

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

INCLUDING
CONSUMER
CHECKOUT

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ANGEL DUST IN
CATTLEFEED

GOOD NEIGHBOURS
MAKE GOOD FOOD?

CLINGFILM IN CRISIS

BSE OFFAL GETS
EXPORTED

SALARIES UP, WAGES
DOWN

GATT, CAP AND THE
SMALL FARM

PESTICIDES FACE
THE FUTURE

FISH FARMING
TESTED

UNCLE BOB'S
AGONY COLUMN

YOUR LETTERS

BOOK REVIEWS

WHAT THE
JOURNALS SAY



Companies in the classroom

SELLING FOOD MESSAGES IN SCHOOLS

THE FOOD COMMISSION

The Food Commission is your consumer watchdog on food. We are independent of the food industry and government and rely on subscriptions, donations and grants for our funding. We aim to provide independently researched information on the food we eat to ensure good quality food for all.

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Selling to schoolkids



Whichever way they turn, children are bombarded with commercial messages. In previous reports we have highlighted junk food advertising on children's television. Now we turn the spotlight on companies in the classroom.

Our special Consumer Checkout report found food companies offering teaching materials, publicity brochures and posters, videos, computer programmes and sponsorship of school events — with virtually every example we inspected promoting commercial interests.

The Food Commission is one of several bodies calling for, at the very least, an accreditation scheme to ensure material is correct, unbiased and non-promotional.

After school, when children are watching *Neighbours* or *Home and Away*, what messages might they absorb? Our report on food in Australian soaps found good news and bad. Branded products do feature on the screen, especially world wide brands Fosters and Coca-Cola. But healthy salads and lean meat dishes are there, along with bowls of fruit. There's only one unanswered question: Do they really eat them?

Food goes to war

No-one wants a war, whether in the Gulf or a trade war between the USA and the EC. The break in the GATT negotiations on agriculture in December left bitter recriminations between the giant trading blocs of the USA and the EC.

But whilst they struggle to set world agriculture onto a more favourable footing for one or the other, small farmers around the world seriously question whether such negotiations can solve their problems. As the Swahili proverb has it... when the elephants fight the grass gets crushed, when the elephants make love the grass gets crushed.

On pages 20 and 21 we look at the future for farming. Whether you farm in Powys, Paxos or the Punjab, if you don't have access to capital to intensify your farming methods — with all the chemicals and drugs you can afford — your days may be numbered.

'Free trade' and 'world market prices' means unhindered competition between farmers large and small, North and South, with no consideration for the environmental and social costs. For smallholders it makes little difference whether the GATT talks succeed or fail because, unless priorities are

changed in favour of sustainable, less intensive farming methods, it will be the biggest farms and corporate agribusiness that will be the victors of the day.

Clinging on

Five months before the latest government report on clingfilm, The Food Commission warned of problems with chemicals in plastic food packaging migrating into foods.

The Food Commission welcomes MAFF's acknowledgement of the problem but we question why it took so long for the latest warnings to be issued when three years ago MAFF's own scientific advisors were warning that toxicological data were sparse and inadequate to ensure consumer protection.

Clingfilm manufacturers have not taken government advice lying down. The PVC clingfilm lobby are well-known to be quick at threatening legal action, although this time it is MAFF who are on the receiving end. Why, clingfilm manufacturers ask, should restrictions be placed on their products when there is no evidence of risk to human health?

But that is exactly the problem. The plastics industry has failed to submit full toxicity tests not only on many plasticisers but also on other substances used in food packaging. As the government has no powers to insist, it has acted with welcome prudence by issuing warnings until there is evidence of safety, rather than following industry's preferred route of doing little until there is evidence of a hazard.

We support moves which cut contamination and keep any potential risk to human health to an absolute minimum. Surely no-one would disagree that levels of non-nutritive contaminants in food should be kept to a minimum, particularly if their safety is unknown?

Appeal thanks

A big thank you to all who have so far contributed to The Food Commission appeal. Our fundraising efforts will continue throughout the year but it isn't just the money — delighted as we are — it is the messages and goodwill that came with it. You have told us, again and again, that you want to see us survive and thrive. And with your continued help and support, we will.

Sue Dibb and Tim Lobstien

Fish farming under attack

Residues of antibiotics and potentially harmful chemicals have been found in farmed Scottish salmon on sale in supermarkets.

All but one of the five samples of salmon tested by *The Independent on Sunday* in October were found to contain chemical residues. In the worst case a fresh salmon on sale in Sainsbury's contained dichlorvos, a highly toxic nerve agent used to kill sealice in fish farms; canthaxanthin, a dye which has been banned from direct use in food and the antibiotic oxytetracycline at levels far above the permitted maximum.

These results underline calls by The Food Commission for a ban on the use of dichlorvos and canthaxanthin in fish farms following publication of a report in *The Food Magazine* (Issue 11, October 1990).

The fish farming industry claims that dichlorvos, the active ingredient of Aquaguard, is essential to control sealice which proliferate in the crowded conditions of fish farms. They claim its

correct use should not lead to contamination of the fish. Yet dichlorvos is banned in the USA, and in Norway, where the salmon farming industry is 15 times the size of UK operations, a 14-day withdrawal period from dichlorvos is stipulated, compared with only four days in the UK.

MAFF claims that their residue tests have never identified dichlorvos although they did confirm the *Independent on Sunday's* test results. As levels of monitoring are low, with only 92 samples being taken in two years, there are fears that this does not represent a true picture of this rapidly growing industry. Dichlorvos is known to be toxic to other forms of marine life such as lobsters, crabs and mussels. Aquaguard was only recently granted a temporary product licence, despite being used for over ten years without a licence approving its safety. Professor Richard Lacey, a member of the Veterinary Products Committee which granted Aquaguard its temporary licence, claims



that members were asked not only to consider the safety of the product but also the economic effects any ban would have on the fish farming industry.

Antibiotics such as oxytetracycline are also routinely included as an ingredient in fish feed to prevent the infections which are rife in the crowded conditions of the fish farms. Another feed ingredient is the dye, canthaxanthin, which has been banned for direct use in food, as it is known to cause deposits in the eye. The government's Food Advisory Committee has called for its ban in animal feeds, where it is used to colour farmed fish

and egg yolks, but Agriculture Minister John Gummer has refused to act to outlaw its use in the UK.

The Food Commission is calling for labelling to identify farmed fish and the various substances used in fish feed; it also wants to see a tightening of monitoring and regulations controlling the industry.

UK blocks EC fish conservation move

The UK Government has blocked a proposal to conserve the EC's dwindling white fish stocks. A European Commission plan, aimed at reducing the number of small fish caught, includes measures to increase the mesh size of fishing nets from 90mm to 120mm. The proposal follows increasing concern about overfishing in EC waters which culminated last year in further drastic reductions to cod and haddock catch quotas. UK agriculture ministers have opposed the move saying fishermen's livelihoods will be put at risk. Neither do they favour another controversial scheme which would pay fishermen not to fish.

PHOTO: LINDA FREEMAN

Food companies reject irradiation

The Government has given the final go-ahead to food irradiation by laying before parliament secondary legislation under the Food Safety Act on 11 December. This covers the licensing of irradiation plants and the labelling of irradiated food and effectively permits the use of irradiation on a wide range of foods including poultry, fresh fruit and vegetables, fish, shellfish, cereals, herbs and spices. But who is going to use it?

The results of a major survey of the UK food industry including retailers, caterers and manufacturers by the Food Irradiation Campaign in December showed that the overwhelming majority of companies will not be irradiating food or handling it. This included some of the major food groups speaking for all of their associated companies.

Over 200 companies were surveyed and of the 79 that replied only two retailers, Iceland Frozen Foods and Normans Super warehouses said that

they will sell irradiated food if customers request it. Sainsbury's appear to maintain their 1989 position as the only major supermarket saying they were prepared to stock irradiated produce.

Of the forty-six manufacturers who answered the survey, only Mattessons Wall's said they would use irradiated food in their products but again only if they thought there was demand by customers for such food. Only a few remained undecided.

The main reason for food companies not intending to handle irradiated food was consumer opposition. They were also concerned about the lack of a test to determine if food is irradiated, which makes policing of the process impossible.

Dr Tim Lang, for the Food Irradiation Campaign said: 'The good news is that the UK food industry is giving food irradiation a vote of no confidence. But the government's decision to permit irradiation in the UK will undermine and

further damage confidence in the food industry.'

Consumer opinion has greatly influenced the food industry's intentions toward the use of food irradiation. The latest market analysis report from Mintel on food safety warns companies to avoid irradiation as it will undermine consumer confidence in processors and manufacturers.

Shoppers wanting to shop with confidence by avoiding the stores and products which may sell or use irradiated food can do so by referring to the Food Irradiation Campaign's survey results. This includes a positive list of companies which have said they will not sell or use irradiated food.

The full report, *Attitudes to Irradiation: A UK Food Survey* costs £10.00 (inc p&p) and is available from the Food Irradiation Campaign, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR. A copy of the positive list of companies only is available for £2.00.

Polystyrene to go

McDonald's in the USA are to replace foamed polystyrene cartons with cardboard following environmental criticism. The dramatic announcement overturns earlier plans to recycle their plastic cartons.

Styrene has been identified as one of two hundred hazardous substances which the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry determine pose the most significant potential threat to human health.

McDonald's in the UK told *The Food Magazine* that they are also planning to drop polystyrene later this year.

McDonald's announcement will come as a further blow to foamed polystyrene manufacturers. Concern for the ozone layer led to pressure for CFC's to be replaced in recent years by less damaging blowing agents.

Clingfilm to carry warnings

It's official — clingfilm is not suitable for wrapping fatty foods or for use in contact with food in a microwave oven. This government advice follows the publication of their report on the migration of chemicals used in plastic wraps. The report is critical of the plastics industry for its failure to carry out full safety tests. MAFF endorses its scientific advisors' recommendations that full toxicological studies on chemicals used in food packaging should be carried out.

Plasticisers: Continuing Surveillance published by MAFF in November, contains strong words from the government's Food Advisory Committee and The Committee on Toxicity (COT); bodies not normally given to tough talking. They expressed particular concern about the plasticiser ATBC used in VDC co-polymer films. These are often sold as safe for microwave oven use, and are widely used to by retailers to wrap cheese, poultry and meat products. Intake of ATBC has increased 30-fold since 1987 when manufacturers were asked to reduce the use of another plasticiser, DEHA, after COT declared that its intake levels were too high. Both committees say they find it 'unacceptable' that intakes of ATBC and polymeric

plasticisers have reached appreciably higher levels without supporting toxicological data being provided.

Whilst welcoming this latest report, The Food Commission points out that the government were aware of the lack of safety data three years ago. COT said at that time that safety data on currently used plasticisers was incomplete and inadequate. On ATBC it warned: 'Given the lack of toxicological data, there is no evidence from which to conclude that films containing ATBC are likely to be safer for microwave oven use.'

The Food Commission's own report on plastic food wrapping (*The Food Magazine* Issue 10, July 1990) was critical of safety controls, and found inadequate labelling of products. The Commission also questions why prior safety approval is given for food additives but not for food packaging materials.

The Risks

Risks to human health from any substance migrating into food is dependent upon the levels of migration, the toxicity of that particular substance and overall levels of intake. Where all these factors are known, risks can be assessed and intake levels kept within 'safe' limits.

COT reports that where factors are currently known, safety margins are adequate to assure safety.

Where the toxicity of a substance has not been fully assessed, it is impossible to give such reassurance on safety. The Committee on Toxicity identified a number of plasticisers for which this is the case including ATBC, polymeric

plasticisers, DEHA and ESBO — all used in a variety of films.

To minimise all possible risks COT strongly recommended that continued efforts be made by manufacturers to reduce levels of migration as far as possible. It wants advice to be given to all users of clingfilms to encourage practices which reduce plasticiser intakes.

Clingfilm advice

New advice covers all plastic food wrapping films which have a 'cling' property, whatever their composition and whether used in homes, shops or by caterers. Manufacturers have been asked to label their products clearly in accordance with the new advice.

■ Don't wrap fatty foods in plastic films as migration of plasticisers is higher into fattier foods, particularly when foods have a large surface area in contact with the film. Cheese is particularly susceptible but some cooked and raw meats, pâté, avocado, cakes, confectionery and some sandwich fillings, particularly mayonnaise and butter, can also be relatively high in fat. If in any doubt use an alternative

wrapping such as greaseproof paper or foil, or store food in a covered container.

■ Do not use film in direct contact with food in a microwave oven. For safer cooking in a microwave put the food in a bowl and cover the top with film.

■ Never use film in a conventional oven.

Supermarkets have also been issued with this advice but, says the Retail Consortium, there is presently no affordable alternative to the cling films used to wrap meats, poultry and some cheeses.

The Food Commission will continue to monitor the situation and will bring you updates in future issues of *The Food Magazine*.

Packaging expert speaks out

Dr Leo Katan is a member of MAFF's Working Party on Chemical Contaminants from Food Contact Materials. Here, in a personal view he argues that the government could do more to help the consumer.

The village butcher has a sign up saying 'No cling film used here'. Supermarkets have cleared their shelves of cling film, and the media have given it the full shock-horror treatment. Why? Because a few weeks ago MAFF's Food Surveillance Report No 30 — *Plasticisers: Continuing Surveillance* was published.

This highly technical and rather dry report came as a shock to both producers

and users of cling film. Lurking in its fifty-three pages are some peremptory statements by the government's Committee on Toxicity (COT). They 'require to see data ...' on toxicity aspects of ATBC 'within 2 years ...', 'recommend that the reasons for the variations' in levels of the additives DEHA and ESBO in baby foods be investigated (*their italics*, not mine).

Extreme intakes of the most important plasticiser, DEHA, have been reduced from 16 to 8.2mg per day per person, and the Committee believe this 'unlikely to present a hazard to health'. However, they still 'believe it prudent, as with any contaminant in food, that intakes be reduced further ... but ... not by substituting it with compound(s) of

unknown toxicity'.

With all this conflicting opinion, ranging from sound scientific study and useful practical advice to misinformation and biased views of vested interests, what is the consumer to think? Especially as much of the practical advice, albeit sound, is too complicated for everyday use.

The problem largely arises from the current transition period from regulations based on British Common Law to European Community (EC) Statute Law. British Common Law puts the responsibility for food packaging safety on to suppliers who can make their own decisions — assisted, of course, by advice and information from all available sources, including industry and government.

Apart from a few detailed exceptions, the supplier remains responsible. Under

EC law the emphasis will change — specifications for food packaging materials, and test methods for control, will be laid down by statute. The supplier will be legally responsible for conforming with the specifications, but he will not decide what they are.

In the meantime, as EC legislation comes into force bit by bit, the present muddle seems likely to continue. In my view, it would be best for the government to introduce temporary regulations to cover the hiatus. These should utilise proposed and draft EC legislation, as well as the advice of its own expert committees and scientists. This would save industry money in the long run; would reduce hassle for the government soon; and would help protect the consumer today.

■ Dr Leo Katan is an independent food packaging consultant.

Banned offal being exported

Evidence has emerged that banned cattle offal, possibly infected with mad cow disease (BSE), is being exported to countries such as Thailand.

Large amounts of offal are accumulating from the four million cattle slaughtered each year in Britain, following the government's restrictions on the use of cattle offal for either human consumption or animal feed. Banned offal can be exported to the EC with a ministry license but it is not ministry policy to issue such licenses at present. Exportation to other countries is permitted without any ministerial control.

