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# THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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## Diabetic disasters

**Diabetic patients are being cynically misled by food companies. In a special Food Magazine survey we expose so-called 'diabetic' foods as a waste of money — £15 million at the last count — and a potential dietary disaster.**

Nearly half a million people with diabetes are eating specialised food products they don't need and which give them no particular nutritional benefit. The products may increase the risk of dietary disease, they cost more than regular brands and taste worse. Yet the foods, frowned on by health experts, are sold in chemists as if they were medically recommended.

These so-called 'diabetic' products were once thought to play a useful role in helping patients control their blood sugar levels. But more than ten years ago they were condemned by health professionals as being of little value and potentially harmful.

Earlier this year the British Diabetic Association (BDA) said that food companies actively promoting and displaying products in high street chemists could be misleading patients into thinking the products are an advantageous or necessary part of their diet. Far from it. These products are 'an outmoded relic' said the BDA, and 'have no place in the current management of diabetes'. Manufacturers and retailers — including Boots and the German chemical giant A G Beyer — are encouraging the unnecessary consumption of products which

- cost up to four times as much as their non-diabetic counterparts
- maintain a stigma that diabetic patients need 'different' food from the rest of the population

- may provide more calories or fat than regular products, breaking the law and undermining attempts to eat a healthy diet
- may provide higher levels of protein than regular products — and excess protein may be linked to kidney damage in some patients

- include large quantities of the sweetener sorbitol, which induces diarrhoea
- undermine health professionals' advice that these foods are unnecessary

Labelling the products is also a problem. With thirty per cent of all diabetic patients suffering eye disorders, clear labelling is important. And with an estimated 75 per cent of adult diabetic patients overweight, warnings that products are unsuitable for an overweight patient are especially important.

Yet our survey found products with the warning 'Not suitable for the overweight diabetic' hidden under wrapping flaps or written in tiny print against a patterned background. One packet of Holey Fruit Bonbons broke the law by omitting the warning entirely.

In a strongly worded statement the World Health Organisation condemned special diabetic foods as 'neither desirable nor necessary'. That was seven years ago, and itself came six years after similar condemnation from the American Diabetic Association. Yet little has changed since then.

**See report on pages 10 and 11.**



## Off the rails

Travelling with my two-year old son on an intercity train, I bought fruit, coffee and biscuits from the buffet bar and asked for a drink of water for my son. I was told I couldn't have any — it was company policy!

I have gone to great lengths to encourage my children to drink water rather than soft drinks. As a teacher of food and nutrition these issues are important to me. I'm complaining to British Rail as I believe plain water to drink, free of charge, should be available to anybody on a train and especially a child.

Marian Armitage  
London W4

## Decimal point

In your otherwise excellent article about 'vegetarian' symbols (FM issue 17) you quote a company as stating that the royalty charge required to use the Vegetarian Society symbol would have added two per cent to the price of each item.

The company quoted should have given you the figure of 0.2 per cent, which is the basis for calculating most of our license fees. Most companies using our symbol derive immense benefit from doing so and consider our licensing fees wholly acceptable.

Tony Nowell, Sales Director  
The Vegetarian Society  
Aitcringham

## Trolley buys

Unfortunately the new initiative in the USA of 'junior trolleys' in supermarkets (FM issue 17) has already arrived in the UK. Here in Sheffield children are learning the joys of impulse shopping from products which look attractive, smell delicious and fit nicely into their very own trolley.

Unfortunately it is not so easy to teach the reality of paying for it. I am told that the trolleys allow children to join in the shopping and not get bored. From the arguments and tears I have witnessed in the aisles this is doubtful.

Caroline Burrows  
Sheffield

## Hey Nanny No

Re: your article 'Kid's Stuff' (FM issue 17) I would be the first to admit the marketing of Nanny Infant Formula had been handled in a 'somewhat naive manner'. The person concerned has since 'left' the company. However I would like to put the record straight on specific points.

1. We have adhered to the WHO Code of Practice which does not allow advertising to the consumer. The trade was informed through journals and retailer information booklets were sent to health shop managers to educate them on the advantages of a goat-milk based infant feed.

2. The EC directive does not cover goat's milk formulas as hitherto none had existed within the community. However there is a set procedure to present feeds other than those based on cows or soya milk and we are strictly adhering to this procedure. I hasten to add that this product has been selling successfully in Australasia for some three years. However, I reiterate BREAST FEEDING IS BEST FOR BABIES and I have no wish to idealise bottle feeding at the expense of what nature has provided.

3. It was incorrectly stated by our 'marketing manager' that we were members of the Infant and Dietetic Foods Association and the Food and Drink Federation. At the time our publicity went to print we had been accepted by IDFA for membership (subject to certain conditions). I have apologised to these bodies for any embarrassment which we have caused them. We are not members to date (June 1992).

Since we are now more educated, albeit the 'hard way' we are taking all steps to correct previous labelling errors etc as soon as is practicable. We remain confident in the quality of Nanny and its role in a bottle-feeding programme.

Nicholas Moy, Director  
Frontier Marketing, Enfield

Please note, we love getting letters and try to print all we can. But long letters may have to be cut — if so, we will try to keep their flavour.

# Thanks to you



With the British economy in recession and many individuals finding it harder to make ends meet, it is, as one of our readers told us, 'wonderful that you have been able to keep going'.

What is wonderful, of course, is the continued sustenance the Food Commission receives from you, our readers and supporters. We have no grants or institutional help. But we have something better, something that makes us determined to carry on: the fact that hundreds, indeed thousands of people want to support our campaigns, to read the magazine, and to keep alive an independent voice able to challenge both industry and government.

And challenge them we must! What on earth is the food industry up to selling products which are clearly unhealthy, break the labelling regulations, are condemned as misleading by health professionals, and yet are sold in chemists as if they were somehow medically approved? Diabetic foods have no sensible place in a diabetic patient's diet. Yet companies such as Boots and the German chemical giant AG Beyer continue to exploit patients' anxieties.

And what about MAFF's claim to give consumers priority over the food industry? Over three years ago MAFF's advisory committee on toxic chemicals in food warned that they could not set an acceptable level of mineral oil (like paraffin oil and vaseline) in our diet, as they felt it should not be allowed at anything like present levels. MAFF announced a ban on mineral oils except for cheese wax and chewing gum. But the ban has not been put into effect. Instead MAFF quietly suspended the ban and called for further research. Who did MAFF ask to do this impartial research? The petrochemical companies!

Watchdog organisations, such as ourselves, will bark whenever we see officialdom or private enterprise stepping out of line. We can do this only if we have firm support. And this we have, thanks to you.

Sue Dibb and Tim Lobstein

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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Co-editors: Sue Dibb & Tim Lobstein

Information Officer: Martine Drake

Subscriptions: Ian Tokelove

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The Food Commission  
102 Gloucester Place  
London W1H 3DA  
Tel: 071-935 9078  
Fax: 071-935 7056

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# Government fails to ban toxic oils

In February 1989 the Ministry of Agriculture announced in a press release its intention to ban mineral hydrocarbons from use as a food additive and in food processing, 'as soon as possible.' The only exceptions were their use in chewing gums and cheese rind. Over three years later the Ministry, apparently under pressure from the industry, has not enacted its pledge nor set any date by which it may be enforced.

Mineral hydrocarbons in the form of white or petroleum oils like paraffin oil and vaseline may be used on dried fruit to prevent them sticking together, as a wax on citrus fruits, as a glazing agent on sugar confectionery and as a lubricant on machinery, where it can leave residues in foods such as confectionery, jellies, bread and sausages.

The industry has estimated that every day over 44,000 litres of white oil worth £20 million annually are used by the baking industry alone to lubricate bread tins and cutting blades. Mineral hydrocarbons are also used in food packaging materials which may come into contact with food, although MAFF says it is reviewing this use separately.

In 1989, following review by the government's expert Committee on Toxicity, mineral hydrocarbons were reclassified as substances with 'definite or possible toxicity' which ought not to be permitted for use in food.

The Committee were concerned that studies of these oils indicated 'toxicity down to very low doses'; also that toxicity testing and specifications were inadequate, that average intakes in the UK of mineral oils 'are in excess of even any tentative Acceptable Daily Intake', and finally that their cumulative nature makes them undesirable as food additives.

In its 1989 announcement MAFF

stated that the 'proposed prohibition of the use of mineral hydrocarbons is to ensure the safety of the consumer, which must take precedence over commercial considerations.' For virtually all uses of mineral hydrocarbons there are already safer, acceptable alternatives — primarily synthetic oils often derived from vegetable sources.

It therefore came as a surprise to consumer organisations to discover that three years after MAFF's announcement the ban has not been implemented and MAFF is unable to say when it will be.

Despite the clear advice from its expert committee which the Minister supposedly accepted, MAFF told *The Food Magazine* that it was awaiting the outcome of further toxicity tests which are being carried out by the organisation, Conservation of Clean Air and Water in Europe, known as CONCAWE. This benign-sounding body was in fact set up by 30 European petro-chemical companies. Five of its members with a commercial interest in mineral hydrocarbons are responsible for this further research. It would appear that this is little more than a delaying exercise inspired by the industry. One of the companies, Shell, originally submitted toxicological studies which the Committee on Toxicity used for its judgement, although they have never been published and are therefore publicly

unavailable for independent assessment.

There would also appear to be a conflict between the views of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Health over the safety of mineral hydrocarbons. MAFF states that 'there is no evidence that these substances have to date produced adverse effects in humans.'

However the Department of Health points out that the only reason for this is that doctors, understandably, do not consider mineral hydrocarbon intakes when taking a clinical history. Therefore, of course, data on mineral hydrocarbon's effects in humans is lacking. The Department of Health makes clear that animal toxicology studies give cause for concern.

