health magazine, consumers should be concerned about hormones in our food. Here's why.

What do these hyper-productive animals have in common? Thanks to injections and implants (in the case of cows) or genetic engineering (in the case of salmon), they contain artificially high levels of sex or growth hormones.



Are these hormones dangerous to the humans who eat the food or drink the milk? The food industry says no—and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) agrees, at least when it comes to cows.

The FDA, which regulates the use of hormones in livestock, hasn't yet decided whether it will approve the sale of a genetically engineered salmon patented by the biotech company AquaBounty. If the salmon—which is wired to produce growth hormone year-round, instead of just in the spring and summer—gets an OK from the agency, it will be the first genetically engineered animal to wind up on your dinner plate. (Genetically engineered fruits and vegetables have been around for years.)

The FDA's stamp of approval isn't likely to reassure those who worry that excess hormones in the food supply are contributing to cancer, early puberty in girls, and other health problems in humans. For years, consumer advocates and public health experts have fought to limit the use of hormones in cows, and some support a ban on the practice similar to the one in place in Europe, where food regulations are generally more stringent than in the U.S.

But it's not clear if such hormones truly are bad for our health. Surprisingly little research has been done on the health effects of these hormones in humans, in part because it's difficult to separate the effects of added hormones from the mixture of natural hormones, proteins, and other components found in milk and meat. Buying organic may reassure shoppers, but there's little proof these products are indeed safer.

ACC Annual Business Meeting Scheduled for Friday, June 12, in San Diego. The American Consumer Council (ACC) has announced its 2015 annual business meeting will be held at the Rancho Bernardo Inn located in San Diego on Friday, June 12, at 10:00 am. Members are welcome to attend. For details, please contact ACC at 1-760-787-0414.

ACC's *Friend of the Consumer* Award Recognizes Outstanding Businesses in 2015.

Is your business consumer-friendly? Does your business deserve greater recognition for its service to consumers? If so, you should apply for the American Consumer Council's Friend of the Consumer Award.

Throughout the year, ACC presents its "Friend of the Consumer" Awards. This prestigious award recognizes manufacturers, retailers, and other businesses that produce or sell products in the United States that meet or exceed federally-mandated standards and are touted by consumers as "consumer friendly."

Each year, ACC awards numerous "Friend of the Consumer" Awards to deserving companies and organizations because they have "demonstrated a commitment to American consumers by providing a specific product or service that fosters consumer confidence and market acceptance."



To apply for the "Friend of the Consumer" award, complete the online application and return it to ACC with the application fee. Applicants will be notified within 5 days of receipt of their application. Thereafter, a panel of independent judges will review your application and make a formal recommendation within 20 days of receipt of your award application.

For more information, visit: <http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/awards.asp>

Green CSM Certification Accepting Applications for 2015 Summer Cycle:

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for the **Green CSM Certification**. Applications for the 2015 Summer cycle are now being accepted through August 31, 2015.

It's a proven fact that consumers want to do business with companies that are eco-friendly and practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The process is straight-forward and all applicants are recognized by ACC and the Green USA Institute.

All applicants complete the criteria and submit their responses to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the **Green CSM Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>