According to Kevin Watkins, Development Officer at the Catholic Institute for International Relations, the regulations banning animal protein in cattle and pig feed in the UK have closed

what were important markets for offal rendering companies. 'As non-marketable surpluses mount there will be a temptation to export them overseas. Third World markets are obvious targets.'

Several consignments of rendered offal were already on their way to such countries when regulations were issued in the UK on 25 September 1990 banning cattle offal from all animal feeds. According to food minister David Maclean, 'the company has recalled those consignments and stopped any further shipments.'

The minister claimed there was 'no evidence' that potential BSE infected offal was being exported, yet the ministry makes no attempt to monitor these exports. Asked in Parliament how often animal protein feed had been shipped

abroad during 1990, the ministry admitted it had no information available.

Calling for regulations which would prevent the export to other countries of material not permitted to be used in the UK, Dr Watkins said that voluntary actions by companies 'did not appear an appropriate basis on which to meet our international obligations. If a product is banned from sale in Britain to protect the health of British consumers, its export to other markets should also be banned.'

Unfit meat

Trade in meat which is unfit for human consumption has grown to a level which is causing concern to the environmental health profession.

Animals in such poor condition that they would not pass the normal meat inspection process are sold to 'dealers' who dress the animal for sale as fit meat. Unmarked boxes of jointed meat are sold to the bulk meat trade as fit meat and fraudulent inspection stamps are being used.

In a trial at Taunton Crown Court, father and son team Norman and Michael Bramall of Barnsley pleaded guilty to passing off unfit meat. Inspectors had checked 85 quarters and found 41 to be unfit and a further 13 to need heavy trimming.

All had been marked with what appeared to be genuine meat inspection stamps, though the meat had obvious signs of bruising, septic arthritis, peritonitis, pleurisy, abscesses, faecal contamination and fly blow (fly eggs and maggots).

Calling for a tightening up of regulations, Nick Hibbert of the Institution of Environmental Health Officers declared 'the potential risks to health are staggering. The most common way in which unfit meat enters the food chain is by integration with boxed, boneless meat for institutional use, including schools and hospitals. Trading in unfit meat is a major criminal operation and will need co-ordinated efforts to stamp this out.'

Slaughterhouse proposals accepted

Cattle head meat should only be removed from intact skulls, not those which have been split to allow the removal of the brain, the government has promised in its reply to the Common's Select Committee report on BSE.

Advice to slaughterhouses not to open the skull in a place where there is any risk of contact with meat destined for human consumption will be legally enforced. These proposals come four months after the Select Committee called for them, and follow evidence from the Ministry's scientific advisor, Dr Tyrrell, that abattoir practices included, in some cases, the use of handsaws to split the skull open (potentially spraying infective brain tissue on surrounding meat) and even the use of hoses put into the stun holes to force the brain out.

Meanwhile the practice of allowing the brains and other offal from calves

under six months old to be used for human food is to continue. Calls for a ban on breeding from the offspring of BSE-infected cattle have also been rejected.

No proposals have been made by the Ministry for random testing of cattle heads in abattoirs to check how widespread the disease has become, despite support for such testing from consumer groups, environmental health officers and the National Farmers Union.

Meanwhile the epidemic of BSE continues, with 12,600 suspected cases slaughtered in the year to September last. MAFF expects the figures to double in 1991. Latest figures suggest cattle herds in the West Country are suffering most, with over a third of BSE cases coming from the five counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire.



Uncertain future for BST

Plans for the licensing of BST, the controversial milk-boosting hormone received a further setback at the end of November when the EC's veterinary medicines committee (CVMP) deferred any decision on the genetically engineered drug. In view of objections raised by member states, the committee wished to investigate concerns about the hormone's effect in increasing the udder disease, mastitis, and painful swellings around injection sites in treated cows.

In September the UK's Veterinary

Angel Dust added to cattle feed

The animal drug Clenbuterol, known amongst farmers as Angel Dust, is being illegally fed to cattle.

The product is used by vets to treat lung diseases in cattle and horses, but has also been used by farmers for its effects on animal metabolism. It can help turn fatty meat into lean and so raises the value of the carcass. Officials at the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland (DANI) are concerned that residues in meat may pose a health problem and have traced the drug back to several farms in the province. There are rumours that three farmers in the Irish Republic have died through direct contact with the drug.

The Irish government acted in July to restrict Clenbuterol's use to horse medicine and followed this up in November with an announcement that drastic measures would be taken against farmers found to be using the substance. New measures include the prohibition of any medicines not authorised by the European Commission and powers for authorised officers to inspect farm premises, test animals' urine and close farms completely. Guilty farmers may be sent to prison for up to two years.

But in Northern Ireland Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, Sam Paul, said 'If we can get our hands on Clenbuterol in a farmer's possession we will take action. One problem is that if a withdrawal period is observed then the substance will quickly clear from the animal's body.'

'DANI officials have traced Clenbuterol to some farms in Northern Ireland and have visited the farmers in question to ask about its use. Those farmers have been co-operative.'

Clenbuterol is a bronchodilator used in veterinary medicine and similar to Salbutamol, used to treat asthma in humans. Added to animal feed at ten times the usual dose over an extended period, Clenbuterol reduces body fat and encourages muscle growth and weight gain.

According to a report in *The Lancet* (24.11.90) 135 cases of food poisoning in Spain during March-July 1990 were traced to the consumption of cattle liver.

Clenbuterol had been administered to the cattle in question.

Although the symptoms were not severe, drug residues are potentially fatal if consumed in sufficient quantity by those already suffering cardiovascular disease.

Anabolic hormones

Although banned in animal feed since 1986, the illegal use of anabolic steroids to promote rapid growth continues. In a crackdown in Northern Ireland 102 suspect carcasses were examined between May and October, from ten meat plants throughout the province. Thirty eight had to be totally condemned as unfit due to hormone residues.

Lead contamination: return to sender?

Butter and milk produced from cows which had eaten lead-contaminated feed from Holland have been exported as butter-oil and milk powder — back to Holland (*Agscene* 9.90).

The butter oil is destined to be used in food manufacturing, while the milk powder is to be added to animal feed. The resulting food products and animal feed compounds may well then be re-imported into the UK!

Over a thousand British farmers will be compensated a total of £5m by the suppliers of the contaminated feed. Two of the suppliers have already been acquitted on the charge of criminal negligence by a Dutch court.

Botulism-infected cattle feed

Three dairy farms which shared a single source of animal feed have recorded outbreaks of botulism (*Veterinary Record* 12.5.90). The cattle had been grazing in a field 'dressed' with poultry litter from a nearby broiler chicken farm, in some cases stored in a manure heap over the winter. Decomposing chicken carcasses were visible amongst the litter.

Yet more cows had to be slaughtered after eating silage made from grass which had been dressed with chicken litter.

Pesticide poisons pigs

Seven hundred pigs had to be slaughtered from 106 farms mainly in the Yorkshire area (*Agscene* 9.90). The animals, with symptoms of lameness in their hind legs, had eaten a feed compound that included a consignment of raw material from France contaminated with Isofeophos, a pesticide not licensed in the UK.

Excess vitamin A

Doctors were caught unawares when the Department of Health issued a press release advising pregnant women against eating cattle liver, as the cattle may have been fed excessive amounts of vitamin A and this could, it was feared, increase the risk of foetal abnormalities.

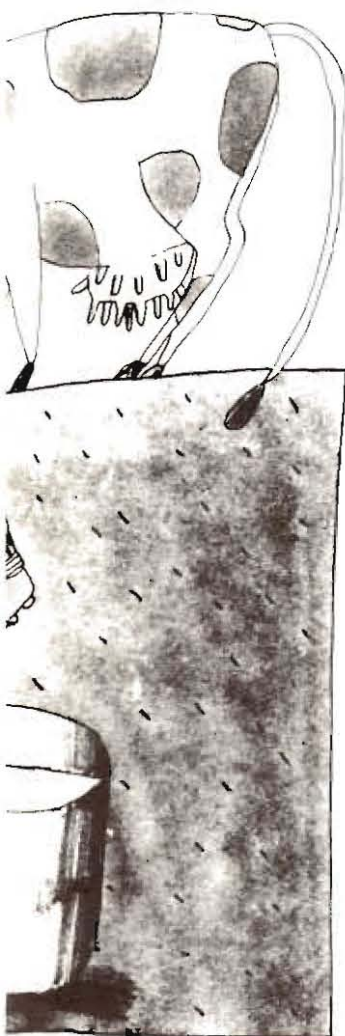
The Department's warning followed a report from MAFF indicating that some liver products (such as pâté or liver sausage) may show excessive levels, and pure liver could contain up to 12 times the recommended daily intake in a single 100 gram portion.

MAFF to review regs

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced in November that an inquiry into animal feedstuffs would be set up. With current concerns over vitamin A and Angel Dust and the Commons Agriculture Select Committee's criticism of ministry inaction on consumer safety, the ministry has now promised that it will, at an unnamed date, appoint a committee of experts to consider the need for rules to safeguard the public from further incidents.

Court upholds hormone ban

The European Court of Justice has upheld the EC's ban on the use of several hormones. In November it rejected an appeal by a group of pharmaceutical companies against the restrictions. It ruled that the Council was within its rights to defend consumer interests and need not be guided solely by the available scientific evidence.



Products Committee refused to licence BST on animal welfare grounds — although the companies are appealing. Meanwhile in Germany the parliament has adopted a Bill prohibiting the sale or application of BST. In the USA the FDA are reported to be considering fresh information on the drug's safety which make it unlikely that the drug will be licensed in the USA for some time.

With the EC decision crucial to the future of BST in Europe, internal battles are taking place behind the scenes. Whilst the agriculture directorate (DGV) is submitting proposals to extend the moratorium on BST, DGIII, responsible for the harmonisation of the internal market is pressing ahead with the approval procedure.

More children are living in poverty

Rising numbers of children in low-income families are causing concern to some of Britain's major charities.

Barnardo's, the 120-year old orphan's charity, not normally seen as a critic of government policies, has spoken out against the impact of the 1988 Social Security Act and its effects on the 20,000 children, young people and families they work with in their community projects.

Barnardo's interviewed 20 families in depth and their experiences were felt to be 'typical of the experiences of other families using the charity's services'. The survey concluded that 'most families found making ends meet a constant struggle despite their careful budgeting.'

These 20 families actually live in poverty every day of their lives. For them poverty is not a question of theory or debate, but a practical reality. Take Joan, who collects her £56.58 benefit on a Thursday:

'Some days, especially on a Wednesday, I have to decide whether to go without sugar and get a loaf, or do without a loaf and get 2 pounds of sugar... I always get the bread. I think the neighbours will lend me a bit of sugar. You feel so small.'

Using frequent quotes from the families themselves the report from Barnardo's describes the difficulties facing people on low incomes. In conclusion Barnardo's considers the 1988 Act to have failed: 'The 1988 changes did nothing to improve the condition of these families and for them did not achieve the stated objectives. The families found themselves no better off in a new system which was neither simpler to understand nor easier to apply to.'

Barnardo's calls for greater accessibility to welfare benefits; abolition of the 'ability to repay' criteria for refusing a social fund loan; the maintenance of child benefit in real terms; and for all agencies involved in low-income families

to listen more to people in poverty themselves.

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has published figures showing trends in the numbers of children in poverty over the period 1979-1987 (the latest year for which figures are available).

Taking Supplementary Benefit (SB) levels as the criterion for poverty, over ten million people in Britain were living at or below SB levels in 1987, compared with six million in 1979. The numbers of children in families at or below these income levels had risen to 2.5 million in 1987 (over 20 per cent of all children) from 1.2 million in 1979 (less than ten per

cent of all children).

The CPAG report, *Poverty — The Facts*, found that the poorest ten per cent of people experienced no real rise in income during the period 1979-87 while average income grew by 23 per cent in real terms. Over the decade 1975-85 poverty increased more rapidly in the United Kingdom than in any other country in the European Community.

The latest Fact Pack from the National Children's Home also looks at poverty and ill health. The charity intends to look more closely at issues such as nutrition and diet in their next report, due in late spring.

By then the year in which the UK ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will have passed. Article 27 of the Convention recognises:

'The right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.'

As the Barnardo's report concludes, the Convention 'also recognises that parents have the primary responsibility to provide this standard of living, but that the state has a duty to ensure that parents are able to fulfil this responsibility.'

'We have seen in this report that in the UK, one of the richest countries in the world, there are parents whose poverty is preventing them fulfilling just that responsibility. We have seen too that society is failing to play its part and meet its obligations to its children.'



cent of all children). Of those children in poverty in 1987, over 1.1 million were in single parent families, which represents an incredible 70 per cent of all children in such families.

These figures, taken from official Low Income Families statistics, do not take into account people living in institutions nor homeless people. Homelessness would add well over quarter of a million people to the figures, many of them

■ *Missing the Target*, Barnardo's, November 1990, based on research reports available for £1.50 from The Policy Development Office, Barnardo's, Tanners Lane, Barking, Essex IG6 1QG.

■ *Poverty — The Facts*, Carey Oppenheim, Child Poverty Action Group, 1990, £5.95, from Publications Department, CPAG, 1-5 Bath Street, London EC1V 9PY.

■ *Children in Danger 1990*, NCH Factfile, NCH, 1990, £2.50, from National Children's Home, 85 Highbury Park, London N5 1UD.

News in brief

Saccharin

The Ministry of Agriculture has confirmed that one in six (17%) of two to five year-olds in their own study were consuming more than the World Health Organisation's recommended daily intakes of saccharin. Soft drinks were the main source of saccharin in their diets.

Aspartame

Diet Coca-Cola produced in Trinidad and on sale in the West Indies, containing the artificial sweetener aspartame must carry the warning 'Not recommended for use by children'. Trinidad passed a warning law in 1986 and Mexico insists on the caution: 'Not recommended for pregnant women and children under seven'.

Microwave ovens

Nine out of ten compact microwave ovens tested by The Consumers Association failed to reheat cook-chill foods adequately. People at greater risk of food poisoning such as the elderly, pregnant women or anyone with a reduced resistance to infection are warned not to use a microwave for cook-chill and frozen foods, poultry or leftovers. Manufacturers have agreed new power ratings for microwave ovens but still no standards apply to the ovens ability to heat food evenly.

Campaign winner

Congratulations to Alan Long, this year's Caroline Walker Trust special award winner and veteran campaigner for the Vegetarian Society. Alan's well-known good humour was put to the test when the Trust's celebratory dinner, comprising food supplied by British farmers, featured lamb as its main course.

Giving the keynote address to the meeting, Dr David Clark, MP, Labour's shadow Minister for Food and Agriculture claimed that not eating fresh fruit and vegetables posed as great a cancer risk as smoking.

Safety First

Consumers say food safety is now more important than convenience, says a Mintel Special Report on *Food Safety*. This market intelligence report says the government badly handled its communication with the public over recent food scares and must become more open with information. Industry is advised to follow recommendations to improve their public image which include avoiding irradiation, reducing additives, stocking organic produce and backing calls for an increase in the number of environmental health officers.

Available from Mintel Publications Ltd, 18-19 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HE. Price £650.