This is not the first time that the industry has apparently successfully resisted government intentions over mineral hydrocarbons. Although chewing gum base was exempted for the original proposed ban, the Food Advisory Committee said that 'consumers should be warned that chewing gum must not be swallowed and never eaten with other foods, particularly chocolate'. The chewing gum manufacturers were reluctant to place warning labels on their products and MAFF has not insisted. Apart from a press release MAFF has issued no further guidance and the majority of chewing gum users therefore remain unaware of this

## Label changes

Like the 73 bus, EC draft directives come only occasionally but then they come in threes. The latest from Brussels include a variety of proposed labelling measures, ranging from raw milk to sweeteners, of which the following give the flavour: ■ Any food or drink containing the sweetener aspartame (NutraSweet) will have to warn 'contains an amount of phenylalanine'.

■ Food or drink made with more than 10 per cent of polyol sweeteners (including sorbitol) will have to warn 'excessive consumption may have laxative effects'. This will include many of the diabetic foods featured in this issue of *The Food Magazine*.

■ Hydrogenated vegetable oils will have to state they are hydrogenated, but hydrogenated animal oils (including marine oils which are often used — as hydrogenated oils — in margarines) need not state they are hydrogenated, unless the specific animal is named. This oddity could not be explained by MAFF press office even after it was pointed out that the same discrepancy exists under present UK labelling regulations.

■ MAFF have also circulated proposed 'harmonisation' moves to phase out the use of pounds, ounces and pints in favour of metric measures, but these will not be enforced for several years yet and even then MAFF will avoid mockery from the tabloids: beer and bottled milk have been given 'endangered species' status and excluded from the changes.

## Food monitoring inadequate, say public analysts

Britain's public analysts, the main line of defence against food adulteration and contamination, have condemned the low levels of sampling in many parts of the country as 'not adequate to ensure public confidence in the food enforcement system'.

In their annual statistical summary for last year, the public

analysts' professional association reveals an average food sampling rate of 1.22 food samples per 1,000 population, less than half the European Commission recommended rate of 2.5 per 1,000, and equivalent to just one sample for every £600,000 spent on food.

Scotland showed the best sampling rate at over 3.6 per 1,000.

London — which the report notes has a complex population mix and a large number of catering outlets and so should undertake a high level of monitoring — came bottom of the list at less than 0.6 samples per 1000.

■ Annual Statistics of the Public Analysts Scientific Service for 1991, Association of Public Analysts, June 1992. Details: Bob Stevens at Clayton Environmental, tel 021-359 5951



## 'Free' trade costs us dear

US campaigner Lori Wallach, a vociferous opponent of the GATT agreement, is touring Europe this summer. In this exclusive article for *The Food Magazine* she reveals the corruption at the core of the GATT negotiations.



■ Lori Wallach is an attorney with Congress Watch, an arm of Ralph Nader's Public Citizen organisation, based in Washington, DC.

In August 1991, a GATT panel ruled on a US environmental law prohibiting the sale of tuna fish caught using methods that kill large numbers of dolphins. This dolphin-friendly law was an illegal barrier to trade, declared the GATT panel, and must be eliminated.

If it had not been clear before, with this case citizens began to see how the technical terms of trade pacts negotiated far away from public input and scrutiny could mask a harsh domestic deregulatory agenda of multinational corporations.

The greatest direct threat to consumer and environmental protection regulation in the latest GATT proposals come from a sweeping definition of 'non-tariff trade barriers'.

By labelling a broad range of food, health, safety, and environmental regulations as 'non-tariff trade barriers' or technical barriers to trade, GATT will open up many of the gains of citizen movements to challenge — not on the basis of whether they protect humans or their environment, but on the basis of whether they restrict certain kinds of trade.

Coupled with this is the concept of 'harmonization', which has been strongly advocated by the Bush administration as well as the Thatcher and Major governments. In theory, harmonization lubricates world trade by equalising standards. In practice, harmonization is a euphemism for ratcheting down standards to meet the lowest common denominator.

The December, 1990 draft GATT proposals are an ambitious blueprint for using these mechanisms to lower standards, including food safety regulations (US and UK). Food safety laws could be dramatically undercut if the GATT draft is adopted. The section on Sanitary or Phytosanitary Measures would create a presumption that any food-related statute or regulation in any country, or subdivision within a country (such as a state or city) that is stronger than a GATT-agreed international standard is an illegal barrier to trade. This section covers food additives, contaminants, labelling, inspection and standards for sanitary handling of food products and much more.

These GATT standards would be set by the obscure, industry influenced commission in Rome known as the Codex Alimentarius. The Codex standard-setters are hardly disinterested tribunals of science. One government representative from each participating country is the official delegate. For many countries, that person comes from the department of commerce and not from a food safety or consumer agency. That government official is accompanied by private sector delegates. The non-

voting private sector contingent of a recent US delegation included three officials from Nestlé, one each from Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Hershey, Ralston Purina, Kraft, and CPC International, as well as agents of trade associations for food processors and the American Frozen Food Institute. Indeed, Nestlé sends so many representatives, from so many countries, that it is more heavily represented than most nations.

If a country chooses to enact a stronger standard of protection than those chosen by the Codex, it would be forced to prove to a GATT dispute resolution panel that the standard is supported by incontrovertible scientific evidence or is premised on the risk assessment procedures set out by Codex and is consistent with other levels of risk allowed by the nation and is the least trade restrictive option possible to achieve a GATT-legitimate goal.

Environmental bases for the food safety standards are not considered GATT-legitimate. Thus, world-wide bans or limits on DDT premised on the chemical's environmental effects could be exposed to elimination as GATT-illegal trade barriers. The GATT text also requires balancing of economic loss with health benefit in all cases. Thus, pure health tests that provide for zero risk standards could fail a GATT challenge. The Delaney Clause, America's strongest food safety law which strictly forbids any carcinogenic additive or pesticide residue in foods is such a health-only law.

Additionally, it is GATT-illegal to distinguish between tuna that is harvested in environmentally destructive ways such as encirclement netting and tuna that is harvested in environmentally sound ways. This logic not only undermines a nation's right to enact health and environmental protections, but it raises numerous questions about this decision's meaning for other non-environmental trade sanctions. For instance, what does this decision mean for a nation's right to enact trade sanctions relating to labour rights practices, such as bans on products produced through slave or child labour? What does this mean for laws about the humane slaughter of animals?

In the US the citizens movement has grown tremendously since 1991. A Congressional resolution states unequivocally that Congress will reject any GATT agreement that could jeopardise American health, safety, labour or environmental standards. The resolution now has 216 cosponsors (half of the Congress is 218 and most resolutions don't get over 100 cosponsors).

The resolution should be voted on in the third week of July. It is opposed by the Bush Administration and by the US business lobby. It is supported by hundreds of citizens groups from the AFL-CIP to the Sierra Club to the Ralph Nader organizations to the National Farmer's Union to the Methodist Church.



## Carrageenan safety questioned

The food additive carrageenan, which is widely used in many processed foods, continues to raise safety concerns. A new government report questions the safety of purified food grade carrageenan (E407) while the producers of an unrefined and untested grade are continuing to press for its approval in foodstuffs in Europe.

Pure grade carrageenan, a seaweed extract sometimes known as Irish Moss, is used as a gelling agent and to add bulk in a wide range of products including desserts, fillings, jellies, confectionery, meat and dairy products, soft and alcoholic drinks, preserves and sauces.

Now, more than 20 years after its initial approval in 1970, the government's expert Committee on Toxicity (COT) has reservations about the complete safety of purified carrageenan. In view of the COT's concern over possible effects on the immune system, the Government's recent Food Advisory Committee review of emulsifiers and stabilisers<sup>1</sup>

recommends reclassifying carrageenan from Group A — additives acceptable for food use — into Group B — 'substances which are provisionally acceptable for use in food but about which further information must be made available within a specified period of time for review.'

Food consumed by babies and young children raised particular concern and the Committee requires within two years 'studies to further investigate the extent of absorption and bioavailability of orally administered food-grade carrageenan, particularly by the immature gut.'

As reported previously in *The Food Magazine*<sup>2</sup> the Philippines' seaweed industry has been attempting to gain European approval for its unrefined PNG grade of carrageenan, which has a significantly different specification from purified food grade carrageenan resulting from a different manufacturing process. US approval was gained in unusual circumstances without the submission

of toxicological data for it, and the Food Commission made clear that the EC food regulatory authorities should insist on seeing toxicological data, as is usual, before taking its decision. The EC authorities have now stipulated that toxicological tests must be carried out and reported by the producers. An article dealing with the more scientific aspects of this matter was published in the *British Food Journal* this spring.<sup>3</sup>

The Food Commission's concern over the US approval of the Philippines' unrefined carrageenan has been reported in the USA<sup>4</sup> and we will continue to monitor this issue.

■ (1) *Food Advisory Committee Report on the Review of Emulsifiers and Stabilisers in Food Regulations*. FdAC/REP/11, HMSO, London, 1992. ISBN 0 11 242931 9.

(2) Politics wins over science in food additives approval, *The Food Magazine*, Vol 2, No 16, 1992.

(3) D M W Anderson, The Carrageenan Connection - Can political lobbying undermine food safety decisions? *The British Food Journal*, Volume 94, No 2, 1992.

(4) Toxicological data asked for EC approval of PNG Carrageenan, *Food Chemical News*, May 11, 1992.

## Caterers urged to help customers

Every week in Somerset, someone under the age of 64 dies of heart disease. In July 1991 a local Workplace Healthy Eating Advisory Team (WHEAT) launched an action-research survey to find out what healthy menus were being provided by workplace caterers in the area.