A Sticky Specification

The specification for the food additive gum arabic has been revised by the FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee on the Food Additives (JECFA) to 'reflect more closely' the specification published seven years ago for a particular sample of gum arabic selected for toxicological evaluation. This evaluation led to gum arabic becoming one of the additives for which JECFA does not consider it necessary to specify an upper limit of use.

Gum arabic may be consumed from an early age, and possibly in above average amounts by children, because large tonnages are used annually mainly in soft drinks and confectionery. The Food Commission considers that such an additive requires a specification sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the gum actually used in such products matches that which was evaluated. Even after a delay of seven years, the revised specification does not do so – it could be met by untested gums from alternative tropical trees.

The Food Commission has therefore expressed grave reservations to JECFA. By continuing to set standards too low, it is giving greater priority to trade interests than to consumer protection.

Call for better labels

Consumers are keen to see more information on food labels, according to a new survey carried out for the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. Interest in exactly what food contains, how it has been produced, environmental effects and healthy eating have all contributed to pressure for changes in the way food products are labelled. The survey was carried out as part of the government's Food Advisory Committee's review of food labelling.

One thousand representative people who are responsible for buying food for their household were asked how useful they found existing

Nearly three-quarters (72%) said that nutrition information made it easier to choose food for a healthy balanced diet. Health educators and consumer bodies have long called for

be most important.

Sixty-nine per cent said that there should be more general information and publicity about the contents of labels.

More women and those in social groups AB and C1 claimed to take notice of what is printed on food and drink labels than did men and people classified in lower social groups. Twelve per cent of respondents took into account religious controls on diet when shopping for food and eleven per cent chose vegetarian, vegan or slimming diets.

■ Food Labelling Survey England and Wales, HMSO, 1990.



CARTOON: JOHN TREWEN

information on food labels and where improvements could be made.

Nearly half the people questioned (46%) stated that they took 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot of notice' of what is printed on the food and drink labels. Many asked for more information, better presented and with less misleading claims.

Four out of five of the respondents said they would like to see the quantities of main ingredients given so that they can tell for example how much fish is in a fish finger or how much juice there is in a fruit drink. This information is rarely provided on products. Consumer bodies say this kind of labelling might encourage manufacturers to improve the quality of many products and provide better value for money.

compulsory nutrition information, yet the UK government has only supported voluntary nutrition labelling through the EC. Foods high in fats, sugars and salt and low in fibre are less likely to carry nutrition information. This makes it more difficult for consumers to make healthy choices.

Respondents to MAFF's questionnaire were also concerned about misleading claims. Over half (56%) agreed with the statement 'I find it difficult to believe some of the health messages appearing on some products'.

About half those questioned said they would like to see more information provided about food sold in cafes and restaurants. Information on ingredients and cooking methods were thought to

When asked what additional information they would like to see on the label respondents replied:

Quantities of main ingredients	52%
Whether pesticides used/organic	50%
More detail on general descriptions	45%
Type of farming used for meat and dairy products	40%
Health messages	36%
Treatment of animals with veterinary medicine	31%
Country of origin	27%
Name of any pesticide used on the product	23%
Use of genetically manipulated organisms in products	23%
Information on slaughtering methods used for meat	19%

Pay rises top 50 per cent

Britain's largest food companies have awarded pay rises as high as 58 per cent to some of their top management.

A Food Commission survey of food companies found that top directors' and chairpersons' incomes have been rocketing, with several individuals earning salaries above half a million pounds.

The highest-paid directors of food-related companies are currently Lord Rayner, Marks and Spencer Chairman, and Bob Bauman, chief executive of recently merged SmithKline Beecham. Lord Rayner, a life peer created by Margaret Thatcher in 1983, is collecting a salary of £619,961, up from £424,401 in 1988/89. His shares and options in Marks and Spencers are worth a further £1.3million.

Bob Bauman became Britain's third highest paid director last spring when he was awarded a 46 per cent pay rise, taking his salary to nearly £1.3 million. The company chairman, Henry Wendt, has also done rather well, having been awarded a 116 per cent pay increase lifting his salary to £1.16 million, plus more than £0.8 million in stock appreciation rights.

Other leading food and catering companies offer top salaries ranging from £100,000 to £534,000, with virtually all pay rises far in excess of inflation. Only

Allied Lyons and Asda were prepared to make salary cuts; Grand Metropolitan and Dalgety raised their directors' salaries only at around the rate of inflation.

British executives in multinational companies received an average pay increase of over 12 per cent on base pay rates, which after inflation amounted to real pay rises of just over four per cent, according to a report by Monks Partnership last November. And according to research carried out by *The Guardian*, pay rises for top executives during the period 1985-1989 averaged 120 per cent, outstripping virtually every economic indicator. In the majority of cases they also outstripped the companies' own growth in earnings per share.

Meanwhile, low paid workers in the food manufacturing sector reached agreement with 35 leading companies last autumn, despite fears that joint negotiations — involving several unions and many large manufacturers — would break down.

The last settlement was in 1987, when a minimum pay rate of £97 per week was agreed after outside arbitration. The 1990 negotiations agreed a minimum rate of £118.60 per week, up 9.8 per cent on the previous year.

Waiters and waitresses in restaurants are paid an average of £90 - £95 in the lowest paying concerns, and £120 - £125 in better paid concerns, according to figures from the Alfred Marks agency. These rates are supposed to be the basic pay offered by proprietors before tips. However tips are often quoted as part of salaries or are pooled with all staff or even kept back by management.

Fast food catering, also a notoriously poorly paid industry, tends to follow the lead set by the largest employer, McDonald's. Current starting rates for crew at McDonald's are £3.50 per hour (West End London, adult) ranging down to £2.75 per hour for a provincial 16-17 year old. For a 37-hour week, the latter's pay comes to £101.75 per week, barely £5,000 per year.

Pay rises don't fuel inflation

A survey by Incomes Data Services found no evidence to back government claims that wage settlements above the rate of inflation would lead to job losses.

The group challenged government figures suggesting up to 230,000 jobs would be lost for every one per cent pay increase above price rises. This, said the report, could not be justified by the evidence. The facts show that over the period 1983 to 1989 pay settlements and average earnings ran consistently around one or two percentage points ahead of inflation.

'Simultaneously, from March 1983 to 1990 the workforce in employment increased by 3.75 million, reaching 27.3 million in 1990. But...it would be wrong to conclude that more jobs created higher pay or that pay increases ahead of inflation created jobs.'

Source: Incomes Data Services, November 1990

Mr Kipling's exceedingly bad profits

RHM, the UK food giant whose brands include Mother's Pride, Bisto, Paxo stuffing and Mr Kipling cakes has had a dismal year. Pre-tax profits are down 24 per cent. So how do they plan to dig themselves out of this stodgy hole? By expanding their bread and cake business into Europe. Whether this is a wise financial move remains to be seen but is it a sign of things to come if the French give up their patisseries for Mr Kipling or their baguettes for Mother's Pride?

ABF wins Silver Spoon

British Sugar, the UK sugar beet processors and makers of Silver Spoon packet sugar, has been sold by its owners Berisford International to Associated British Foods for £583 million.

The deal came after Tate & Lyle, who have previously bid for the whole of Berisford, failed to match ABF's offer. ABF, whose brands include Ryvita and Sunblest, is two-thirds owned by George Weston Holdings. The sale will bring to ABF 12 British factories and control of two Polish Sugar factories.

Tate Lyle's interest has been known since their bid for Berisford in 1986. The deal was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission who blocked it. Subsequently Tate & Lyle admitted it had colluded with Berisford on pricing strategies. Tate & Lyle's empire is built largely on imports of Third World sugar cane, while British Sugar is based on European sugar beet.



How they score: company salaries for the highest paid director or company chair

Company	1989/90 salary (£000)	% change on 1988/9
Allied Lyons	325	-26
Argyll	419	+44
Asda	231	-13
Associated	129	+25
British Foods		
Cadbury	430	+58
Dalgety	243	+9
Grand Metropolitan	506	+9
Hillsdown	384	+31
Marks and Spencer	620	+46
Northern Foods	137	+13
Ranks Hovis	269	+22
McDougall		
Reckitt & Colman	242	+29
J Sainsbury	158	+13
SmithKline Beecham	1260	+46
Tate & Lyle	534	+53
Tesco	345	+34
Unigate	163	+23
Unilever	409	+42
United Biscuits	312	+22
Whitbread	226	+55

Sources: Company Annual Reports 1989 and 1990. Research by Ian Tokelove

CONSUMER CHECKOUT

The Food Magazine's special supplement and guide to brand name products

COMPANIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Food companies know that the battle to win hearts and minds starts young. As school book budgets are cut back, more and more teachers are turning to educational materials that are sponsored by industry and commerce. But is this material truly educational or is it merely commercial propaganda? And can you always distinguish between the two?

Consumer Checkout took a look at food companies' activity in the classroom. We found booklets, posters, videos, computer programmes, workcards, recipe sheets and teachers notes produced by food companies, trade associations and marketing boards, and available free or at very low cost.

At best some of this material was well produced and could provide a useful teaching resource, albeit featuring the company or trade association name. At worst so-called educational material was little more than product promotion or biased propaganda. With company and brand images liberally scattered throughout material, it is not too difficult to spot its promotional intent. But more subtle messages can be harder to evaluate. Perhaps the most deceptive material Consumer Checkout discovered

was literature produced by publishers or consultants which does not clearly identify that the material is sponsored by commercial interests.

Food and nutrition is one of the key areas of interest for business sponsorship. It is an area where



'The young have become a special target for business interests.

Vulnerable and malleable, they have increasingly been subject to a massive and sophisticated assault by corporations hungry for profit and often short on social responsibility. Systematic effects are made to manipulate children and to make them prisoners of greed, envy and waste.'

Anwar Fazal of the International Organisation of Consumer Unions, 1985

there is considerable contention about what is in the best interests of consumers, with industry on the receiving end of significant consumer criticism. Now school children are being courted in order to rebuild corporate images, offset bad publicity and establish brand awareness.

It makes sound marketing sense. As one European business group, acknowledging the potential for influence, put it in 1983: 'There is no doubt that schools are still among the best places for educating the consumer. There is where the future is shaped. Joint responsibility for educating the young is part of a kind of social marketing which is developing alongside traditional marketing aimed at making a profit. The former will, little by little, influence the latter's chance of success.' (*Private Industry & Young Consumer Education*, The Union of Industries of the European Community, 1983)

Now, with a statutory requirement for industry to support the National Curriculum, there is even greater encouragement for industry in the classroom.

But sponsored literature is not the only way into schools. Fast food companies have backed sports and reading schemes where children are awarded vouchers for burgers and pizzas. Commercial

In this issue of
Consumer Checkout
we look at:

- Food companies selling in schools
- McDonald's advert gets slammed
- Larger sugar lumps
- The good Neighbours diet

interests sponsor competitions, sports teams and other school events, provide computers, televisions, fridges for home economics departments, vending machines — and of course speakers for talks.

Thankfully we have yet to embrace the corporate message as fully as in the USA. There corporations such as Coca-Cola and McDonald's have backed 'adopt-a-school' programmes; fast food companies are moving into school meals; and pupils are obliged to watch advertising in a deal which provides schools with free TV and video equipment.

But we are certainly going down that road. As Sheila Harty, author of *The Corporate Pied Piper* asks: 'What kind of students will graduate from a school career that is really one long commercial break?'

Companies in

Home economics has always been a magnet for food companies.

Classroom walls have long displayed posters from food manufacturers and marketing boards illustrating cuts of meat or where milk comes from. But now home economics has been incorporated into design and technology under the national curriculum, teachers are looking for new teaching resources on food and health. So what materials are available to busy teachers on limited budgets?

We checked a number of sources where teachers can choose material designed for use on food and nutrition issues. Whilst non commercial sources and educational publishers were listed, the majority of materials come from commercial interests. Of the 70 sources of educational materials circulated to members of the National Association of Home Economics Teachers, two-thirds are produced by food companies, trade associations and marketing boards. Similarly two-thirds of the Ministry of Agriculture's list of food and agriculture teaching aids are produced by commercial interests (see box 1).

Education or soft sell?

So should we be concerned when we find commercial interests teaching about nutrition? Our own survey (see page 13) found all but a handful of material produced for schools by food companies and trade associations was promotional in some way. In the worst cases brand names and images appeared frequently throughout the material. In others commercial messages were more muted.

In another survey, over half (57 per cent) of business sponsored materials aimed at technology pupils in the national curriculum (which includes home economics) were clearly promotional. The survey published last year by the London Education Business Partnership, found that only two per cent of the material would be useful in the classroom.

In 1986 The National Consumer Council, in its report *Classroom Commercials*, found not all of the commercially-sponsored educational material they surveyed met the high standards of the best.

In the worst cases it presented biased and inaccurate information that could best be described as 'consumer education'. One-third of the commercially sponsored educational material surveyed was inaccurate in some way and over half of it had a promotional bias, using sales techniques aimed at inducing long-term brand preference. Examples of bad practice often related to food.

Following the publication of *Classroom Commercials*, the NCC set up a working party of business, consumer and educational interests which in 1988 produced a set of Guidelines for Business Sponsors of Educational Material (see box 2). Whilst attempting to provide guidelines for responsible companies to curb the excesses of commercial promotion, the NCC acknowledged that control lay in the hands of teachers, heads and governors when determining what material was acceptable.

But how realistic is it to expect busy teachers to assess the commercial bias of material? Teachers need and want good, well-produced teaching aids and are often grateful for commercially produced material, which is offered free of copyright restrictions, allowing teachers to photocopy it. But classroom teachers are vulnerable and often lack the time and expertise to fully evaluate the subtle commercial or ideological bias of such materials.

Helen Jackson, Head of Home Economics at a secondary school in North London agrees. 'We just get sent so much stuff. Teachers just don't have the time to examine everything that comes in. Some materials are easier to assess, such as the promotional content of a poster. But with a computerised programme it's much less easy.'

But not all material is so blatant in its promotional content. Jenny Ridgwell, a home economics educational consultant, has worked with a number of food businesses to produce material for schools. 'Companies are realising that it's no longer that easy to put heavily sponsored material into schools because teachers won't wear it. Any material that is going to be well-used by teachers has to be useful, use the right language and not be blatant in its advertising message'. But not all commercial interests have seen the light. She cites the Food and Drink Federation and the Sugar Bureau as two examples of bodies continuing to put out material which focuses heavily on specific products.

But with the government issuing poorly produced material and when little alternative to sponsored material is available, it appears that a

1 What material is available?

There are several source lists from which teachers can choose from a wide range of booklets, posters, videos, work-cards, recipe cards and teachers notes.

The National Association of Teachers of Home Economics publishes a list of 70 sources of educational resources on food and nutrition which it distributes to its 4,500 members, but it makes no attempt to assess the accuracy or source of the materials.

Two-thirds are produced directly by food companies, trade associations and marketing boards. Familiar company names such as Kelloggs, Birds Eye, Heinz and Nestlé feature alongside the Stork Service to Education, The Shredded Wheat Healthy Eating Bureau and The Allinson Wholemeal Bread Education Service. While the list also includes non-commercial sources such as the British Diabetic Association, The Coronary Prevention Group and the Centre for World Development Education, the source of funding for others may not always be clear. These include publishing ventures such as Learning Curves which describes itself as a new teaching resource for Home Economics but fails to mention that all its activity cards are sponsored by the food industry.

Another source book for teachers is Goldmine, produced annually by David Brown, himself a teacher. The latest edition lists over 1200 educational resources and states in its introduction that it excludes purely promotional material. However the section on Agriculture and Food Production contains mainly commercially produced resources, only some of which is explicitly labelled promotional.

The Health Education Authority does make some attempt to identify commercially produced materials in its annotated list of teaching materials for health education. But conformity to nutritional guidelines is not fully assessed. The resources listed for heart disease and food hygiene include materials produced mainly by non-commercial sources, such as health charities and local health promotion units.

The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food also produces a list of over 89 teaching aids relating to food and agriculture. The list describes the material as of 'an educational or promotional nature' but makes no attempt to distinguish between the two. Two-thirds are produced by commercial sources.

the classroom

'quiet' advertising message is a small price to pay. The National Dairy Council produces a nutritional computer programme for schools which many teachers find useful. Yet the 'quiet' message is still there — advising pupils that they need to consume several helpings of milk and milk products a day.

Similarly the Dairy Council's Food Awareness Pack has been praised in the Times Educational Supplement for its 'sound information in a format which is totally compatible with GCSE requirements'. Yet it still contains subtle promotion of dairy products but 'nothing which really amounts to direct advertising'. In contrast a pack from Allinson Wholemeal Bread is described as more obviously promotional but the reviewer questions whether 'this hard sell becomes less suspect when the product is as wholesome as Allinson's bread?'

This illustrates the dilemmas teachers face when trying to assess materials in this difficult grey area. Industry is becoming more subtle in its approach, moving away from direct advertising towards the production of material which looks at broader social issues such as food and nutrition. Corporate public relations departments can more easily disguise their commercial motive under the banner of education. Thus 'issue' advertising is used to argue the company's position on current public controversies.

For example The Butter Information Council produces a student pack entitled *Fats on Trial*, and the Food and Drink Federation a booklet promoting food irradiation. And you may wonder why the

National Dairy Council produces a booklet on food additives? Read their promotional blurb for the booklet and you discover that 'Milk and dairy products are also discussed, emphasising that in the United Kingdom it is illegal to use any form of food additives in milk intended for drinking'.

Missing Data

Another difficulty lies not with what is said, but perhaps more importantly, what is missing. The primary educational deficiency of commercial materials is their sins of omission which spring from the ideological bias of the sponsoring company's interests. This is public relations parading as pedagogy,' says Sheila Harty in her booklet, *The Corporate Pied Piper*. 'Such sins of omission are the language of advertising and are evidence of the inherent bias in commercial materials and proof that teachers cannot rely on business handouts for accurate or conclusive information'.

Perhaps this explains why Kelloggs fails to mention the less desirable nutritional role of added sugar in its 'Nutrition Guide'. Or why The Meat and Livestock Commission's leaflet on meat production makes no mention of the antibiotics and growth promoters used in animal rearing. Or why the British Egg Information Service fail to mention the less palatable facts of battery farming.

The Soil Association is unhappy that materials supplied to schools from the British Agrochemicals and the Fertiliser Manufacturers Associations are misleading in their statements on organic agriculture. However, the wealth of commercially sponsored educational material is unlikely to be classed as advertising by the Advertising Standards Authority and would therefore not fall within their jurisdiction, should it be inaccurate.

So what can be done to curb the worst excesses of the industry? The International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU) Code of Practice recommends that governments should ensure that all business-sponsored materials should carry a national stamp of assessment by a special independent body before being allowed into schools. Under no circumstances should promotional material be presented as 'educational' says IOCU. In the UK a number of organisations including the Health Education Authority, The Food Commission, The Coronary Prevention Group and the National Forum for Coronary Heart Disease Prevention are investigating an accreditation scheme for educational materials. Such a scheme operates successfully in Finland, where materials are assessed by an independent body. While not

2 Guidelines for Business Sponsors of Educational Material

- Educational material must not try to influence what children or their families buy — either by an implicit or explicit sales message or through highlighting an advertising slogan. While a sponsor's name should always be prominently displayed, trade names or logos should be used sparingly. Material should carry the sponsor's name and address and telephone number of the department responsible for receiving comments or complaints about it. All material should show clearly the date of publication.
- Promotional material should never be presented as educational. If promotional material accompanies an educational pack it must be clearly identified as such.
- No attempt should be made to state, imply or demonstrate that a particular product or service is superior to its rivals. It should be clearly stated that any benefits apply to the whole class or goods or services, not to an individual named product and an illustration of the sponsor's own product should not be used in this context.
- Sponsors should accurately represent the broad range of informed opinion on a subject. They may put forward an argument on behalf of their product or industry but must make it clear that only their own particular viewpoint is represented.
- Head teachers and governors must control what is given to pupils and no sponsored material should be directly given to pupils without the school's permission.
- Sponsors should seek the advice of people involved in education before preparing materials and must avoid sexual or racial stereotyping.

Guidelines for business sponsors of educational material, is published by The National Consumer Council, 20 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH.

Beating the competition

Companies see competitions as a good way of promoting products in schools. Heinz Baked Beans asked pupils to devise a 'nutritious canned ready meal using Heinz Baked Beans as the main ingredient'. In case the class lack imagination Heinz helpfully add that existing varieties include Barbecue Beans, Curried Beans, Beans with Mini Sausages, Beans and Burgerbites and Beans and Hotdogs in Smokey Bacon Sauce. Not only does such a 'competition' increase sales but it is obviously aimed at increasing future brand preference.

Smith's Crisps are encouraging pupils to collect crisp packets, with schools that reach the target receiving free T-shirts for their football teams. While the National Association of Teachers of Home Economics jointly sponsors with St Ivel popular awards for home economics students.

obligatory, approval acts as a symbol of quality with the government providing schools with a subsidy on half the cost to purchase approved material.

It couldn't happen here?

Could US methods soon hit our shores? The introduction of television ads into classrooms caused controversy in the USA when Channel One, a news show designed for teenagers, was broadcast in schools across America. Schools are offered about \$50,000 worth of video and TV equipment but in return they must guarantee that 90 per cent of students will see Channel One's ten minutes of news and two minutes of adverts a day. Advertisers have included Cheeto's cheese snacks and M&M confectionery. Whilst some states have banned the show as a transparent and cynical ploy to reap profits from schoolchildren under the guise of educational television, other schools have taken a pragmatic approach. 'In a day and age when school budgets have repeatedly failed to keep up with the needs of schools, it behoves educationalists to go to the private sector to see how they enhance programmes,' said Samuel Fortunato, a secondary school headmaster.

Another increasingly popular US corporate scheme is the 'Adopt-a-School' programme which has attracted the corporate involvement of such companies as Coca-Cola and McDonald's. These companies 'adopt' a local or needy school and provide management and technical assistance, equipment and building renovations, teacher training, student employment and curricula materials or whatever else that school needs.

Here in the UK, with the option for budget

Hiding their light

Educational Project Resources is a consultancy offering companies the chance to promote their branded products and services to school children. 'We are providing the right materials and the ideal opportunity for companies marketing to 14 to 18 year olds, to promote their concern for this age group and their products and services.' (*Marketing* 26.7.90)

Consumer Checkout asked Educational Project Resources why some of their material designed for schools failed to give clear information on the commercial sponsor. They replied: 'If companies don't want to go into details about who they are they don't need to. It depends on the client and what they want.'

Salt for Life is a booklet published by the Rowland Company, a public relations consultancy, which fails to state that it is produced by the Salt Manufacturers' Association. 'People might think it was biased if we said who produced it', a spokeswoman for The Rowland Company told Consumer Checkout.



PHOTO: AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION

control being given over to individual schools, there is potentially more scope for business involvement and sponsorship in schools. The trend is made more likely by government encouragement to commerce and industry to help shape the education of tomorrow's workforce.

It is this widening of commercial involvement and sponsorship that concerns Rob Gifford of the National Union of Teachers. Whilst not opposed to sponsorship, the NUT says it can have moral and ethical implications which schools need to consider. He cites the example of Glaxo, which offered to sponsor post-16 prospectuses for all schools in a Hertfordshire town. The head teachers initially accepted what appeared to be a generous offer. Then one head realised that Glaxo's involvement in animal experimentation would not necessarily be acceptable to many pupils. Consequently the schools turned down Glaxo's sponsorship.

Fast food companies have been keen to promote their products through schools by way of sponsorship deals. Pizza Hut in Birmingham imported a reading encouragement scheme from the USA, whereby pupils receive vouchers for pizzas for every book that they read in school. McDonald's sponsored a school sports scheme which had the backing of the Sports Council, the National Coaching Foundation and Sports Minister, Colin Moynihan, in which school athletes were awarded a certificate entitling the holder to free Big Macs.

And then there are the school dinners and tuck shops. In the USA Pizza Hut and McDonald's are already moving into school dinners. Here in the UK we may not yet have invited the fast food chains into the school kitchen. But by cutting school meals, an increasing number of local authorities are driving kids into their arms just the same.

Some schools have already invited hot dog vans into the playground in return for a cut of the profits. Vending machines are also proving to be a growth area. This summer the UK's leading soft drinks companies Coca-Cola and Schweppes Beverages, launched a major drive to introduce vending machines selling Coca-Cola, Diet Coke, Sprite, Fanta Orange and Lilt. One of their main targets was — yes you've guessed it — schools.

Science as supermarket

If you want to take your children somewhere interesting at half-term to provide them with an educational and enjoyable experience, the Science Museum may well be high on your list.

But you might be taken aback when you walk into the museum's Food for Thought gallery to find yourself in the middle of a mock up McDonald's burger restaurant or a Sainsbury's supermarket checkout. But the Sainsbury gallery as it is known, opened in 1989, boasts as its major sponsors The Sainsbury Trust, Mars, British Sugar, Tate & Lyle, the National Dairy Council and the Meat and Livestock Commission. Not too surprising then to hear that the Gallery has been criticised for its corporate involvement — particularly as consumer concerns over food receive scant attention.

And who do you think is behind the successful Museum of Nutrition in Vevey, Switzerland? The answer is Nestlé's — the world's biggest food company. According to Kenneth Hudson, director of the European Museum of the Year Award 'The PR department at Nestlé told the company it had to do something about its image. So it set up the Museum of Nutrition in Vevey, in which its name does not appear.'

■ Researched and written by Sue Dibb

CONSUMER CHECKOUT SURVEY

To discover what materials commercial food interests were making available to schools Consumer Checkout contacted a number of companies, trade associations and marketing boards asking them to send us 'material suitable for schools'.

We received a wide range of leaflets, booklets, posters, worksheets, teachers notes and packs, details of which are summarised in our table.

All but three of the twenty five food industry bodies listed below sent us material that in our opinion was promotional (listed as P in our table). This material seeks to raise awareness of the company's or trade association's products. The extent to which this occurs varied between highly promotional material and that which was not brand orientated but sought to promote the marketing aims of a trade association. Many materials also included background information on the history, sources, production, development and marketing of products.

We then looked at whether any of the material we had been sent had been specifically produced with the classroom in mind (listed as E in our table). Only ten sources (40%) met this criteria. Material sent included worksheets, teaching packs or teachers notes. This material may be promotional and there is no guarantee that it is suitable for use in schools.

Food companies, trade associations marketing boards etc

			Comments
Australian Dried Fruits	P		Promotional posters and leaflets
British Agrochemicals Association	P	E	Leaflets on pesticides. Teacher's notes, resources and worksheets on farming and pesticides
British Egg Information Service	P	E	Recipes, poster, booklets promoting eggs. Worksheets and teacher's notes. Three computer programs available.
British Soft Drinks Association		E	Teacher's notes, worksheets and industry information.
British Sugar	P		Promotional material
Butter Council	P	E	Promotional poster. Teaching packs for infant and secondary schools plus 'Fats on Trial, the diet: heart disease debate'.
Cadbury's	P		Leaflets on history, production and marketing of Cadbury's cocoa and chocolate products.
Flora Project for Heart Disease Prevention			Leaflets on prevention of heart disease.
Food & Drink Federation	P		Booklets on food processing, hygiene, and promotion of irradiation
John West	P		Leaflets and recipes promoting products
Kelloggs	P		Leaflets on nutrition promoting Kelloggs products, recipes. Includes <i>The Grains Are Great</i> 30 page booklet on cereal crops and Kelloggs role in bringing them to your breakfast table. Features Kelloggs name or logo over 40 times.
LoSalt	P		Leaflets promoting LoSalt
Meat & Livestock Commission	P	E	Leaflet series promoting British meat. 'Meat Wise' worksheets and teacher's notes. Farmyard poster with teacher's notes.
Milk Marketing Board	P	E	Promotional leaflets and nutrition information on milk and dairy products. 'Nutrition Link' includes worksheets, nutrition information and recipes. Videos and computer programme.
Mushroom Growers Assoc	P		Recipes, nutrition information. Teacher's notes on cultivated mushrooms.
Eden Vale Munch Bunch	P	E	The Munch Bunch Education Service produces posters, work sheets and teacher's notes aimed at educating 6-9 year olds on the benefits of healthy eating. Features Munch Bunch characters and products throughout.
New Zealand Lamb	P		Recipes and nutrition guides promoting New Zealand lamb.
Potato Marketing Board	P	E	Recipes and posters promoting potatoes. Worksheet and factsheets on history, production, nutrition & cooking of potatoes.
St Ivel		E	Information sheets on dairying and dairy products.
Sea Fish Authority	P		Leaflets on cooking and nutrition of fish and fish industry.
Sugar Bureau	P	E	Teaching packs promoting sugar.
Tate & Lyle	P		Leaflets on sugar from sugar cane.
Tilda Rice	P		Recipes, free sample, and booklet on the production, markets and history of rice.
Van den Berghs	P		Leaflets and recipes promoting products. Booklet 'The Story of Margarine'. See also Flora Project above.
Women's Farming Union	P		Industry-sponsored leaflets promoting British food eg Dairy Crest, Meat & Livestock Commission, ICI, British Agrochemicals.

Consumer Checkout takes a close look at what you're taking off the shelf

McDonald's ticked off by ASA

The Advertising Standards Authority has upheld a complaint against burger company McDonald's for issuing a misleading advertisement.

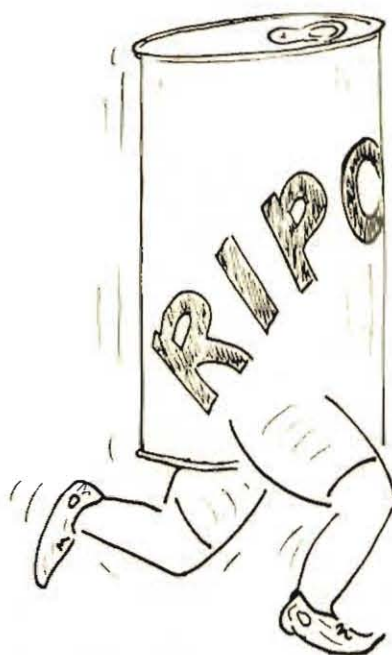
Roger Backhouse of Ilford complained that the advertisement gave the inaccurate impression that the only chemicals used were chlorine for cleaning and stabilisers.

Using information from the Food Commission*, Mr Backhouse submitted evidence that McDonald's milkshake syrups could contain products like synthetic vanillin, sodium benzoate, phosphoric acid and the dye sunset yellow (E110) which is banned in Norway and in other countries.