The results now coming through show that although 77 per cent of the 300 caterers contacted felt they did play a role in the improvement of their customers' health, virtually as many (74 per cent) had never held any form of healthy eating promotion, and many were unaware of current nutritional reports and recommendations.

Healthy alternatives were often available on menus, but some caterers had abandoned products like low fat cheese, wholemeal pastry and pasta, and reduced fat mayonnaise, saying they were unpopular or too expensive.

■ For more details on the WHEAT project contact the Health Promotion Unit, Somerset Health Authority, Wellsprings Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7PQ, tel (0823) 333491.

## events

### Food and low income

Huddersfield Health Authority and the Look After Your Heart programme are jointly mounting a conference on Food and Low Income Initiatives, to be held on Friday October 2nd.

■ Details from Deborah Wyles, Community Nutrition Educator, Health Promotion Unit, Princess Royal Community Health Centre, Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4EW, tel (0484) 545411 ext 4284.

### Social service catering

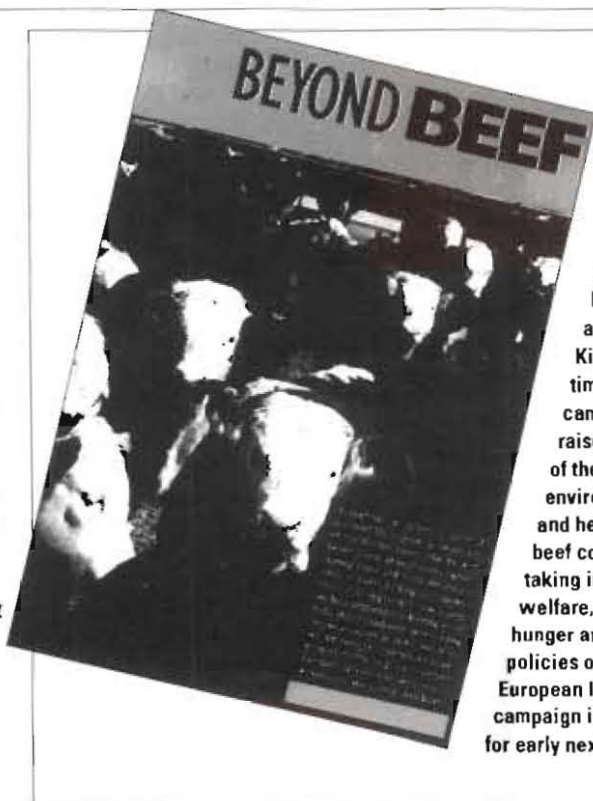
'Community Meals — a luxury or a necessity' asks the Advisory Body for Social Service Catering, which then suggests you join in finding the answer at its conference at Brunel University, Uxbridge, on September 16-18.

■ Details from Dawn Patterson, ABSSC Conference Secretary, Longdon Heath Lodge, Upton-on-Severn, Worcester WR8 0QX, tel (0684) 592500.

## Vegetarians at higher risk from nitrates

Up to 700,000 vegetarians may be exceeding safe recommended levels for nitrate consumption because of drinking water contaminated from intensive agriculture, according to Friends of the Earth. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food claim in their recent report on nitrates in foods that vegetarians were within safety limits but Friends of the Earth say that MAFF figures ignore intakes of nitrate from drinking water. FoE are calling for the government to control nitrate fertiliser use to protect drinking water sources in areas where nitrate pollution is high.

■ *Nitrate, Nitrite and N-Nitroso compounds in food: Second Report*. Food Surveillance paper No 32, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 1992.



From the country that spawned McDonalds and Burger King comes a timely campaign to raise awareness of the true environmental and health costs of beef consumption, taking in animal welfare, global hunger and farming policies on the way. A European launch of the campaign is scheduled for early next year.



# From the farm to your front door

**Community groups in Japan and the USA can order their food direct from organic farms. Now similar schemes are taking root in British soil. Sue Dibb reports.**

Once a week boxes of fresh organic vegetables are delivered direct from local organic farms to homes in Bristol and Bath. For £5 a week two hundred and fifty households receive reasonably priced, freshly harvested organic produce with the added advantage of knowing how and where it has been produced. At present the scheme is limited to fruit and vegetables but it is planned to add dairy produce and organic meat to the weekly deliveries.

Because the costs of packaging and transport are low, the food is good value compared with supermarket supplies. And the farmers and growers benefit from knowing they have a guaranteed market for their produce.

Eric Booth of the Soil Association, which is facilitating such schemes in the UK, has found that the overwhelming advantage for consumers is knowing how their food is produced. "Consumers are becoming ever more concerned about food quality, freshness and safety. Every survey shows they care about water pollution, environmental damage and responsible stewardship of the land. They are alarmed at the amount of packaging and processing their food is subjected to, and at the

length of the distribution chain from field to table."

He is working on a project to help facilitate what has become known as community supported agriculture (CSA) by preparing leaflets, providing information and setting up a database of schemes and interested producers. However as he points out local people are needed to set up schemes. "We can help with information and support but it only works if there is a local commitment. But we have found there is a huge advantage for people in knowing where their food is coming from. Families can go and visit "their" farm, even go and work and harvest if they want. And it's an important educational tool. We've had a great response from schools who want to develop links with farms, not just for a one-off visit, but throughout the seasons."

Schemes to link producers and consumers come in all shapes and sizes. In the Bristol scheme the fruit and vegetables provided vary at the producer's discretion, depending on what is in season and available. The consumer to give the producer ideas as to what they would like to receive, but these choices may not be incorporated until the next growing season.

By contrast, subscription farming requires much closer co-operation between producer and consumer. Payments are usually made for the whole season or year in advance and can be paid in labour as well as money. The consumer has a greater say in the type of produce they receive and an involvement in farm policy. The farmer has a stable, ready-made market, help with the growing and harvesting of the crops and some insurance should a particular crop fail.

Ayrshire Organic Growers is one example of subscription farming set up in 1990 supplying forty 'shareholders' for an annual cost of £180 from three organic growers within a 5 mile radius of Ayr in Scotland. Springhill Farm in Buckinghamshire has also been operating subscription farming since 1991. Active subscribers pay by regular labour at weekends while all subscribers receive organic produce, are involved in annual farm policy and enjoy the co-operative nature of the enterprise.

Full community supported agriculture (CSA) can involve farm management co-ordinated by all within the community and the farms are usually owned by everyone in the community. The ideal is to support the community in as many ways as

possible from within the community itself. This extends beyond food production to including sharing non-farming skills, machinery and vehicles.

While CSA schemes may be new to the UK they have a longer history overseas. One of the first CSA schemes was established 25 years ago in Switzerland and there are now projects in Germany, Denmark and France. In the US the number of CSA projects has grown from the first in 1985 to over 200 in 1991.

In Japan approximately twenty per cent of the population, some eleven million households, are members of consumer co-operatives. The overwhelming priority for Japanese co-operative members is safe food rather than cheap food and the co-operative movement has had a strong influence on the quality of foods, specifically the elimination of some food additives, as well as on environmental issues and social welfare.

One of the main factors in their success is their use of home deliveries. Each co-operative organises in groups of up to a dozen households and delivers to them weekly as a unit. The effect can be to strengthen neighbourhood social relationships.

One scheme, the Seikatsu Club, has provided the model for a new UK project called the Creative Consumer Co-operative which aims to set up a nationwide scheme which consumers can join as produce becomes available in their area (see box). Such schemes can do much not only to break the deadlock of high price and non availability of organic food in the UK but to re-establish the valuable links between producers and consumers which modern farming methods, food manufacturing and supermarkets have done much to destroy.

■ For more information on community supported agriculture:

#### Organisations

Eric Booth, The Soil Association, 86 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB. Tel: 0272 290661.

Creative Consumers Co-operative, FREEPOST, 52 Elswick Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 5BR. Tel: 091-272 1148.

#### Further reading:

*Linking Farmers and Consumers*. How you can support local farms and eat fresh organic foods. (Includes details of schemes already operating). Price £1.00 (50p p&pp).

*Farms of Tomorrow (Community Supported Farms, Farm Supported Communities)* Trauger Groh & Steven McFadden. £10.90 (£3.50 p&pp).

Both available from The Soil Association, 86 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB.



## Become a Creative Consumer

The Creative Consumer Co-operative (CCC) plans to be the first national, direct delivery consumer co-operative supplying organic foods at lower than shop prices while supporting organic growers and sustainable agricultural practices. Membership of the co-operative involves a minimum investment of £50 which entitles the member to be a participating purchaser.

The CCC estimate that 90 per cent of the population will be able to get produce from the CCC delivery network within four years.

The CCC has already raised sufficient funds to carry out pilot projects and welcomes new enquiries.

■ For more information contact the Creative Consumer Co-operative, 52 Elswick Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 5BR.



## CAP reform a failure - SAFE

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms agreed in Brussels in May are a failure for the environment, consumers and the majority of farmers, says the Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment (SAFE) Alliance. The reforms neglect environmental concerns, will not eliminate surpluses and fail to resolve the CAP's destabilisation of world markets, says SAFE's report published in July.

Fundamental reform of the CAP was promoted by the EC to tackle agricultural overproduction and redress the imbalance of farm subsidies whereby 20 per cent of farmers received 80 per cent of effective support. Despite the UK government's stress on budgetary and environmental considerations, the chance to, in agriculture minister John Gummer's words, 'put the environment at the heart of the CAP' has been lost says SAFE, the coalition of 30 small farmer, consumer, organic, third-world development, animal welfare and environmental organisations.

Instead, 'set-aside' is now firmly at the heart of the CAP. SAFE argues that setting land aside has dubious environmental consequences since it does nothing to tackle the increasing intensity of farming on the land that remains in production. Experience from the US shows that the total level of farm inputs such as pesticides and fertilisers, remains relatively constant although used over a smaller area.

Set-aside also encourages large farmers to meet their obligations by buying or renting poorer quality land to put into set-aside. This is likely to force increasing numbers of smaller farms out of business.

During negotiations the powerful big farm interests successfully lobbied for the abandonment of proposals that would have redirected farm support to the majority of (smaller) farmers. Instead the amount of compensation paid to farmers for taking land out of production will be calculated on a regional, rather than a farm-by-farm basis. Therefore if some farmers over-

produce, all farmers in the region will suffer, deterring the others from remaining within the spirit of the scheme.

Large farmers may find that they will be better off increasing their production even after they (and their neighbours) pay compensation. This could have disastrous consequences for small farmers who will lose much of their support.

There is also little evidence that the reforms will reduce the price of food to consumers. A 35 per cent reduction in cereal prices would only mean 3p off a 60p loaf of bread, assuming manufacturers choose to pass this price saving onto customers.

While the environmental concerns of agriculture were acknowledged, if not given great priority, health implications of the CAP were completely ignored. Subsidies will not encourage the production of lower fat commodities and the CAP will continue to support tobacco production.

The CAP reforms may also herald the introduction of VAT on food in the

UK. While some food prices to the consumer may be slightly reduced, the total cost of the reform package shows a steady increase in its budget. How this will be paid for has yet to be worked out, but introducing VAT on food is likely to be one option.

Subsidised exports of surplus EC products have destabilised and depressed international agricultural markets — a factor which brought the GATT negotiations to a halt earlier this year. Developing countries unable to subsidise their exports have been particularly hard-hit, losing markets and desperately-needed foreign exchange. Controlling EC overproduction is a prerequisite for addressing these problems. Unfortunately the CAP reforms, through set-aside, are unlikely to achieve this end.

The SAFE Alliance is urging the UK government in its six-month Presidency of the European Community starting in July, to champion meaningful agricultural reforms (see below) and through its sister organisations in other EC countries, SAFE will be pressing similar agendas upon other member state governments.

## Organic food faces EC threat

EC bureaucracy could prevent genuine organic food from reaching the consumer and undermine the growing market for organic produce in the UK. According to British organic organisations, the EC's standards for organic foods come into effect on 23 July before workable procedures have been set up.

Organic imports from non-EC countries which have not yet registered for community approval, including the USA, will no longer be legal. Also at risk are many 'trade not aid' projects that have been developed to provide third world growers with fair prices for organically grown produce. 'Despite our wholehearted support for the regulation in principle, we cannot allow its shortcomings to undermine the British organic food market, just at a time when availability and continuity of supply are improving,' said Patrick Holden, Director of British Organic Farmers.

## Five priorities for the UK Presidency of the EC

In July the UK began its six-month presidency of the EC. SAFE has identified five key areas to which the UK government has already expressed commitment during its election campaign and which the Minister should pursue in his six month Presidency.

### 1 Consumer issues

The government should show its responsiveness to public opinion by proposing an EC-wide moratorium on irradiation and re-drafting the Novel Foods regulations to make provision for public consultation and improved labelling. The role of the EC's Consumer Policy Services should be upgraded, and the EC should insist on democratisation of the Codex Alimentarius committees.

### 2 Farming and the environment

The government's vaunted

commitment to the environmental importance of agriculture should be put into practice through the introduction of voluntary whole farm management agreements which would encourage a shift to more ecological agriculture.

### 3 Animal welfare

In the review of the Battery Hens Directive, the government should follow the conclusion of the EC's expert working party and insist on the abandonment of laying cages as soon as possible. The Transport Directive should stipulate limits of 12 hours between stops for farm animals in transit.

### 4 Organic agriculture

Whole farm management agreements would enable the government to honour its commitment to organic farming by

supporting farms under conversion as well as those in fully organic management. The government should also provide funding for the organic certification authorities which fulfil its statutory obligations under the EC Regulation on organic foods.

### 5 CAP and the third world

The government should promote schemes to encourage less over production in Europe and export dumping at the expense of the Third World. The Sugar Protocol should be renegotiated to safeguard market access for developing countries, with the establishment of a diversification fund in compensation for likely price cuts.

■ *Missed Opportunity and New Hope: Priorities for the UK Presidency* is available from SAFE, 21 Tower Street, London WC2H 9NS. Price £2.00 inc p&p s.



# A Mars a day keeps the watchdogs at bay

**Action and Information on Sugars (AIS) has accused the TV advertising watchdog, the Independent Television Commission (ITC), of failing to enforce its new Code of Practice at the very first challenge.**

In June the ITC rejected AIS complaints that the Mars slogan, 'A Mars a day helps you work, rest and play', breached the broadcasting code. AIS also claim unfair treatment, secrecy and delay over the ITC ruling.

Action and Information in Sugars complained firstly that the Mars slogan could not be scientifically substantiated, and secondly that it was a 'generalised health claim' which is not permitted under the advertisers' code of practice.

Initially the ITC's medical advisers accepted that the slogan had no basis in science. However Mars then changed its defence, claiming the slogan was not a health claim at all but a 'convenience claim'. Despite clear evidence, from the government's expert Food Advisory Committee and proposed EC legislation that in fact such a slogan would be considered a health claim, the ITC accepted Mars defence that their slogan is only 'a claim to be a convenient and agreeable source of food energy'.

The ITC also chose to ignore the context of Mars advertising and promotion which is to associate its product with sport, fitness, vitality and

health, including being the official snack food for this summer's Olympic Games.

However it is not just the ruling but also the ITC's procedures that have led to concern. The ITC conducted extended correspondence with Mars who were given repeated opportunities to submit new evidence and introduce new arguments. AIS was neither informed of the arguments raised by Mars nor given the opportunity to respond. The ITC defended this unequal treatment as 'normal' procedure and refused to make any of the material submitted by the advertiser available, saying it was 'confidential'.

The ITC's choice of medical advisers is also a matter of concern. The ITC's principal medical adviser on this complaint was Professor Harry Keen, a retired diabetologist from Guy's Hospital. It is a matter of public record that Professor Keen was the recipient of research grants from various British and international sugar organisations for 15 years.

The Mars decision is the latest in a long sequence of judgments by the ITC exonerating advertisers' misleading claims about food and health. Two notable examples were the complaints about the Milky Way slogan 'The sweet you can eat between meals without ruining your appetite' (see FM issue 16) and the sugar industry's notorious 'humming bird' adverts for sugar (see FM issue 13). Following these concerns Joan Lester MP will be asking the new Minister responsible for broadcasting, David Mellor, to commission a thorough review not only of advertising codes but of regulatory body procedures.

## Poor women eat poor diets

A survey of women living on low incomes has confirmed previous suggestions that the women's diets are likely to be lacking a range of essential nutrients.

On average, the sample of 62 women with small children living on low incomes in the Newcastle area had diets low in dietary fibre (average 11g per day compared with the recommended 30g) and high in fat (42 per cent of energy compared with the recommended 33 per cent).

The women's average consumption of calcium, magnesium, potassium, and vitamin B6 fell 17-27 per cent below the levels deemed sufficient for the majority of people (RNI), while iron, vitamins A and C and folic acid fell more than 40 per cent below these levels.

As the report points out, these essential nutrients are found in more expensive foods (at least in terms of pence per Calorie), such as wholegrain products, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables (especially green leafy vegetables) and fresh lean meat.

Interviews with the women showed the cost of food to be the main factor affecting food choice. 'Nutritional knowledge and cooking skills were generally high across the group and did not vary with income level, and hence it can be said that income prevented the utilisation of this knowledge and the opportunity to use these skills.'

■ An investigation into the factors affecting the diet of women in low income groups. Ian Antony Jones, Newcastle Polytechnic Department of Applied Consumer Sciences, 1992.

## ITC faces criticism over baby milks ads

Baby Milk Action is calling for the Independent Television Commission (ITC) to stop the first television adverts for a follow-up milk on the grounds that it detracts from breastfeeding. Manufacturers Young Nutrition are this summer screening adverts for its follow-up milk, Forward.

Baby Milk Action, supported by the Health Visitors Association and the Royal College of Midwives, argue that the WHO/UNICEF International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, which the UK Government supports, says there should be no promotion of any product that is, or is perceived as, a breastmilk substitute.

Follow-up milks are aimed at babies over four months but have been described in the 1986 World Health Assembly Resolution as 'not necessary'. The Australian code of practice on baby-milk marketing has recently been amended to prevent all milks for babies under a year from being advertised.

■ For more information: Patti Rundall, Baby Milk Action, 23 St Andrew's Street, Cambridge CB2 3AX. Tel. 0223 464420.

## Why mums ignore health workers

A survey of mothers of young children in Haringey, North London, found that younger mothers, those on lower incomes and those from black and ethnic minority groups tended to ignore healthy eating advice from health workers and baby clinics. Food company leaflets were seen as one significant influence.

The survey found commercial sweetened drinks tended to be introduced at an early age by many mothers, and commercial weaning foods were introduced by nearly four out of ten mothers by the time the child was three months. The study found the lowest breast feeding rates and the highest reliance on commercial weaning foods among women from Asian backgrounds, and mothers from both Asian and Chinese backgrounds tended to have a poor knowledge of currently recommended good weaning practices.

Nearly a quarter of mothers agreed with the

suggestion that 'baby food is so bland it is a good idea to add sugar or salt', and a similar proportion agreed that 'the earlier you introduce solids the better'. Sixty per cent said they had been given conflicting feeding advice by different health workers, whilst 42 per cent were unsure about the advice given by their health visitor or else thought it was 'old fashioned'.