After investigation the ASA declared the advertisement misleading and asked McDonald's to modify their claims in future. McDonald's subsequently told *The Food Magazine* that they had already stopped running that campaign, and that the additives mentioned amounted to less than half a per cent of the milkshake.

Mr Backhouse declared his delight at seeing his complaint upheld. 'McDonald's make a big play of their food being wholesome, but they completely failed to mention important ingredients in their advertisements. I won't be eating there.'

* For more information on the ingredients of take-away food read the Food Commission's book *Fast Food Facts*.



Cracking the cholesterol claims

Here's a cracking new idea about to hit the USA — 'low cholesterol' eggs laid by hens fed a low fat diet. Or is it? Health campaigners say this is just another example of hype rather than health.

The Coronary Prevention Group says such 'low cholesterol' claims are misleading because they confuse dietary cholesterol, found in foods such as eggs, shellfish and liver, with blood cholesterol levels. It is the latter which are an important factor in coronary heart disease. Blood cholesterol levels are more directly related to the amount of saturated fat than to the amount of cholesterol consumed. Therefore cutting down on saturated fat is the main dietary key to cutting blood cholesterol levels.

In the USA and Australia 'low' or 'no cholesterol' claims are common but under present UK food labelling law a 'low cholesterol' claim cannot be made unless the product is more than 35 per cent fat, relatively low in saturates and high in polyunsaturates. This effectively limits the use of the claim to just a few foods such as spreads and oils although EC proposals for new laws would permit such claims, which means that use of this claim is likely to increase.

Meanwhile a Belgian-based company, The Corman Society in a deal with the Normandy Milk Union, is marketing 'cholesterol free' butter. Levels of cholesterol are normally negligible in butter — but as it does contain high levels of saturated fat any low cholesterol health claim is highly misleading. Dr Mike Rayner of the CPG would like to see the whole sham ended. 'There's a good argument for banning low cholesterol claims completely because of the confusion they engender', he maintains.

Competing with water

In the last issue of *The Food Magazine* we reported on 'isotonic' sports drinks. Now a new competitor is about to enter the race for quick profits. Gatorade which has a staggering 95% of the US sports drinks market is under starters orders to catch Lucozade in the UK market.

Gatorade's makers Quaker Oats have already taken Italy by storm. France and Germany have been a little slower on the uptake. But Gatorade thinks it can outstrip the competition: 'It's not a fight over brand share. When we go into a new market, our primary competitor is water,' Ronald Bottrel for Quaker Oats candidly told *Marketing Magazine*.

MEDICI BURGERS

A new addition to the European Renaissance Heritage is being planned for Florence. McDonald's plan to site a 230-seat restaurant in a 13th century ex-Medici residence only 30 metres from the cathedral. The building is owned by the same organisation which manages the cathedral.

■ Agscene, Nov/Dec 1990.

It's true. McDonald's rely on chemicals.

We use about 34 tons a week. We spend more than £100,000 on them a year.

Sealing powder, sanitising fluid, floor cleaners.

We buy soap and cleaning cloths which are made to our own, rigorous specifications.

We even specify the time when and the way in which they are to be used.

For example, we strip down our milkshake machines every day.

We clean all the parts which touch anything that might drink, because they are already there (drying up, etc.) right before our eyes, so we don't use them.

Cleaning, in fact, is as much a part of the work in our kitchens as cooking.

It is a continuous process, not something we leave until closing time.

You might say that we are obsessed about it.

You might even say that we are fanatical about it, because all our kitchens are quite open to the public gaze.

We are confident that you won't see anything you would rather not see.

We are equally confident that you won't eat anything you would rather not eat.

But, though chemicals play an important part in our kitchens, they have a very small part in our food.

Our hamburgers are made with 100% European beef, with no fillers, no fillers and no additives.

(Our scrambled eggs are made with 100% eggs and cooked in 100% butter.)

Our milkshakes are made with fresh milk and there is real strawberry juice in the strawberry syrup.

True, we add a little stabiliser to keep their consistency consistent.

And we clean our lettuce (let's be honest, by the way) with chlorine, before we wash it.

But when you eat at McDonald's, you are eating little more than the best raw ingredients, freshly cooked in spotlessly clean kitchens.

And that is plain, unadorned fact.





TWO LUMPS OR THREE?

Beware the new sugar lump. Once you could rely on each one being 2.5 grams, with two lumps being equal to a heaped teaspoonful.

But the new range from Silver Spoon comes in at over 2.9 grams per cube, nearly a 20 per cent increase in weight. If you carry on putting the same number of cubes in your tea you will get through the pack faster, and give yourself extra calories too.

Catering sizes will remain unchanged at around 2.5-2.7 grams, with two wrapped in a pack. Caterers have to watch their portion control and were reluctant to accept the bigger cubes, which would have meant getting through their supplies more quickly.

British Sugar deny there is any intention to fool the public into using more sugar. 'It is just because we have changed our supplier' their spokeswoman told *The Food Magazine*. 'Customers can see that the cube is bigger.'

Bangers for the chop?

The great British banger is due for a change. It is about to join Europe. Whether it will still have the same unique quality we have learned to love or loathe is still open to debate, but the EC is insisting on several changes.

■ **Less preservative:** sulphur dioxide will no longer be permitted as a preservative. Present levels are up to 450 milligrams per kilo — the highest level permitted in any foods except dried fruit and vegetables — allowing manufacturers to have fresh-looking sausages on the shelf for over a week. The new regulations will bring the shelf life down to four days or less.

■ **For hygiene's sake** fresh meats and frozen meats cannot be mixed together — fresh meat must be used for chilled sausages and frozen meat used for frozen sausages.

■ **Limit on freshness:** fresh meat means meat that has been kept chilled for no more than six days, the EC is proposing. This contrasts with the present 21-30 days often used in Britain. As the industry like to call them, 'mature meat trimmings' will no longer be available for mince or mince products like sausages and burgers.

■ **For hygiene's sake,** quick chilling of the sausage will be required. Products must be cooled to two degrees Centigrade within an hour of cutting and wrapping — a speed which many smaller producers may not be able to achieve.

The outlook for small producers is bleak. They need to equip themselves with rapid cooling equipment and should only use very fresh cuts for their chilled sausages. If the sausages aren't sold within a few days, out they go.

In the meantime, though, there are no plans to limit the amount of fat or water in the sausage, and the added colouring (making fat, water and rusk look like lean meat) will continue to be allowed. As a result the

DECLINE OF THE BRITISH SAUSAGE

Porke sosiges (Rebecca Price 1681-1740)

2 pounde and a halfe of lean hog meat
3 pounde of hoggs fatt
spices: peper, clove, mace, nutmeg
herbs: sage, tyme, majerome, rosemary, peniroyall
salt
yolks of six eggs

Typical modern pork sausage

12 kg minced pork hock
35 kg pork trimmings (belly, jowl, diaphragm, headmeat etc)
30 kg pork back-fat
17 kg ice
11 kg rusk
2.5 kg skimmed milk powder
2.4 kg salt and seasoning mix
250 g polyphosphate (water absorber)
110 g sulphite (preservative)
under 1 g Red 2G (colouring)

■ Research by Helen Smith

'Great British Banger' will probably remain a protected species despite its gradual decline from the high standards of yesteryear. The term 'banger' originated in the 1930s and 1940s when the addition of extra water (but no instructions to prick the skin) often led to the sudden bursting of the sausage in the pan.

Traditional recipes did not include added water, but the modern sausage can typically have 20 per cent ice mixed into the recipe, and a total water content often over 50 per cent.

Gripe water comes off the booze

Despite persistent claims by the industry that gripe mixtures had to contain alcohol to preserve the product, one company has now broken ranks and has started marketing an alcohol-free version.

Woodwards, who claim over 50 per cent of the annual market of five million bottles, have re-formulated their product, which carries a 'Contains No Alcohol' announcement on the label. Their main rivals, Dinnefords (made by Beecham) and Nurse Harvey's (made by Harvey-Scruton) still contain alcohol at levels of around five per cent, stronger than many beers.

When the London Food Commission first reported on the hazards to babies of drinking the equivalent of

half a measure of gin every few hours the industry were quick to dismiss this as 'alarmist'. Beecham insisted 'The alcohol in gripe waters is present solely to preserve the mildly antacid formulation: other commonly used preservatives are not effective' while Woodward claimed 'alcohol is present because it is used to extract the natural dill oil and ginger tincture from the dill seed and ginger root.'

However, quizzed by Jack Ashley, MP, the government admitted to 50 reports a year of accidental overdose of gripe water and agreed to review product licences with a view to reducing the alcohol content. Woodward, it seems, have made a virtue of necessity.



ILLUSTRATION: CORBETT/PIRAMAN

The good Neighbours diet

We check out the food messages hidden in Aussie soaps

Television is a powerful influence in determining food choices. In Australia, as in Britain, there have been calls for more responsible food advertising, particularly to children. But what nutrition messages are being screened between the advertising breaks? Heather Morton sat through 45 hours of Australian soaps to find out.

Among the programmes most popular with young British audiences are three Australian soaps, 'Home and Away', 'Neighbours' and 'A Country Practice'. Their appeal lies in their bright and cheerful scripts, the beach and pool-side settings, which many find irresistible, and characters who are seen as the very exemplars of clean, modern, fresh-faced living. The actors are household names and role models for the young, with articles on their fictional and private lives appearing frequently in the British and Australian press.

Previous studies of US and British soaps had concluded that some television programmes contain even more negative nutrition messages than the commercial breaks. So far however no-one had looked at the Australian soaps, so I videotaped a 45-hour sample of these shows when they were broadcast in Australia early in 1990, and analysed them for their nutrition references.

Eating and drinking featured heavily as a backdrop to the plot in all three soaps. On average about a quarter of each 20 or 25-minute episode was devoted to such behaviour, with about six such scenes in each episode.

Styles of eating and drinking ran from the most formal dinner party to the casual snack or a cup of coffee. The most predominant scenario involved characters talking over a main meal served at a table. For the nutrition educator these scenes were encouraging: many children miss breakfast and over a third of the main meals eaten at table were breakfasts.

Poor quality snacks outnumbered healthy snacks by 25 per cent. These unhealthy snack foods, which also feature highly in television advertising, have been blamed in part for the incidence of overweight Australian children with high blood cholesterol levels. But many of the positively-coded snacks shown were well-filled

sandwiches, high in fibre and complex carbohydrate.

Main meals were generally good news with breakfasts, lunches and dinners twice as likely to be rated as healthy. Efforts were made to show salads, vegetables, fruit and fruit juices on the lunch and dinner table.

Overall, the images did not have the negative impact of food advertising in Australia or the UK, where only a small proportion of advertised foods support the selection of a healthy diet. But although snacks and main meals together coded more positively than negatively overall, there is still plenty of opportunity for improvement in nutrition images, particularly in the snacking area.

Next I examined what the characters said about food. Verbal references to food and drink were far fewer than the visual, but fewer than half (43 per cent) of the references were scientifically correct. Such misinformation given by the characters could confuse the less-informed viewer. All of the remarks concerned body

when alcohol advertising, in Australia at least, is prohibited. Generally alcohol drinking was presented as normal and non-problematic, with occasional over-drinking seen as inevitable, acceptable and with no lasting problems.

The Fosters brand name was clearly visible on beer cans and, compared to the usual 30-second beer commercial, was seen for relatively prolonged periods. This brand had also the advantage of being associated with popular characters having a good time; a classical Pavlovian conditioning exercise. This is especially interesting when the IBA's new code on drink advertising prohibits the use of 'role-model' personalities which may appeal to the young.

This kind of covert advertising was not limited to beer, though it was the largest category. Other examples included soft drinks, breakfast cereals, margarines and snacks. Coca-Cola was frequently promoted, with its name cropping up on bottles, cans, fridges, food stores and even on an enormous beach tent. While the cola companies are reported to be spending \$30 million on traditional advertising in Australia in 1990 to maintain and increase their share of the lucrative soft drink market, this one brand seems to be benefiting from some heavy product placement in the soaps.

Overall, my survey suggests that food and nutrition messages in these Australian soaps are rather more positive than previous investigations of prime-time television programmes have indicated. But there is plenty of room for more and better positive nutritional references which could easily be incorporated without imposing on the story line.

A report of the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia has acknowledged that the media, and particularly television, are probably more powerful in determining children's food preferences than the example of the family. It urges health professionals to explore ways of using the mass media proactively in nutrition education. With an estimated 18 million viewers for some episodes, the educational possibilities are extraordinary. After all, if the applications for library cards can increase all over the USA after the airing of an episode of 'Happy Days' where The Fonz joins the library, just think what effect the beautiful people of 'Neighbours' eating their vegetables could have on viewers around the world.

■ Heather Morton is Head of Nutrition and Social Health at the University of South Australia, Adelaide.



Watching *Neighbours* food messages

image and slimming, and were made by women.

Men were shown buying food and drink more frequently than women, but far more women were seen preparing and serving it. However, the men were not shown to be completely helpless in the kitchen. They were shown as able to produce their own food on occasion, which is a move away from the stereotypes of a previous generation.

During the 45-hour sample, alcohol was shown being consumed in 100 scenes, with over 75 per cent of the drinkers being adult males. These programmes are careful never to show young people drinking alcohol. Nevertheless, the net effect is the free promotion of alcohol as part of social interaction, and in time slots

Turning the chemical tide

Two new reports from the British Medical Association and The Pesticides Trust are critical of the UK's lack of a coherent policy on pesticides. In this three page special review, Pete Snell examines their arguments. He also finds there is little reason to feel reassured by the government's latest residue testing figures. Here he sets out a comprehensive strategy for reducing dependence on pesticides.

Pesticide policy is not just a choice between current control methods and an organic alternative. Reducing pesticide use whilst maintaining yields is a proven strategy. The BMA report clearly advocated such an alternative, yet media coverage was, as usual, devoted to organic producers. It ignored the many exciting techniques which now exist to reduce the risks to health and the environment.

These techniques have gained growing popularity amongst hard pressed non-organic farmers anxious to cut the cost of farm inputs. In countries with a coherent pesticide reduction policy, such as Sweden, the techniques such as those listed below have cut pesticide use by almost half with no reduction in crop yields. The lack of such a coherent policy in Britain was condemned by the BMA — below we examine what such a policy could offer. Other national policies for usage reduction provide various models from which Britain can choose. The demand for such a national policy is demonstrated by the initiatives already taken by the agrochemical industry, growers, manufacturers and retailers.

Pesticides are meant to be toxic to pests — whether animal or vegetable. The major groups of insecticides operate directly on the nervous system of insects. If a chemical acts only on the target organism it will do

less damage to the environment and to health.

Because the nervous systems of insects and mammals are fundamentally the same, such 'selective' chemicals are rare. Selective pesticides usually rely on the different metabolic defence mechanisms of different animal groups — but with only limited success. For these reasons insecticides have traditionally been regarded as posing the greatest risk to human health and have faced the toughest approval system.

Pesticides for use against plants and moulds, the herbicides and fungicides, act on different metabolic processes. Many herbicides act by disrupting the photosynthetic cycle by which weeds obtain energy for survival. Others act by modifying growth patterns; for example by causing a weed to collapse under its own weight. Since such pesticides operate against processes which do not exist in humans, approval schemes have been less strict. However concern has now grown about the effects of long term exposure to such chemicals on individual human cells. One US study said that 90 per cent of fungicides and 60 per cent of herbicides, by usage volume, might cause cancer compared with 'only' 30 per cent of insecticides.