Some of the conflicting sources of advice may derive from the commercial leaflets available in baby clinics. Whilst the Haringey study was being prepared health visitors at one of the clinics rejected leaflets from the manufacturers of Marmite as they felt the leaflets undermined current advice to avoid salt in infant diets.

■ A study of infant feeding practice in the London Borough of Haringey with regard to socio-economic status and ethnicity. Shirley Posner, Food and Consumer Studies, North London Polytechnic, 1992.



# A Diet of Junk Food Adverts - Part 2

The Food Magazine takes a second look at advertising on children's television

Two years ago The Food Magazine monitored a week of advertising on children's television and asked: are children being fed a diet of junk food ads?

The answer was clear-cut. Products high in sugars and/or fats made up four-fifths of food advertising to children. Commercial breaks were dominated by adverts for just the kinds of foods which do little to contribute towards a healthy diet — sweetened cereals, confectionery, crisps, fast food and soft drinks.

Now we have updated our previous survey. During May 1992, we watched a week of advertising on evening and Saturday morning children's ITV and found a remarkably similar picture.

As before, food and soft drinks accounted for nearly half (47%) of the 189 adverts shown, far higher than any other category.

When we looked at the kinds of foods children were being encouraged to consume the picture is still dominated by sugared cereals and confectionery (see graph). Foods high in sugars and/or fats made up four-fifths of food advertised on children's television — exactly the same figure we found two years ago. Fast foods, bag snacks, soft drinks and

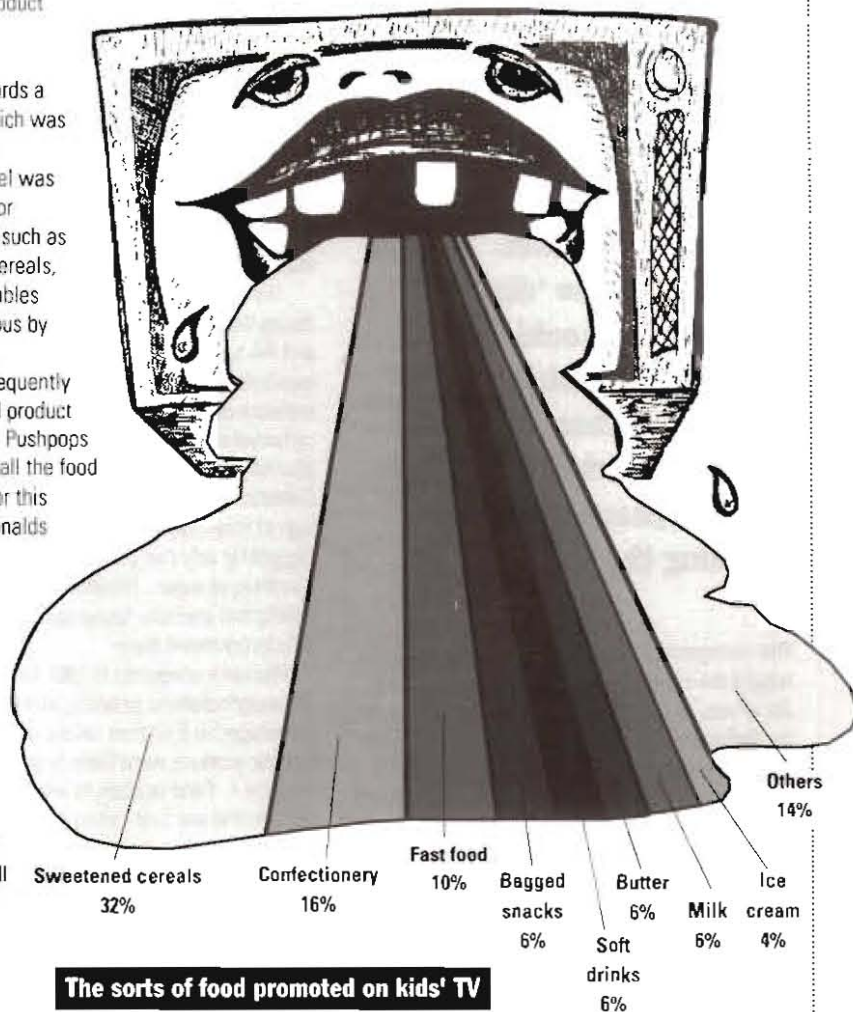
ice cream all featured highly in the promotions

The only product that could be considered to contribute towards a healthy diet which was advertised at a comparable level was milk. Adverts for healthier foods such as unsweetened cereals, fruit and vegetables were conspicuous by their absence.

The most frequently advertised food product was the sweet, Pushpops — one in ten of all the food adverts were for this product. McDonalds and Kellogg's Ricicles followed closely, each with seven adverts.

Fast action, cartoons, special characters and free gifts are all used to appeal to children

Researched  
by Liz Cloud.



## Most heavily advertised food products

	No of ads
Pushpops	9
McDonalds	7
Ricicles	7
Honey Nut Loops	6
Milk	5
Frosties	4
Frosted Shreddies	4
Lucky Charms (Nestle)	4
Lurpak butter	4

## School meals to be advertised on TV

As a small but significant challenge to advertising for junk food, 18 education authorities are running prime time adverts this autumn on children's television for school meals.

The ads will feature a School Meals rap, 'School dinners are cool dinners', with animation and live action.

The purpose is to halt the numbers of pupils who prefer the local chippie or bring their own snacks at lunchtime by encouraging them and their parents to realise school meals are tasty, nutritious and fun.

## The Case for More Responsible Food Advertising to Children

Despite increasing emphasis on nutrition education, children's diets have shown no improvement in the last ten years, and there is growing concern about the nutritional quality of many children's diets.

Advertising is just one of a number of complex factors which influence food choices but television advertising is a powerful and important medium for the promotion of foods, particularly those aimed at children. No other medium is so widely accessible and accepted; its messages give a power and status that rivals and may exceed parental guidance and educational influences.

The National Food Alliance Working Party on Advertising is concerned about the

imbalance between the power of advertising compared to healthy eating messages as well as how the advertising codes are drawn up and implemented. The ITC's recent ruling over the Mars slogan (see facing page) is yet another example of advertising regulatory bodies appearing to go to great lengths to protect manufacturers' interests whilst ignoring official expert advice on healthy eating.

The National Food Alliance is drawing up recommendations for more responsible advertising which it intends to publish before the end of the year.

■ For more information contact Sue Dibb, c/o The National Food Alliance, 102 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3DA.



# Diabetic products report

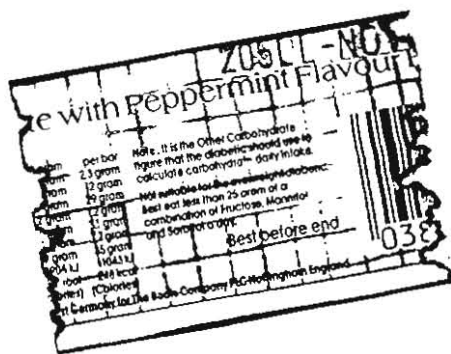
**With diabetes affecting over 700,000 adults in the UK, manufacturers are keen to sell specialised products for this captive market. But our survey found no 'diabetic' product that could offer either better nutrition or a lower price than others on the supermarket shelf, and many appeared to be breaking the law.**

The management of diabetes through diet does not require the use of special 'diabetic' foods. This is not a hasty or ill-judged conclusion but the view of the Professional Advisory Committee to the British Diabetic Association (BDA), published earlier this year<sup>1</sup>. It was not the first time they had made such a statement, but followed a similar recommendation against such foods ten years earlier.

Diabetes is characterised by an absence, reduction or inefficiency of insulin, the hormone regulating blood sugar level. Left untreated, blood sugar level would rise to high levels, resulting in blurred vision, thirst and an increased need to pass water. Treatment involves controlling the blood sugar level through injections of insulin and diet, medication and diet, or through diet alone.

The sale of special 'diabetic' foods began during the 1960s when carbohydrate restrictions and the total avoidance of regular sugar was the recommended dietary treatment. But increasing evidence during the 1970s showed that restricting carbohydrate was not essential for keeping blood glucose under control and by 1979 the American Diabetic Association was recommending a diet high in fibre-rich carbohydrate, low in fat and suggesting only that patients should avoid large quantities of sugar. The BDA followed suit in 1982, adding that specially formulated diabetic foods had little to commend them.

Research conducted in 1981 found that many overweight diabetic patients, who had been encouraged to limit their calorie intake thought that diabetic products were likely to be low-calorie products<sup>2</sup>. Food regulations introduced in 1984 required that any food calling itself 'diabetic' must be lower in calories and lower in fat than equivalent regular products. This was often not the case —



This is the actual size of the warning on a two-ounce confectionery bar (and many diabetic patients have sight impairment). It tells consumers to avoid eating more than 25 grams of fructose, mannitol and sorbitol combined in a day. Using the table and a calculator reveals the bar to contain 33.3 grams of these sweeteners. We think it would be better to say **DON'T EAT THE WHOLE BAR IN ONE DAY — AND IF YOU ARE OVERWEIGHT DON'T EAT ANY OF IT!**

and as we show in the table opposite, it remains not the case. Yet these products are sold in chemists at a premium price, giving a strong impression to purchasers that they are medically approved and suitable for helping diabetic patients.

Our research found that in all the main categories of diabetic food products there were plenty of alternative products that cost much less

## Sorbitol

The sweetening agent sorbitol, derived from sugar, is commonly used as a sugar substitute in diabetic foods because of its slower absorption into the blood. It is also used industrially in plastics and writing inks and as an antifreeze.

It has no great advantage over other sweeteners nutritionally, and it has one distinct disadvantage: it is a laxative and can give consumers diarrhoea. Sorbitol-containing products usually recommend a maximum intake of 25g per day.

In a survey by Newcastle Polytechnic 3, over 40 per cent of diabetic patients were unaware of what sorbitol was. As Derbyshire's diabetic dietitian, Jackie Moore, commented: 'My patients find it difficult to interpret the diabetic food labels, and even I myself would need to sit down with a calculator to work out what 25 grams of sorbitol looked like in teaspoons of diabetic jam.'

Take care! We found high levels of sorbitol and other restricted sugars such as fructose and isomalt in several products

**Levels of sorbitol and other restricted sugars in products**

Product	Portion	Amount of sugars
Boots jam (60% sorbitol)	1 heaped teaspoon	10.8g
Stube jam (52% sorbitol)	1 heaped teaspoon	9.4g
Boots mint choc bar	1 bar (55g)	33.3g
Holex fruit bonbons	10 small sweets	18.6g
Vivil lemon sweets	1 pack (22g)	21.2g
Holex Orange Truffle choc bar	half bar (50g)	22.0g
Boots Jelly	quarter pint jelly	11.4g
Boots Bourbon biscuits	three biscuits	9.9g

## Advice to people with diabetes

The good news is this, having diabetes does not mean a special diet with special foods. You do not need to feel stigmatised by having to follow a different diet from other people.

BUT this doesn't mean turning into a junk food junkie. The British Diabetic Association recommends:

- Limit sugars
- Increase dietary fibre
- Increase carbohydrate (especially the complex starches)
- Limit total fat (especially saturated fat)
- Limit salt

If these guidelines look familiar, they should do. They are the healthy eating guidelines recommended for everyone. In practical terms this means most of the day's food should be fruit, vegetables, bread, rice, pasta, potatoes, etc, with less than a fifth being fatty foods such as fish, meat, eggs and cheese<sup>4</sup>.



and could ensure a lower-calorie diet.

Health professionals advise their diabetic patients not to use these misleading products, yet research from Newcastle Polytechnic<sup>3</sup> found that a third of diabetic patients believed the diabetic products were really necessary and half thought there should be more available.

An EC Directive on diabetic food products has yet to make its appearance but the BDA expects that it will do little to change the present situation. In 1980 the government's then Food Standards Committee reviewed the question of whether special diabetic foods were necessary and concluded, with Alice in Wonderland logic, that because people bought them there must be a need for them. 'This is a self-perpetuating delusion,' commented the BDA.

We agree. We believe diabetic patients are being taken for a ride by companies marketing over-priced and unnecessary products which undermine professional advice and encourage an unhealthy diet. We urge the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to use Britain's time as EC president to ensure that an EC directive is forthcoming — one which severely limits this cynical exploitation of patients' concerns.



More sorbitol in this jam than all other ingredients put together: just an ounce and a half of the jam — enough for three slices of bread — will provide more than the maximum sorbitol consumers should eat in a day. And at 98p for 15oz it costs more than either regular or sugar-reduced jam from the supermarket.

■ Researched by Sabina Syed and Rowena Hunter

1. Thomas, B. J., *Patterns of nutritional intake in diabetics and non-diabetics, relationship with vascular disease and its pathogenesis*, Ph D Thesis, London University, 1981

2. Thomas, B. J., *et al* British Diabetic Association's Discussion Paper on the Role of 'Diabetic' Foods, *Diabetic Medicine* 300-306, 1992.

3. Hunter, R., *An evaluation of consumer buying habits and the nutritional quality of diabetic food*, thesis submitted to Newcastle Polytechnic, June 1992.

4. Nutrition Sub-committee, British Diabetic Association, *Dietary recommendations for people with diabetes: an update for the 1990s* *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 393-412, 1991.

## Save your money

We compared the prices of regular products, low-sugar alternatives and the so-called 'diabetic' products. The diabetic products score badly on both health and cost. Some appear to be breaking the law by calling themselves 'diabetic' foods yet containing more fat or calories than equivalent regular foods.

Product	Price	Calories (kcal/100g)
<i>Strawberry jam</i>		
Robertson regular	66p for 12oz	249
Boots diabetic	98p for 15oz (80p for 12oz)	262
Sainsbury reduced sugar	69p for 12oz	125
<i>Orange squash</i>		
Co-op regular	73p for 1 lt	91
Sionon diabetic	£1.09 for 1 lt	4
Co-op sugar free	65p for 1 lt	4
<i>Milk chocolate</i>		
Cadbury's regular	27p for 50g	514 (30g fat)
Thornton's diabetic	48p for 40g	519 (32g fat)
<i>Sponge cake mix</i>		
Greens regular	53p for 229g	312 as cake (11g fat)
Boots diabetic	89p for 300g (68p for 229g)	362 as cake (13g fat)
<i>Chocolate caramel wafers</i>		
Tunnocks regular	47p for 106g	454 (20g fat)
Boots diabetic	81p for 65g	490 (28g fat)
<i>Bourbon biscuits</i>		
Crawfords regular	29p for 150g	483 (20g fat)
Boots diabetic	79p for 150g	470 (22g fat)
<i>Jelly</i>		
Rowntree regular	31p for 1 pint	346 per pint
Birds reduced sugar	53p for 2 pints	40 per pint
Boots diabetic	42p for 1 pint	233 per pint
<i>Cereal bars</i>		
Jordans regular	25p for 33g	411 (20g fat)
Health & Diet diabetic	36p for 35g	432 (24g fat)



Under the Food Regulations, diabetic products must not have more fat or calories than equivalent non-diabetic products. But we found several items which appear to break the rules, and which could encourage a deterioration in a consumer's diet.



## The lion, the fish and the wildebeest

**The National Food Alliance held its first ever public meeting on a sultry afternoon in June in central London. But the sixty or so members and guests didn't give a thought to the heat, fumes and traffic noise; they were being treated to a stimulating and entertaining presentation by Professor Michael Crawford, head of the Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition at Hackney Hospital.**

Professor Crawford had been asked to give the keynote address at the National Food Alliance Annual General Meeting. The theme was 'Children, food and the future' and Professor Crawford approached the issue with passion (and some extraordinary slides). Research done by Crawford and others is accumulating into a body of evidence which links maternal nutrition not only to the health of the baby, but also to the baby's chances of developing serious diseases in adult life.

Women who eat poor quality food risk not only their own health but significantly increase the likelihood of having a baby with a low birthweight. Cerebral palsy and neural tube defects (spina bifida) are far more common in low birthweight babies. And when small babies reach adulthood they seem to be more prone to develop coronary heart disease.

Michael Crawford is convinced that these effects are due to dietary deficiencies. In one study the diets of mothers with low birthweight babies were monitored for 44 different nutrients, both macro-nutrients (fat, saturated fat, sugars, protein) and micro-nutrients (a wide range of vitamins, minerals and trace elements). He found that mothers with low birthweight babies had diets which failed to comply with recommended intakes of 43 out of the 44 nutrients.

What is it about the modern diet which strips it of vital nutrients? Professor Crawford reminded the audience that saturated fat comprises a dangerously large proportion of the westernised diet. To illustrate the point he showed a slide of the aorta of a lion. Despite

the fact that lions eat nothing but meat, the aorta was perfectly smooth and free of the fatty streaks and cholesterol deposits which would be found in a human of comparable age.

The meat eaten by a lion differs substantially, of course, from anything you might find in your local butchers. Further slides demonstrated that meat from wild animals (such as wildebeest) is dramatically lower in fat than meat from domestically reared animals. This holds true even for the leanest cuts of meat. In addition, the composition of the fat in the meat differs between the two sources.

The fat in domestic animals is more likely to be saturated whilst in wild animals the proportion of polyunsaturated fats is higher. The link between saturated fat (whether from meat or other sources) and coronary heart disease is well known. Perhaps less well known is the importance of polyunsaturated fats in providing essential nutrients for growth and development, particularly of the brain.

And this is where the fish comes in. Some types of fish are rich in polyunsaturated oils and there is important evidence that these might help protect against coronary heart disease. But even non-oily fish is rich in some types of vitamins and minerals and Professor Crawford argues that these are the kinds of nutrients the modern diet lacks. Without these micro-nutrients in sufficient quantities women are more likely to produce low birthweight babies who, in turn, may develop diseases of the central nervous system and cardiovascular disease.

Predictably, good nutrition is also important for the early development of the newborn baby. One study

even showed that breastfed babies had a higher IQ at 8 years old than children who had been bottle fed. Breastmilk, of course, contains micro-nutrients which formula milk does not.

But what about vegetarians and vegans? If you don't eat meat or fish are you missing out on these vital micronutrients? Vegetarians and vegans already know the answer to this question but Michael Crawford indirectly, and spectacularly, provided clues.

A slide of Mount McKinley in Alaska (taken whilst Professor Crawford was flying over it) showed how trace elements washed into the streams and rivers cascade down the mountain side and eventually find their way into the estuaries. Michael's point was that these minerals enter the food chain via seafood in the estuaries but, since rivers feed the land, vitamins and minerals are also found in abundance in fruits and vegetables.

In short, the problem with the modern diet is that, not only is it too high in saturated fat but it is also too low in the vitamins and minerals which are found in seafood, fruit and vegetables.

In the lively discussions which followed, many National Food Alliance members supported Professor Crawford's thesis but noted the far reaching changes his ideas would mean for the way we produce, process and distribute our food supply. Policies in agriculture, education, industry and social security – to name but a few – would all need a radical overhaul.

For the sake of our health, the task for the National Food Alliance members is to make sure these policy changes happen sooner rather than later.

■ The address of the Alliance is  
102 Gloucester Place,  
London W1H 3DA  
Telephone: 071-935 2889

Fax: 071-487 5692.

Organisations wishing to apply for membership of the Alliance should please write to the NFA secretary, at the above address.