Organic production schemes do permit the use of some chemical pest control — normally with inorganic chemicals or plant extracts. These may in fact be less pest specific than synthetic alternatives. However organic growers emphasise that these should only be used as a last resort. It is the non-chemical methods they use that are now being adopted more widely.

Throughout the industrialised world, governments which are really concerned for the environment have set targets for reducing the volume of pesticides used by as much as 70 per cent. Such governments include those of Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the Kyushu district which uses 20 per cent of Japan's pesticides. Similar plans are being developed in the US.

Such strategies do set measurable goals and are invariably supported by pesticide approval review schemes. These are coupled with training schemes for operators, MOT-style tests on spraying equipment and additional taxes on pesticides to discourage their use. However reducing usage weights through increased use of more toxic chemicals offers no benefits.

The baseline figure for such reduction strategies has to be chosen with care since pesticide use varies with climate. Britain used less pesticides in 1989 and 1990 because of long dry spells during crucial growing periods. Sweden chose its base period as the average usage from 1981 to 1984, and claims to have reduced usage by 45 per cent up to 1989. Time will tell whether such an improvement will last but the Swedes claim to have achieved all this with no drop in yields and an increase in farming profitability.

Doctors call for greater pesticide controls

The British Medical Association's working party report, *Pesticides, chemicals and health*, says that pesticide poisoning often passes unnoticed by the medical profession. The report calls for more training for doctors, to help them recognise symptoms, and a better reporting system. However the report does not restrict itself to medical matters and notes that our knowledge about pesticides and human health is incomplete. It also points out the lack of a central strategy governing the use of pesticides.

In response, the agrochemical trade association representative on the working party dissociated himself from the report and the MAFF Parliamentary Secretary, David Maclean, sent a highly critical open letter to the Working Party Chairman.

However, now that Japan, the Netherlands, West Germany and Sweden are all following active pesticide reduction strategies, it has become more difficult for the government to ignore the latest in a series of reports critical of its complacency.

The BMA list five key areas for action:

- **REDUCTION:** the minimisation of pesticide use and a timetable for staged reductions
- **INFORMATION:** wider access to existing information, particularly toxicity data, and the expansion of research and development at all stages, from the validation of toxicity models used for pesticide approval to effective identification and collation of data on poisoning.
- **DIVERSIFICATION:** the establishment of an integrated pest management strategy and the funding of more research into non-chemical control of pests.
- **REGULATION:** the removal of regulatory control from MAFF, greater rights for workers, a review of past approvals, an improvement of controls over residues in food and water, a review of hazardous practices such as post-harvest treatment of foods, an improvement of international controls and an increase in the number of agricultural health and safety inspectors.
- **EDUCATION:** more training for doctors so they are better able to recognise and treat the effects of pesticide poisoning, and training for all users, so as to reduce the risk of such poisoning.

Pesticides, chemicals and health, British Medical Association; Report of the Board of Science and Education, Edward Arnold, London, 1991, ISBN 0 340 54924 6

MAFF-funded work in Britain includes projects on:

- computer forecasts to minimise pesticide applications
- techniques for growers to measure pest population and only use pesticides when crop yields are at risk
- improvements of sprayer design to minimise drift
- the identification and understanding of pest predators or repellents
- the development of natural resistance in crops.

The increased emphasis on work to reduce reliance on chemical pest control is excellent but it cannot yet be seen as a co-ordinated policy to achieve target levels of pesticide reduction. It is difficult to wean habitual users away from their chemical 'fix'.

Until recently many growers didn't believe that pests in greenhouses and tunnels could be controlled by biological means alone. Now the practice is widespread and thoroughly welcomed by most growers who have long wished to escape the chemical treadmill — as much for the sake of their own health as for their bank balance. In the absence of a co-ordinated government strategy such impetus for change has often come from within the private sector.

The introduction of legally enforceable maximum residue limits on foods, long resisted by MAFF, has fundamentally altered commercial perception of the dangers of pesticides to their business. If the residue levels detected by government surveys (reported elsewhere in this feature) are typical, then one in 17 fruit and vegetable samples or one in 34 animal products could lead to the prosecution of a retailer for exceeding existing or proposed legal limits. Apart from the fines for such prosecutions, no quality retailer wants a reputation for supplying contaminated food.

Current laws allow producers to escape punish-

ment by taking 'reasonable precautions' and demonstrating 'due diligence' in their dealings with suppliers. Retailers and their suppliers are consequently encouraging the growers to clean up their act. Accurate record keeping, a clear understanding of the importance of harvest intervals and a commitment to minimising chemical use may not just save a grower money. It can be a marketing bonus for suppliers who are able to satisfy retailers anxious about maintaining their 'healthy', 'green' image.

The last issue of *The Food Magazine* reported on a group of agrochemical suppliers who now operate a policy of minimum pesticide applications. They rely heavily on testing pest populations before use and only use chemicals when pest populations exceed trigger levels. Both the insect traps and the estimates of trigger population levels are derived from MAFF research. This group would naturally welcome a more positive lead from government and more government research into the whole area of chemical pesticide reduction.

British government research into safer chemicals once led the world, but its record on policy initiatives has been poor. It opposed the introduction of legally enforceable limits on residues on food; it opposed the introduction of a system of 'prior informed consent' for pesticide exports and now it looks like becoming the last country in northern Europe to adopt a systematic policy for pesticide reduction. The UK trade surplus in pesticide exports is no longer an excuse for inaction. Future company profits depend on staying ahead of ever stricter environmental legislation; and an unregulated home market will give no inducement for domestic agrochemical producers to keep pace with the companies of the future.

Commission. It acts as an independent source of information about pesticides. It now employs three staff, hosts the European staff member of the international Pesticide Action Network and monitors over 100 periodicals and all new books on pesticides. Its journal and abstracting service is now required reading for both its founding organisations and an increasing number of companies anxious to understand pesticide concerns. This book is more than just a research report — it is a compilation of the expertise gained over the last three years.

Such a wealth of perspectives can be daunting but it does allow the general reader an insight into the often conflicting views on pesticide safety expressed by different scientists and observers. All the chapters give a very thorough grounding in the issues covered whilst the references indicate the major sources for further reading on each particular field. The final chapters on reducing pesticide use show just how easily this objective could be achieved if it were more actively supported by government.

Pesticides, policy and people: The impact on health The Pesticide Trust, 23, Beehive Place, London, SW9, 1991, £10.00.

10 ways to reduce pesticide use

■ Use only when needed

Trap target pests and only spray when they reach danger levels. Measure the micro-climate around each crop and only treat when conditions favour diseases such as potato blight. Only treat crops when you calculate the target pests are at their weakest.

■ Use lower pesticide concentrations

Zap bugs and weeds with less chemical than the manufacturers recommend — recent research in Scotland says that application rates one eighth of that recommended may not kill all the weeds, but cereal yield can actually increase.

■ Produce what grows well naturally

Crops have developed natural resistance to pests in their country of origin. Sugar beet, which requires high pesticide inputs, is only economically viable in Britain because of quotas on cane sugar imports. Its production may be stopped in Sweden so that their government can meet its pesticide reduction targets.

■ Increase natural resistance

This radical solution depends on developing resistance to new pests through plant breeding programmes. But beware — natural toxins to pests can affect humans too and are not yet clearly understood!

■ Encourage natural predators

Distribute bigger insects into greenhouses to eat any pests; and let nature help by leaving hedgerows and headlands unsprayed, so that they act as natural reservoirs for such predators.

■ Reduce monoculture

Rotate crops so that persistent pests can't get a hold.

■ Interplanting

Plant main crops with others that keep out the pests. Onions do not drive away carrot fly, according to MAFF scientists, but undersown cereals leave a lot less space for weeds.

■ New application techniques

Incorporate long-lasting pesticides in seed capsules or into the soil blocks used for transplanting. But beware! Early harvesting for baby vegetables can lead to excess residues.

■ Protect crops from predators

Seventy per cent of current production of vegetable crops grown under cover now use natural predators to reduce pesticide use. The environment in greenhouses or polythene tunnels can be easily controlled but even in the case of unprotected crops, the partial protection of woven cloth can dramatically cut caterpillar numbers on cabbages.

■ Better use of existing techniques

Check nozzle efficiency on spraying equipment. Use sprays which do not produce small droplets which blow away or large droplets which drain off leaves. Change nozzle angles so that lower spraying heights create less drift.

Pesticides Trust report

The aptly named *Pesticides, Policy and People* published by The Pesticides Trust suggests that there is no coherent policy on pesticides in the UK and that people suffer as a result. It was funded by the King's Fund and is based on the research report submitted by the Pesticide Trust to the British Medical Association enquiry into pesticides and health. This was the largest single body of evidence submitted by the voluntary sector and its recommendations were largely accepted by the BMA working party.

However the book does not restrict itself to the health aspects of pesticides. Chapters cover pesticides' legislation and its enforcement; pesticide toxicity and data on exposure and poisoning; and pesticide concerns specific to food, water and developing countries. The book ends with a review of current issues concerning pest management and alternative methods less reliant on chemical control.

The Pesticide Trust was established 3 years ago by development charities, environmental and consumer groups and trades unions, including the London Food

Residue tests 'hardly reassuring'

The reports of the government's Working Party on Pesticide Residues (WPPR) are the most complete report on residue levels produced in Britain. In response to EC directives they will now be published annually. As a result the government Committee on Toxicity (COT) will only be able to review the findings on an occasional basis. This is a sad omission in view of the considerable expertise on food, consumer products and the environment possessed by COT and its willingness to publicly criticise past WPPR work programmes.

As usual the MAFF press office says the latest report on pesticide residues in foods is 'reassuring'. Judge for yourself from the summary table prepared by the Pesticide Trust and presented below.

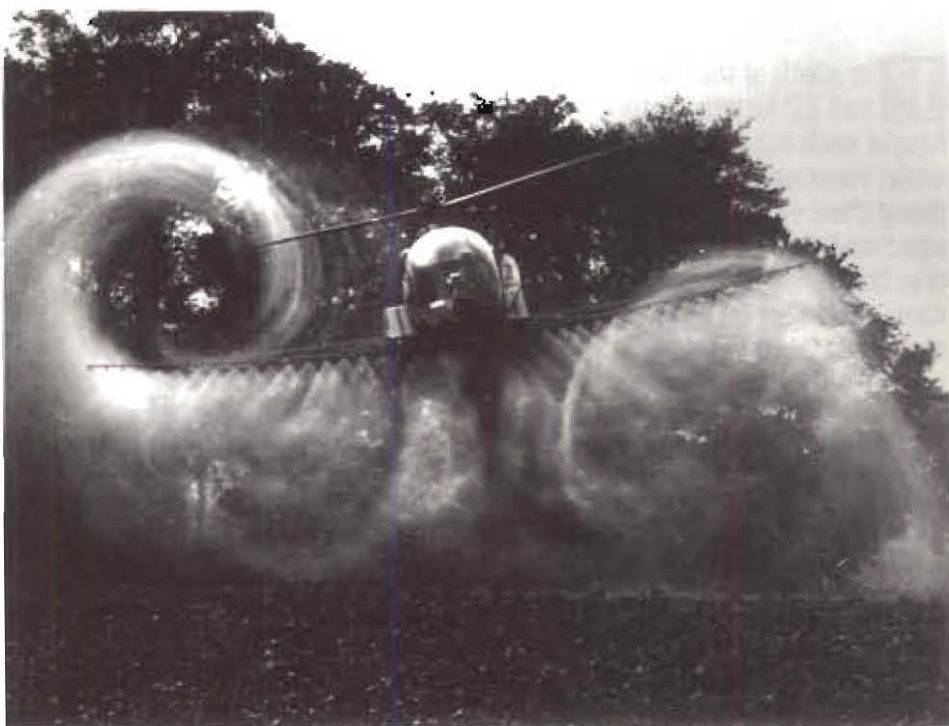
Food Group	% containing residues	% above MRL
Dietary staples (bread, milk & potatoes)	32.2	0.4
Fruit and vegetables	20	6
Animal products	34	3
Health foods	60	0
Infant foods	21	0
Dried and semi-dried fruit	51	0
Animal feedstuffs	21	1
Miscellaneous	38	2
Food of UK origin	27	2
Imported as 'other' food	40	3
Overall residue levels	32	2

(Source: Pesticides Trust)

Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) are the maximum concentrations legally permitted in foods. They should not be exceeded if safe usage instructions on pesticide labels are followed. However the government has not yet set MRLs for many residues. And its chemical tests cannot detect many residues, so food contamination could actually be higher than stated. And there have never been any prosecutions for exceeding MRLs in Britain, even though such offences are clearly common. Some reassurance!

Are health foods healthy?

Are MAFF officials obsessed with health foods? Fresh fruit and vegetables, infant preparations and human breast milk studies, where evidence for health



concerns exists, have all been ignored by testing programmes in at least one of the last three residue studies. In contrast pulses and health foods have featured in every study, even though general residue levels are low. 'Health foods contain pesticides' say the next day's papers — cynics might wonder if it may not be a deliberate tactic to undermine the food and health lobby.

What then do the latest tests reveal? Sixty per cent of health foods, including processed and unprocessed nuts and seeds, as well as speciality teas, contained detectable residues. None exceeded Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs). On the positive side, many of the samples were taken from foods derived from numerous sources — since only some of these were contaminated overall contamination levels remain low. However less encouragingly, there are no MRLs for some of the residues detected because they have never been permitted in Britain.

Organochlorides

In general the pesticides detected were organochlorides such as DDT but included impure technical grade Lindane constituents, never used in Britain. Rather than pretend that such contamination is peculiar to 'health' foods, a programme is now needed to identify the countries with poorest pesticide

controls. We need to help such countries meet our standards. The alternative is for the world food trade to become dominated by plantation-based production, closely controlled by transnational companies. They can guarantee pesticide levels to high paying super-market buyers. Without positive assistance to poorer countries it is these companies who will in future set the standards for residue levels on Britain's food imports.

Dithiocarbamates

These are widely used fungicides. In the USA most have been banned because the US government thinks they cause cancer. MAFF says they don't affect DNA and so are safe when ingested below the threshold levels. But their levels in British food exceed Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) more often than any other chemical. The latest report says dithiocarbamates exceeded the MRL in 16 of the 77 UK lettuces which were analysed. In one case the level was 45 times the MRL. Of 24 samples of imported lettuce, only one exceeded the MRL. As these chemicals can be washed off easily, consumers should perhaps be given specific instructions in the light of these findings.

■ *Report of the Working Party on Pesticide Residues 1988-1989*, MAFF/HSE, HMSO, 1990, £8.95, ISBN 0 11 242902 5

Crushed by

What does farming support in the industrial west mean for smallholder effect GATT agreements may have in developing countries while George

For much of the 1980s the US and EC farming interests have fought each other like bull elephants, using massive export subsidies to dump their surpluses on already saturated world markets. The result was the deepest price depression since the 1920s for commodities such as cereals, sugar and beef.

In industrialised countries government support for farmers provided some protection from the slump in world prices. By 1986 over a third of farmers' income in the US and EC was provided by government payments.