*This page has been contributed by  
the National Food Alliance*

### **Aims and membership of the NFA**

The National Food Alliance is an association of voluntary, professional, health, consumer and other organisations. Its purpose is to develop food and agriculture policy in order to benefit public health, the environment, trade, employment, the economy, and the common good, nationally and internationally.

### **Members of the NFA include:**

Action and Information on Sugars  
Baby Milk Action  
Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union  
British Organic Farmers and the Organic Growers' Association  
Caroline Walker Trust  
Catholic Institute for International Relations  
Children's Society  
Christian Aid  
Common Ground  
Coronary Prevention Group  
Council for the Protection of Rural England  
Elm Farm Research  
Food Additives Campaign Team  
Food Commission  
Friends of the Earth  
GMB  
Green Alliance  
International Institute for Environment and Development  
McCarrison Society  
Maternity Alliance  
National Community Health Resource  
National Council for Voluntary Organisations  
National Farmers' Union  
National Federation of Consumer Groups  
National Federation of Women's Institutes  
National Forum for Coronary Heart Disease Prevention  
National Federation of City Farms  
OXFAM  
Parents for Safe Food  
Pesticides Trust  
Rural, Agricultural and Allied Workers' Union (TGWU)  
Soil Association  
Vegetarian Society  
Women's Farming Union  
World Cancer Research Fund

### **Observers of the NFA include:**

Consumers' Association  
Consumers in the European Community Group  
Guild of Food Writers  
Health Education Authority  
National Consumer Council  
Royal Society of Medicine Food and Health Forum  
Scottish Consumer Council  
Welsh Consumer Council

### **Officers:**

Professor Philip James (President)  
Geoffrey Cannon (Chairman)  
Jack Winkler (Treasurer)

Jeanette Longfield (Co-ordinator)



# Kids just wanna have fun!

**A new book — The Nursery Food Book — written by the Food Commission and aimed at nurseries and playgroups is published this summer. *The Food Magazine* dips in.**

There are shelves of books written for parents encouraging them to feed their children healthily. But what is

there for the professional nursery worker, playgroup leader or childminder?

At best they have a few pages in some generalised handbook, or they have A4 documents from voluntary organisations or local social services on policies and practices. There is little fun in either of these to inspire a child-carer.

Books for parents can be used, of course, but only up to a point: what is missing is a comprehensive guide covering not only healthy eating but food learning projects suitable for young children. And, in a salmonella-conscious age, some sensible advice on food hygiene and safe kitchen

practices.

The Nursery Food Book is designed to fill this gap, and to be valuable not only for staff working day-to-day with children looking for inspiration and advice, but also for trainees and students learning about caring for young children.

This is more than just a food-on-the-plate book. It includes children's activities preparing and sampling food, ideas for stories and projects, outings and gardening. Then there is a 50-recipe section for the cook, including snacks, main courses and desserts, all with a multi-cultural flavour, topped off with a 'sling-it-in-the-bin' list of food products you should never need again!

The philosophy behind the book is simple: professional carers have a duty to ensure children are well-fed, well educated, positively socialised (including multi-cultural aspects) and that all these things are not just done but seen to be done, especially by the parents. In turn, parents can be encouraged by seeing good practice by a professional, and can absorb the ideas for themselves.

This isn't just a hopeful philosophy; much of it is actually written into the DSS Guidelines for the Children Act. Good practice is a duty.

But the main thrust of the book is that food is fun. Food can be

## Special offer Save over £1!

Subscribers to *The Food Magazine* can order a copy of *The Nursery Food Book* with no postage and packing charges. And no stamp needed when ordering!

Just send your name and address with a postal order or cheque for £8.99 payable to The Food Commission.

Send to:  
Subscriber offer, The Food Commission, FREEPOST, London EC1B 1FX.

**NO stamp needed!**

### Setting them thinking

To start child-care students thinking there are assignments on each chapter of the book, brought together at the back so as not to clutter the text for the non-student reader. The suggested tasks can be provocative:

- A nursery teacher tells you 'We don't need to bother about multi-ethnic food here because we only have white children'.
  - (i) Discuss this statement.
  - (ii) If you had a job at the nursery with this teacher, what do you think your approach should be?
- Try to find one or more adults who had a food problem when young. Compile people's stories of childhood difficulties over food.
  - (i) What might have started the problem?
  - (ii) How was the problem solved?
  - (iii) Did it continue into adult life in any form?
  - (iv) Can you think of any way the problem might have been prevented?

■ Here is a conversation between parent and child:

Child *I'm hungry!*

Parent *It'll soon be dinner time.*

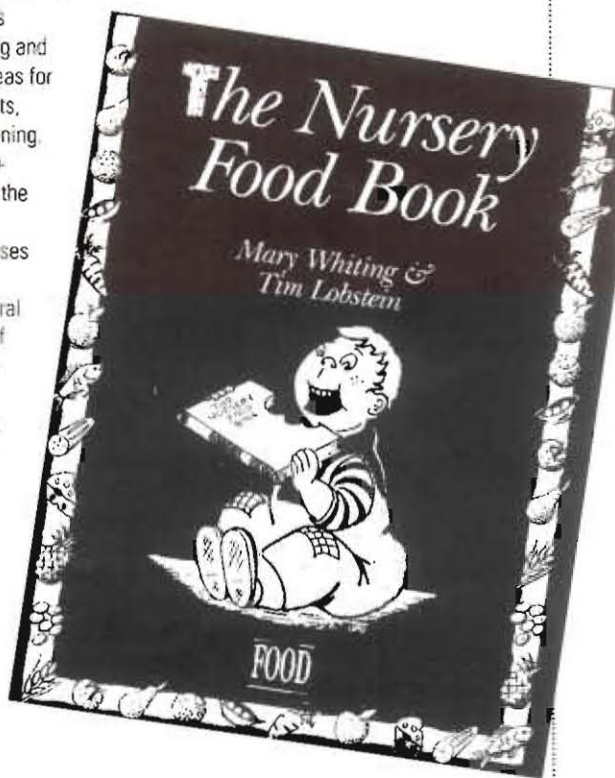
Child *I can't wait. I'm starving! I want some chocolate.*

Parent *No, you shouldn't eat between meals. Dinner's ready in an hour and it'll spoil your appetite.*

Child (screaming) *It won't! I want some chocolate!*

Comment on what the parent has said. Then rewrite this scene with yourself as parent, and write the rest, including the ending. Perhaps you can make a video of the scene.

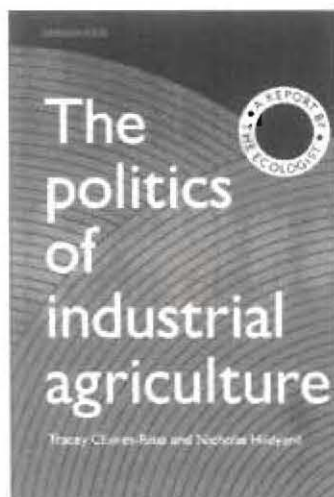
Make a list of items suitable for a child's snack an hour or so before dinner.



educational, food can be nourishing, food can socialise a child and can encourage multi-cultural awareness. If it isn't fun, however, all the good intentions are wasted.

**The Nursery Food Book by Mary Whiting and Tim Lobstein is published by Edward Arnold, July 1992, price £8.99, ISBN 0340-559357**





## THE POLITICS OF INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE

Tracy Clunies-Ross & Nicolas Hildyard  
Earthscan Publications, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN £8.95, 1992, ISBN 1853831387

Industrial agriculture tries to justify all its ill-effects as the price we have to pay for increased yields. The necessity of increased yields is in turn justified by the need to feed ten billion people by the turn of the century. Alternatives are classified as inappropriate, ineffectual and perhaps immoral, so organic agriculture, permaculture and extensive production are assigned a fringe role - to provide unnecessarily expensive food for the neurotic middle classes.



A page from *Vitamins ABC* by Eileen Palmer (Amberwood Publishing, £3.99, ISBN 0951772325). Lovingly made, the book devotes a page to every nutrient and a cartoon character each: Cassie Calcium, Freddie Fibre, Peter Protein and even Kelly Vitamin K. We suspect, though, that this level of nutritional detail is usually taught in secondary school — where the children may be a bit old for the text.

This whole political edifice is a monstrous lie. Industrial agriculture is actually accelerating towards disaster as it undermines the environmental prerequisites for sustainable food production. The future of our food is now threatened by short term greed, stupidity and arrogance, yet few people are concerned about it. Whilst the supermarket shelves are full of variety and choice we are lulled into a false sense of security.

Anyone who still thinks that industrial agriculture can continue indefinitely to deliver food in abundance should read this book now. In no more than 50 years industrial agriculture has wrought ecological, economic and social havoc to our countryside — all in the name of an efficiency which is measured in terms of acres per farmworker. In practice, this so called efficient agriculture is the most energy intensive and least energy efficient method of producing food that has ever been devised. It cannot be sustained and we need to be planning viable alternatives now.

In the long wrangle over the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy there was at one time reason to hope that overproduction would be dealt with by 'extensification' — to use the Eurospeak term. In other words, farmers would be encouraged to shift to less intensive farming, using less nitrates and less pesticides in order to reduce yields.

The McSharry reform proposals contained some sensible measures but right at the last moment, they were overturned by our own Mr Gummer, who has now succeeded in imposing a reform of European agriculture that favours only the grain barons and intensive meat producers.

Surplus grain will still be dumped in the third world, undermining local production and creating the conditions for future famine. Consumers will continue to pay twice for our food because the 'reformed' CAP will actually be more expensive. Animals will continue to be reared in cruel conditions. Our countryside will continue to be polluted by industrial agriculture. Thousands upon thousands of small mixed farms, many of them practising more sensible production methods than the big

industrial farms, will be forced into bankruptcy if the CAP 'reform' is not swept away. Good luck to the French farmers who have laid siege to Paris in protest at this evil nonsense. We should be encouraging them to come here to help us lay siege to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Robin Jenkins



## FIXING THE RULES

Kevin Watkins  
CIIR Publications, Unit 3, Canonbury Yard, 190a New North Road, London N1 7BJ £6.99, 1992, ISBN 1852871040

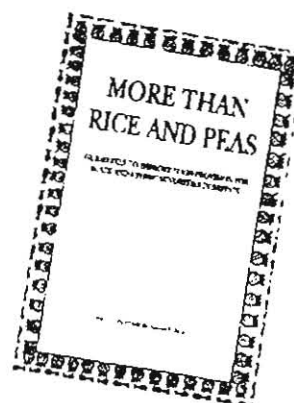
World trade growth and a reduction in trade barriers could be of benefit to both powerful nations and developing countries. But as Kevin Watkins' book deftly shows, trade liberalisation is currently being fought for by the dominant trading nations to the detriment of developing countries.

The history of the GATT, focusing on agriculture, services and patenting, and the GATT's effects on developing countries' industry and natural environment are succinctly explained.

Background information on the basis for current disputes between the various trading blocks is given, and the links between multilateral trade organisations, the World Bank and the IMF are explored. The book lacks referencing for its facts and figures, but it has a resource-packed 'further reading' section and it is an invaluable guide to past and future events in global trade.

Martine Drake

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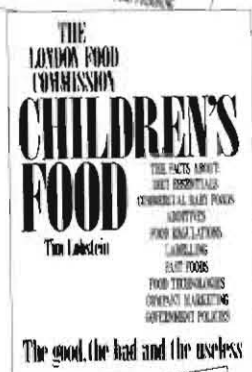
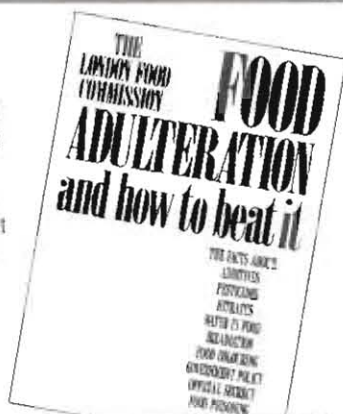
The London Food Commission's expose of the shocking state of food quality in Britain, revealing the facts on additives, pesticides, nitrates, food poisoning and irradiation. We deserve the best but we will only get it if we demand it. This book spells out what the demands should be. 295pp ISBN 0-04-440212-0 £5.95 including post and packing.

### 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.

### Fast Food Facts

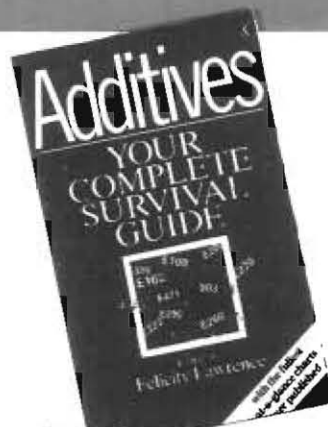
■ Chips coloured with textile dyes  
■ French fries cooked in beef fat  
■ Batter made without eggs or milk  
You don't have to avoid fast foods. But you do need to know what is in them. With comprehensive tables of nutrients and additives this book is a unique look into the secretive world of fast food catering. 171pp ISBN 0-948491-48-5 £5.95 including post and packing.



### Additives - Your Complete Survival Guide

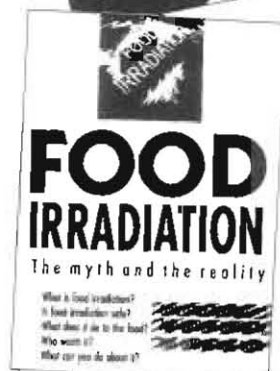
What can you do about additives? Which are dangerous and which are safe?

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 postage and packing.



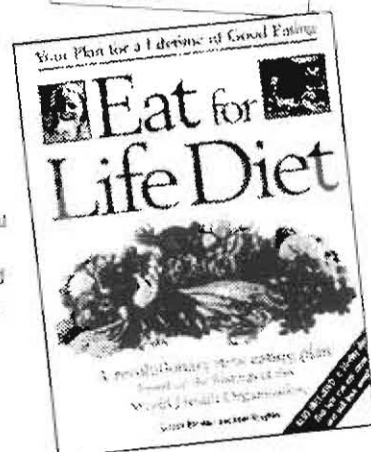
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## No kidding

Our little item in the last issue on Nanny, a New Zealand goat's milk formula feed for babies imported by Frontier Marketing, raised a ruffle at the Food and Drink Federation (FDF). The company claimed membership of the FDF on its publicity

sheets. 'Any suggestion of a link between Frontier Marketing and FDF and IDFA is defamatory ...' they stormed, wanting an apology and a reply 'within seven days'.

Suddenly we felt sorry for Frontier, a one-typewriter show trying to sell

nuclear-free baby milk to health food shops, who admitted to us that they have learnt 'the hard way' about the Codes of Marketing, EC Directives etc which restrict baby milk companies in Britain (see letters, page 2).

It turns out they had sought advice from the industry experts, the Infant and Dietetic Foods Association (IDFA), which is housed and staffed at the FDF. Frontier enjoyed a pleasant lunch with IDFA's chair (Nestlé's Ron Hendey). Clearly neither then nor subsequently was Frontier given much advice on current marketing restrictions. But Frontier were invited to join the IDFA and prepared their publicity accordingly.

Sometime later the small question of fees came up. 'Fees?' worried Frontier, whose marketing budget could barely afford another lunch. 'Yes,' said IDFA, '£4230 (inc VAT)'. Frontier muttered a suitably antipodean response, but we suspect IDFA will have them signed up in weeks.



## The chips are up

Bad news for summer barbecue lovers coming from... no, not the environmental health brigade but your local Customs and Excise. Leaflet 800626/Dd8324762/C20150 contains this terse notice regarding the payment of VAT, which is not required on fuel supplies or foodstuffs:

*'Barbecue food flavour enhancers eg hickory chips which are absorbed into the food by burning are not fuel or food for human consumption and are standard-rated.'*

## Taking the biscuit

They won that one, but lost another. Jaffa cakes have long been a *cause célèbre* because cakes are food (zero-rated) while



biscuits are snacks (standard-rated), and a Jaffa cake is a ... well, it's a biscuit isn't it? That's what Customs and Excise claimed, and demanded their cash from United Biscuits. But following a recent tribunal decision, the vatman has now conceded *'Jaffa cakes and chocolate-covered lebkuchen are cakes rather than biscuits and so eligible for zero rating.'*

However, revenge will be sweet — literally: *'Florentines: All products, of whatever size, typically described as "florentines" are standard-rated.'*

## Irradiant faces

The chief of the Food Safety Unit at the World Health Organisation is one Dr Fritz Käferstein, a man whose period of office as food safety supremo has seen a global increase in food-borne disease while a third of post-harvest food supplies are declared unfit for human consumption.

His preferred solution is the technical fix: food irradiation. 'Scientific research shows that this is a perfectly sound food preservation technology,' he declares, showing the full impartiality of his position. This quote is taken from a press release he issued last May, announcing the results of 'the most comprehensive review and analysis of the published and unpublished data on irradiated food attempted to date.'

Attempted is perhaps the word. The review exercise had been demanded by the Australian delegation to the WHO, as they refused to accept previous statements from Käferstein that food irradiation should be sanctioned by the WHO for worldwide use. It is understood that Käferstein hired some American consultants who were perhaps poorly briefed or else didn't know what they were doing, for their report appears to have been rejected by the steering group when Käferstein presented it at the same time as launching his press release.

Red faces at WHO where they quickly said the report was 'not yet finalized' and that it had 'not been decided how to issue it.' When would it be ready, we asked. 'Write to us again by the end of this year.'

## None so daft

'There is a great danger of a revival of witchcraft,' said the speaker at the opening of the Food and Drink Federation conference this spring.

'There is a growth of belief in all kinds of wholly irrational things,' he continued, claiming Europe would be unable to compete with the US if innovations such as the introduction of food irradiation and the milk-boosting hormone BST were held back by the suspicions 'of those who believe in witchcraft.'

Yes, you guessed. It was John Selwyn Gummer, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

## Baby blues

As we went to press we finally received a copy of the Food Advisory Committee's thoughts on additives in children's foods. At first they sent a letter asking for our thoughts on the report, but didn't enclose a copy. Then they wanted us to pay £8.50 for it. At last they sent it free — arriving after the deadline for consultation!

See next issue for our critical comments on the missed opportunity to improve our children's food.

## Juicy stories

They certainly do things differently in the States. While MAFF is keeping extremely tight-lipped about the pending prosecutions of 11 companies for alleged adulteration of orange juice (see FM17), in the States they are a bit more up front.

On May 15 the US Department of Justice indicted seven individuals on charges that they adulterated orange juice products with sugar.

'We will not tolerate fraudulent schemes that cheat consumers through false descriptions of the product purchased, nor will we permit individuals or companies to take business away from legitimate juice manufacturers through fraudulent schemes of

the type alleged in the indictment,' said Assistant Attorney General Stuart M Gerson.

They are equally candid about the scheme which cheated consumers of more than \$20 million.

'The defendants constructed hidden rooms to facilitate the undetected addition of liquid sugar to orange juice concentrate, created false documents to hide the identity and use of sugar and products that contained sugar, destroyed documents and misrepresented their actions to government personnel and others.'

Our own MAFF won't say what tricks UK companies get up to, and there are suspicions that MAFF may even drop the charges