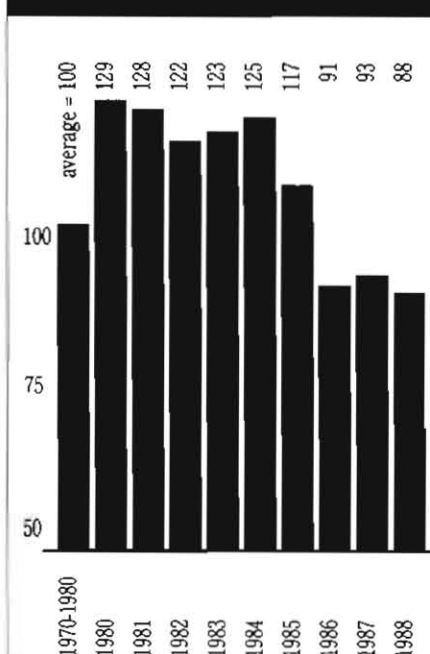
But developing countries and their producers were badly trampled upon. Exporters in Asia, Africa and Latin America lost badly needed foreign exchange revenue and saw their broader trade and debt problems compounded. Depressed world farm prices were estimated to have cost Argentina around US\$3bn a year in lost earnings in the mid-1980s — equal to two thirds of its debt service payments at the time.

Similarly, Thailand saw export prices for rice fall from \$230 to \$170 a ton in 1986 as the US attempted to dump its way to an enlarged market share. For the first time in 20 years rural poverty increased as the price slump hit the country's two million smallholder rice producers. In Africa, EC beef dumping has undermined regional markets for countries such as Zimbabwe and Botswana, again compounding debt problems.

Export crop producers were not the only victims. Attempts to encourage greater food self-reliance also suffer when cheap cereals flood local markets. At the height of their trade hostilities the US and the EC were dumping wheat, produced at a cost of US\$180 a ton, at prices as low as US\$60 a ton in West Africa — a third lower than equivalent production and marketing costs for peasant-produced staples such as sorghum and millet. Faced with such ruinous competition from European and North American treasuries, peasant producers were forced out of their own local markets — and in some cases off their land.

World prices rose briefly with the North American drought of 1988, which dramatically cut US surpluses. But prices are once again on a downward trend, the surplus mountains are re-appearing on both sides of the Atlantic and a new 'farm war' is now a distinct

Sub-Saharan Africa experienced a dramatic worsening of trade terms (export prices less import costs) during the 1980s.



World-wide average commodity prices dropped 33 per cent between 1980 and 1989. For sub-Saharan Africa the fall in prices left their exports' purchasing power 15 per cent below the level it had reached during the 1970s. (Source: World Bank 1990)

possibility — a potential catastrophic prospect for most producers in the South.

Whether or not it comes to this hinges on the outcome of the present round of GATT talks. An agreement on agriculture is essential to the success of the negotiations, which are suspended as this article goes to press.

The GATT dispute between the US and the EC concerns the amount by which farm production is subsidised by federal or Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments. The US is pressing for at least 75 per cent cuts, while the EC has offered 30 per cent cuts by 1996. French and German opposition to even this level of cuts is hardly surprising since it would bankrupt a large number of small family farmers.

For developing countries the critical question is

whether subsidy and price cuts for European and American farmers will reduce the over-production which led to the dumping of the 1980s. The answer is that they almost certainly will not. Hardly less disconcerting is the prospect of a classic GATT fudge — a farm superpower deal which will leave the problems facing the South unresolved.

As one of CAP's architects, Sicco Mansholt, has observed, bankrupting small farmers is a highly inefficient way of reducing surpluses. This is because the consequent concentration of production on more capital intensive farms will bring big productivity gains. Surpluses could actually rise as a result.

But the main threat to the South is the USA's drive to open developing country food economies to 'world market' forces. GATT proposals tabled by the US would only permit developing countries to give their farmers support if (i) it had 'no, or a minimal effect, on trade' and (ii) it did not act to maintain domestic prices at higher than world market levels.

This means that border restrictions on cheap food imports would be outlawed. Millions of vulnerable rural producers would be exposed to world prices dictated by EC and US surpluses. Efforts to raise food production, maintain rural employment and encourage ecologically sensitive agriculture would suffer.

This appears to be exactly what Washington — and the giant grain corporations such as Cargill which dictate the US position on GATT — have in mind. US Agricultural Secretary John Block stated US intentions with characteristic bluntness when he described the idea that developing countries should seek greater food self-reliance as a 'romantic anachronism'. Instead he urged them to 'adopt a more realistic food strategy based on the ready availability of cheap US cereals'.

This ignores the fact that in much of the developing world import dependence has already reached unsustainable levels. With commodity prices at historically low levels and debt service repayments reducing import capacity, consumers in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa — where imported cereals account for as much as a quarter of cereal consumption — are already dangerously exposed to the vagaries of world markets.

What happens in GATT is one aspect of the broader US effort to restructure the world food in favour of its agri-business corporations. While preferring trade diplomacy to push for free trade GATT rules, elsewhere — especially in the South —

elephants

Farmers in Europe and the Third World? Kevin Watkins looks at the Stevenson examines proposed changes to the Common Agricultural Policy

When the elephants fight the grass is crushed. When the elephants make love the grass is crushed
Swahili proverb.

old-fashioned economic muscle remains the order of the day. Nigeria, which banned US wheat imports in 1988 in an attempt to increase domestic food production and self-reliance, has now been threatened with a ban on its textile exports. And it has been warned that a GATT settlement will be used to outlaw all restrictions on US access to its markets.

GATT raises profound issues of political sovereignty, which is why Jamaica and other food-deficit countries are fighting a rearguard action to protect their food producers and work towards food self-reliance. They are demanding that any GATT agreement incorporates a distinction between the sort of subsidies that encourage over-production and dumping on the one hand, and those that promote food self-reliance on the other. If EC and US pronouncements on food security are to be taken as more than mere platitudes, it is a distinction they should accept.

■ Kevin Watkins is CIRR member of the aid agencies' UK Food Group - details from Catholic Institute for International Relations, 22 Coleman Fields, London N1.

Euro CAP-trap

Farmers' rush to produce increasing amounts in response to open-ended guarantees has resulted in incalculable damage to the countryside, environment and rural communities, says MEP George Stevenson. The irony is that despite mounting expenditure on farm support, large numbers of farmers are still struggling to survive.

Bigger farms had a bonanza in the heyday of the CAP - some three quarters of the CAP budget goes to the largest 20 per cent of farmers, exporters and agribusiness interests. But smaller farms have not

been able to protect themselves from soaring costs. Subsidies have not been going to those most in need, and have certainly done little to protect farmworkers who have seen massive job losses and remain poorly paid.

Across-the-board price supports will benefit those who produce most, particularly if they also save

that production targets are set for the EC as a whole. If the target is exceeded the price is reduced for all farmers in the EC. Farmers who still produce large quantities will be treated the same as those who have deliberately cut back their production levels. Farmers are therefore encouraged to chance higher levels and risk the reduced price they may get.



Something needs to be done. I believe that a 'common' policy does not have to be a uniform policy. Policies to ensure we get plenty of food at prices we can afford, with security to farmers, should also protect the countryside, give reasonable security to farmworkers and prevent over-production.

A partial solution might be to give each farmer a guaranteed price for each commodity up to a certain level of production. The quantities would be fixed for each farm relating to their crop areas and livestock numbers. Production above this level would get

production costs through economies of scale. On top of this, the whole system lends itself to massive fraud.

The EEC claims that CAP is being reformed using a ceiling level for price support (Maximum Guaranteed Quantities or 'stabilisers'). If the total amount of, say, beef or sugar is higher than the ceiling level then the CAP-guaranteed price is reduced.

One of the weaknesses of the stabiliser scheme is

little or no price support.

Other measures need to be adopted to ensure the environment is protected. But I firmly believe tinkering with the present CAP system will not be sufficient: a fundamental reform is required to secure the future for agriculture and rural communities.

■ George Stevenson is MEP for Staffordshire East and Labour's agricultural spokesman in Europe.

BOOK REVIEWS

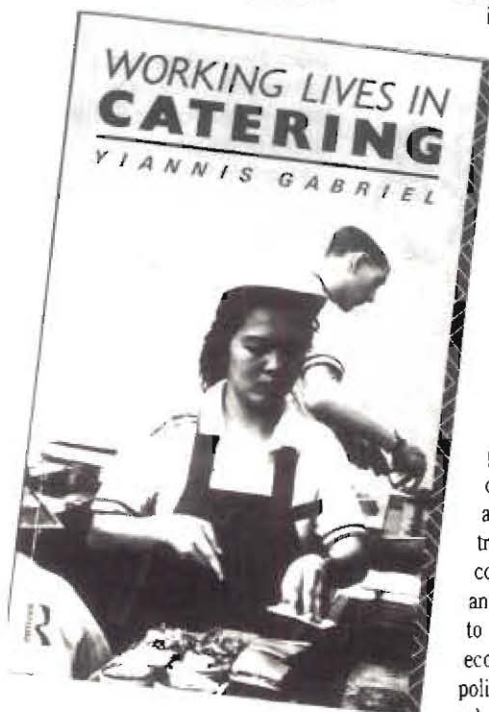
WORKING LIVES IN CATERING: Yiannis Gabriel, Routledge (11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4) £9.99 paperback, ISBN 0-415-05438-9.

'You work like a machine here. You do what they tell you. You work for eight hours, you go home and that's it,' comments Mr Suarez, kitchen porter at a large NHS hospital.

'When we prepare the food,' says Mrs Reynolds, catering assistant at a local authority cook-freeze kitchen, 'we don't think that someone is going to sit down and enjoy it. As long as it looks all right we're not making any effort to improve the quality.'

'I have a casual approach to the job ... right now the job suits me but I couldn't last here for more than a year,' says an anonymous fast food worker.

Yiannis Gabriel has collected together the thoughts, hopes and disillusion felt by some of the massive workforce of more than two million people employed in catering services in Britain.



Structured interviews are used to evaluate staff satisfaction with their work, and their attitudes to management and trade unions. But it is the quotations from the workers themselves that turns the figures into actual feelings. To make use of these varied and valuable insights, Mr Gabriel developed ways of

scoring and tabulating what otherwise would remain isolated quotes.

Take Mr Suarez again: 'I do my eight hours here, go home and try to forget about it. Still I like the job, otherwise I wouldn't be here. But the things you see depress you.' How can this be scored as an answer to 'Are you satisfied with your job?' Mr Gabriel prefers to use methods such as comparing one job with another – the present one with a previous one or with a common standard.

Even such comparative methods can be unreliable. So interviewees are asked to indicate priorities that they give to their work, and then, 'as far as these important things are concerned would you say your present job is first rate, pretty good, so-so, not too good or very bad?'

The combination of tabulated replies and extensive quotes provides a valuable record of the working lives of people who remain remarkably invisible to the media, to trade

unions, researchers, politicians and even the customers they serve. Yet it is an area where rich profits are being made through the application of mass production techniques borrowed from manufacturing.

The book is also a record of workplace relations and attitudes to management and to trade union organisation. It reflects the mid-point of Thatcher's Britain, when, as Mr Gabriel points out, 'capital in the persons of Edwardes, McGregor, Murdoch and others has challenged the traditions of management by consent and collective bargaining and has sought to re-assert its "right to manage" ... Some called it economic realism, others were less polite ... It affected every attitude and coloured every sentiment, depressing expectations, undermining opposition to management and inhibiting solidarity ... its importance is hard to over-estimate.'

Produced two years ago in hardback, the book has lost none of its relevance.

Tim Lobstein



HEALTHY EATING:

A guide for chefs and caterers Rob Silverstone, Macmillan Education (Houndmills, Basingstoke, RG21 2XS) £8.99 paperback, ISBN 0-333-52260-5.

When the London Food Commission researched the teaching of catering studies at colleges in 1985 (*Catering for All?*) it found serious shortcomings in relation to the issue of healthy eating. At the time several government publications and the long-suppressed NACNE report were all calling for changes in the great British diet; and it was becoming widely appreciated that food eaten in canteens, cafes, take-aways and restaurants, as well as schools and hospitals, accounted for as much as a third of national food consumption.

Chefs and catering staff, said the NACNE report, needed to be targeted with the healthy eating message. The report concluded that the places where they learned their skills were falling down when it came to healthy nutrition.

Gradually colleges started to change. Taking a lead was a lecturer at Dorset Institute of Higher Education, Rob Silverstone. He has since moved on to Brighton Polytechnic, but the course he developed has been distilled into this book: 60 pages looking at the

principles of healthy eating, food supply and special needs, and 70 pages of recipes.

The recipes themselves are accompanied by ratings for fibre, calories and fat (with bar charts to show the energy derived from fat) for each portion.

Most recipes serve ten or fewer portions, and the implication that the recipes might be aimed more for higher income clients than mass institutional catering is confirmed by some of the ingredients. Fish soup includes cognac, herbs are expected to be fresh and ingredients such as mangetout and gruyere make the occasional appearance. Sugar is out but honey is frequently used.

That said, many of the recipes are simple and inexpensive and some are quite unusual; try Lentil and Apricot Soup, Rabbit in Plum Sauce, and even Pears with Calves' Liver.

Tim Lobstein

MULTICULTURAL GUIDELINES

South Glamorgan Food and Health Policy has published a booklet, *Food & Health Policy for Multicultural Groups in South Glamorgan*. The guidelines for caterers, trainers and health promoters extend dietary recommendations to take into account the specific needs of the many cultural groups of the area. It is available from The Health Promotion and Education Centre, St David's Hospital, Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff CF1 9TZ Tel: 0222 344141.

ORGANIC FOOD

The Soil Association has published a series of five regional guides entitled *Organic food you can trust*, covering Scotland, Wales, Midlands and the North, West Country and South and East (including London). The guides cost £2.50 each and are available from The Soil Association, 86 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB. Tel: 0272-290661.

Feeding Hungry Babies

Dear Food Magazine

Having recently had a baby, I have been surveying the range of formula milks on the market and have been puzzled by those marked 'for the hungrier baby'.

Can you tell me how they differ from ones intended, presumably, for the baby who is only averagely hungry? Are they safe to give infants from birth? And how does one know if a baby is hungrier than average?

My concern is that unless there is a sound nutritional reason for choosing these products, they may merely be playing on the common but mostly unfounded anxiety about underfeeding, and exploiting the exhausted parents' desire for an unbroken night's sleep.

Also I would be grateful if you tell me what maltodextrin is, as it is listed as an ingredient in many baby foods?

Claire Sibson
London SE15

Editor's reply: Baby milk companies will happily sell you all the different types of product they can. Each product variety takes up shelf-space in the shop, so the more product varieties the more shelf

space that company can grab.

They market ones for 'the hungrier' or just 'the hungry' baby on the principal that parents will think that a baby that likes to feed often is somehow an unhappy baby, and that a sleeping baby is best. The formulas 'for hungrier babies' may include casein protein instead of whey and may use dextrin starches, all in an attempt to slow down the rate of absorption of the formula and so delay the time for the next feed. Our view is that for most babies there would be little to tell them apart, and that it all helps to confuse mothers and imply some 'scientific' grounds for what is a mere marketing tactic. They also try to sell formula as 'humanised' or 'closest to mother's milk, or the 'balanced' formula.

Obviously the ideal is a healthy diet for mum and breastmilk for the baby. No cow or soya substitute can beat it.

Maltodextrin is a chemically-treated starch half-way broken down into sugar. It is less harmful to teeth and less sweet to taste, but like sugar it is empty calories. Manufacturers like it because it is a cheap bulking agent to fill up the packet and help the mixture flow. When wetted it makes gum of the sort used on postage stamps.

Food companies in the Clinic

Dear Food Magazine

May I offer a counterblast to your criticism of infant feeding literature?

The new HEA booklet *From Milk to*

Mixed Feeding provides clear, authoritative, healthy, detailed, unbiased, well-illustrated information on weaning. Half a million copies have been printed and will be available at District Health Education Units. We hope this colourful informative booklet will reach every parent in the country, and provide them with clear guidelines.

This information is already available free to all first time parents within the *Birth to Five* book, but the HEA rightly decided that given all the commercial leaflets finding their way into clinics, a special version was needed.

We hope parents will look out for this booklet and that health clinics give it pride of place.

Karen Ford, Programme Officer
Parenthood and Child Health
Health Education Authority
London WC1



UNCLE BOB'S AGONY COLUMN

Public analyst Bob Stevens answers questions about food composition.

How do they make decaffeinated coffee?

Unroasted 'green' coffee beans are steamed to soften them and then the soft beans are rinsed in a solvent which dissolves the caffeine.

Solvents normally used are either hot water, carbon dioxide or methylene chloride. The problem with hot water is it removes the flavours along with the caffeine, and these then have to be refined from the water and returned to the beans or the instant granules.

Carbon dioxide is effective and non-toxic but only works when hot and under pressure, which is costly. Cheapest is methylene chloride, a component of some paint strippers and dry-cleaning fluids. There should be very little of this left in the coffee after it has done its work — tests show average residues to be about one fiftieth the EC maximum recommended level.

Manufacturers don't have to show what process they used, but in a survey by *Which?* magazine of 23 decaffeinated coffees, 15 had used methylene chloride, 6 carbon dioxide and 2 hot water.

With advice not to use cling film for wrapping fatty foods, is it OK to use old-fashioned greaseproof paper?

Most greaseproof paper is actually grease-resistant paper. Most of the sorts we buy in the UK come from Sweden or Switzerland, and they use methods which start with sulphite-

treated cellulose-based paper, soaked in or coated with a grease resisting agent.

Silicones and polyvinyl alcohol may be used, and more expensive versions may use fluorohydrocarbons (not CFC!). We have no data on their possible hazard to health, but scientific advisors to the government have recommended 'a thorough examination' of paper and board materials including a high priority for research into fluorohydrocarbons and silicones.

From my mail: a choice paragraph from a letter from MAFF enclosing a report of one of MAFF's working groups.

The report represent the views of the Group ... As the Report represents the

views of the individuals in the Group we do not consider this Report as necessarily representative of the views of the organisations represented by individuals in the Group...

GATT and free trade

Dear Food Magazine

When New Zealand farming subsidies stopped, Kiwi farmers cut back on agrochemicals and energy use so their farm output fell. Existing cuts in British farm subsidies have caused tractor sales to drop by 18 per cent and pesticide

sales to plummet over the last two years. Developing countries are calling for larger cuts so that EC food mountains disappear and there is more space on world markets for their produce.

If Sunon Handscomb opposes such cuts he supports European agribusiness. That is bad for the environment and bad for farmers in developing countries.

Peter Snell, London E8.

MARKET PLACE

BOOKS

Food Irradiation

Good food doesn't need irradiation. If food had to be irradiated then ask 'what was wrong with it?' With the UK government permitting food irradiation in 1991 this book is essential reading.

224pp ISBN 0-7225-2224-X £6.50 including post and packing.

Food Adulteration

The London Food Commission's expose of the shocking state of food quality in Britain, revealing the facts on additives, pesticides, nitrates, food poisoning and irradiation. We deserve the best but we will only get it if we demand it. This book spells out what the demands should be.

295pp ISBN 0-04-440212-0 £5.95 including post and packing

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Thousands of women and young children live in cramped, unhealthy and sometimes dangerous bed and breakfast hotels. They may be unable to cook or even store food. Their diet is poor. Based on interviews with the women themselves, it is a unique record of late-twentieth century Britain as experienced by hundreds of thousands of people.

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More Than Rice and Peas

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240pp ISBN 1-869904-30-3 £17.00 including post and packing

Children's Food

- ★ *Teething rusks sweeter than a doughnut?*
- ★ *Fish fingers less than half fish?*
- ★ *Beefburgers can be up to 40% pig fat?*

The book offers ways of judging what is good or bad on the shelves of our shops and gives sound advice on how to ensure our children eat healthily.

210pp ISBN 0-04-440300-3 £4.75 including post and packing

Additives – Your Complete Survival Guide

What can you do about additives? Which are dangerous and which are safe?

With comprehensive charts, the book explains 'E' numbers and examines the evidence on each food additive. It tells you everything you need to know, but industry would prefer you didn't ask, about the chemicals added to your food.

288pp ISBN 0-7126-1269-6 Normally £4.75, but for Food Magazine readers just £3.50 including post and packing.

Safe Food Handbook

The key facts to help you understand current issues such as the use and misuse of pesticides. Plus an A-Z shopper's guide to the most commonly bought foods, pinpointing risks and recommending alternatives.

Edited by Joan and Derek Taylor, with an Introduction by Pamela Stephenson.

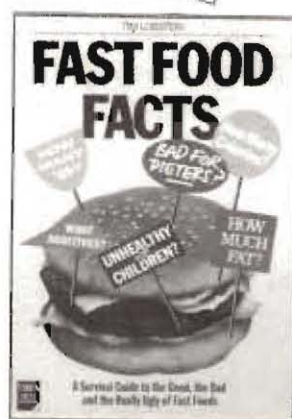
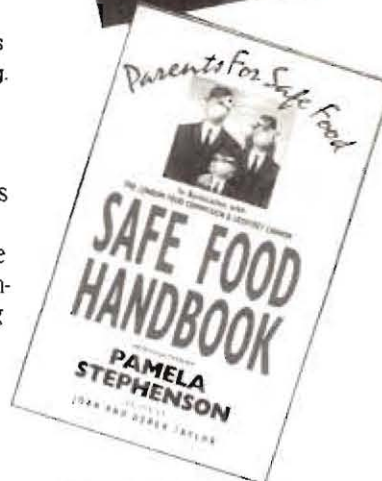
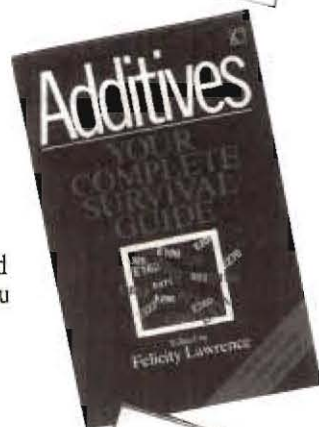
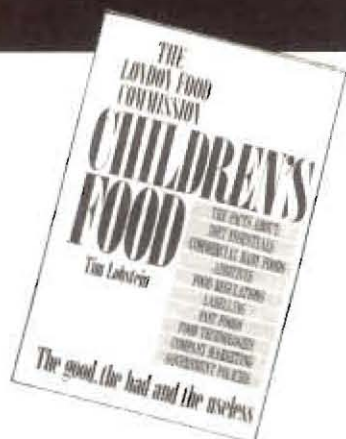
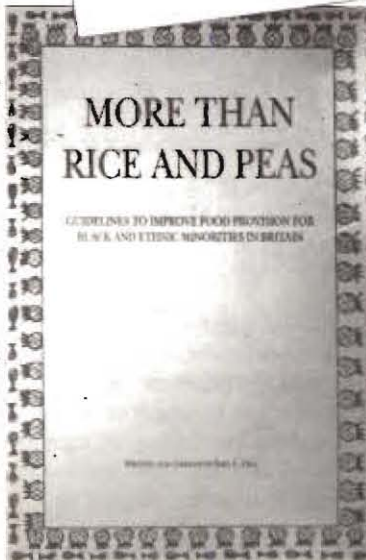
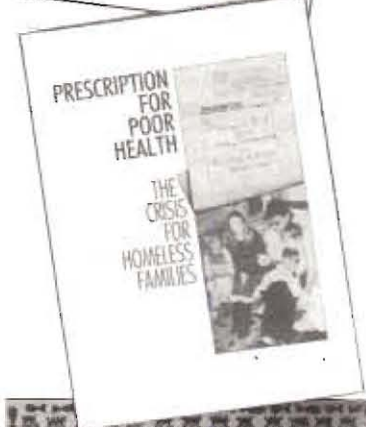
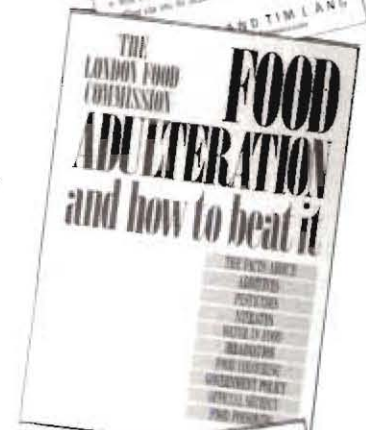
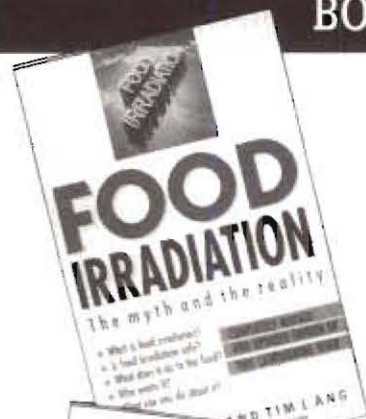
256pp ISBN 0-85223-823-1 £7.74 including post and packing

Fast Food Facts

- ★ *Chips coloured with textile dyes*
- ★ *French fries cooked in beef fat*
- ★ *Batter made without eggs or milk*

You don't have to avoid fast foods. But you do need to know what is in them. With comprehensive tables of nutrients and additives this book is a unique look into the secretive world of fast food catering.

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WHAT THE JOURNALS SAY

Coffee drinking, breastfeeding, chocolates and fats – Eric Brunner reviews the medical press

AMERICAN STUDY GIVES COFFEE THE OK

Five cups of coffee per day do not pose a risk to heart or circulation, say researchers at Harvard. Their finding, based on a study of 46,000 men, is unexpectedly welcome news for coffee drinkers. For many years a link between coffee and heart disease has been suspected. In 1986 a follow-up study of medical students over 35 years found a 2.5-fold increased risk for those drinking five or more cups daily. Coffee is suspected of raising blood cholesterol, blood pressure and causing irregular heart rhythms.

In this new study increasing levels of caffeinated coffee — up to five cups daily — were not associated with higher risk of cardiovascular disease. Higher consumption of decaffeinated coffee, however, was associated with a small increase in heart disease risk. Since analysis of risk based on levels of caffeine consumption from all sources (chocolate, cola drinks and tea, as well as coffee) showed no effect, it does seem that caffeine is not harmful to the circulation. Though the researchers offer no explanation, it may be that the method for removing caffeine which involves the use of organic solvents, rather than the water-based method, is responsible for the finding.

Grobbbee DE et al, 'Coffee, caffeine and cardiovascular disease in men', *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1990, vol.323, page 1026-32.

BIRTH SEPARATION WRECKS BREAST-FEEDING INSTINCT

Removal of the new-born baby from its mother for weighing and measuring will often interfere with the breast-feeding reflex. Swedish researchers observed that infants placed on the mother's abdomen began to make crawling movements towards the breast after about 20 minutes and 24 out of 38 were sucking 'correctly' after 50 minutes.

But if a baby was removed for measuring and dressing, and then returned to the mother only 7 of 34 were sucking after the same period. The effect of the use of pethidine (an opiate) for pain relief in labour had a similarly dramatic effect. The drug caused sedation in the infants, and of the 26 who were not sucking two hours after birth all but one were born to mothers who had been given pethidine. It might be asked why better pain-relief methods for labour have not been developed.

Richard L and Alade MO, 'Effect of delivery room routines on success of first breast-feed', *The Lancet*, 1990, vol.336, pages 1105-07.

THE AUTO-BREWERY: SUGAR TURNS TO ALCOHOL

People with windy bowels may be producing alcohol from sugar in their guts. After a carbohydrate or chocolate

binge (sugar content 65 per cent) a blood alcohol level around the 20mg/100ml — the legal limit for Swedish drivers — is possible. The phenomenon is called the 'auto-brewery syndrome', and depends on the activity of bacteria and yeasts living in our guts.

Hunnisett A et al, 'Gut fermentation (or the 'auto-brewery' syndrome)', *Journal of Nutritional Medicine*, 1990, vol.1, pages 33-38.

DOCTORS CONSIDER THEIR WAYS

The recent White Paper requiring all primary health care teams to adopt a prevention strategy has brought attention to the inadequacy of undergraduate medical education in the UK. Teaching of heart disease prevention in medical schools presently ranges from half an hour to 20 hours during the five year curriculum. If there is no agreement about what to teach and who should teach it (epidemiologists? cardiologists? public health physicians?) it can only be expected that newly graduating doctors will favour the curative approach cherished by their hospital-based mentors.

Crimlisk S, 'Teaching prevention of heart disease', *British Medical Journal* 1990 (News), vol. 301, page 1115.

FOODBORNE ILLNESS

Public concern about food safety has prompted the ever-watchful journal *The Lancet* to run a series of 16 articles on food safety. The series started in the 22 September issue and 'sets out to focus attention on what is known about the principal agents and sources of foodborne illness'. Topics being covered include salmonellosis, listeriosis, campylobacter, veterinary sources of foodborne illness and BSE.

The article on bovine spongiform encephalopathy tells us that by 2 November there had been 19,907 cases on 9413 farms. The author believes that the features of the outbreak suggest an 'extended common source' (animal feed?), but that it is possible that further cases are occurring via recycling of the infection through animal products in feed supplements prior to the ban. BSE has been confirmed in ten cats in Britain.

Various authors, 'Foodborne Illness' — series of 16 articles, *The Lancet*, vol. 336

HYDROGENATED VEGETABLE OILS RAISE BLOOD CHOLESTEROL

Hydrogenated vegetable oils in shortenings and margarines are significant parts of the diet. Adding hydrogen atoms to the double bonds of polyunsaturated vegetable oils converts them to solid fats, but in the process trans-fatty acids are formed. Only small amounts of such fatty acids are found in nature.

Researchers in the Netherlands have shown, in a short-term dietary study, that the trans-fatty acids have an undesirable effect on blood fats similar to that produced by cholesterol-raising animal fats.

Thirty four women and 25 men ate three mixed natural diets of identical nutrient composition, except that 10 per cent of the daily energy intake was provided as either oleic acid (the main constituent of olive oil) or saturated fatty acids. The diets were eaten for three weeks each, in random order.

Oleic acid produced the best balance of HDL-cholesterol, considered to be protective, and LDL-cholesterol. The trans-fatty acid diet produced the same low level of HDL-cholesterol as the saturated fat diet, and an intermediate LDL-cholesterol. Effects did not differ between men and women.

Hydrogenated soybean oil was used in this trial. Whilst this is the main source of trans-fatty acids in the US diet the authors point out that their results may not apply to other oils, such as hydrogenated fish oil. It does appear that the 1984 COMA Report, which lumped trans and saturated fatty acids into the same category took the right view. Attempts by vested interests to change this classification should be resisted until the evidence supports the move.

Mensink RP and Katan MB, 'Effect of dietary trans fatty acids on high-density and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels in healthy subjects', *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol 323, Pages 439-45.

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