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# THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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## Ingene-ious food?

**We are already eating the products of gene technology. In this special *Food Magazine* feature on genetic engineering we ask is it safe, what controls are there on this new technology, and what rights do consumers have to know about how their food has been made?**

Britain is one of the few countries in the world where foods made using genetically modified organisms are already known to be on sale in supermarkets. Surprised? Well you might be, because you certainly won't find anything on food labels to tell you. In the UK three types of a genetically modified enzyme, chymosin, have been developed as a 'vegetarian' alternative to rennet from calves' stomachs for making cheese, and a genetically modified yeast has been approved for bread making. Yet the industry is reluctant to admit their use.

These cheese enzymes and bread yeasts are just the first in a line of bio-engineered foods made with genetically modified organisms that are in the pipeline. But the rules for how these foods should be controlled and labelled have not yet been decided and is the subject of fierce debate. The majority of the food industry opposes any kind of labelling and in the USA has persuaded the regulatory authorities that labelling is not required. Here in the UK there are no mandatory laws although the Food Advisory Committee has recommended labelling some genetically modified foods but not others. Meanwhile the EC is drawing up new procedures to regulate this growing industry but its proposals are unclear and weaker than current UK guidelines and only add to the confusion.

This state of affairs is likely to undermine consumer confidence in these novel

foods before they have even got off the ground. Campaigners in the USA are urging consumers to boycott all genetically modified foods and in Holland fields of genetically modified crops have been destroyed for the second consecutive year.

These reactions indicate growing concern over the development of a technology which goes beyond what nature or traditional breeding could ever do for crops or farm animals. The technology promises crop varieties that are more resistant to pests, produce higher yields, speed up food processing or have a longer shelf life. And for consumers, scientists say there will be more choice and improved products. That sounds like good news, so why the secrecy? Why the reluctance to label foods made by genetic engineering?

Whatever your views on genetically modified foods there is one area where there seems to be general agreement from all sides – the need for more information and open debate. Biotechnology companies are beginning to recognise that there are no short cuts to winning consumer confidence and it is inevitable that confidence will only be gained through a process of involvement, consultation and acceptance of consumer opinion. They may even have to accept the unpalatable truth that while some products may be accepted, others will be rejected.

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

## Cherry skins

It was with a sense of outrage that I noticed, after I bought some cherries, a label on one of the unopened boxes. They were from the USA and the boxes were stamped 'Treated with Improdione to Inhibit Decay'.

Fruit is removed from the box before being put on display so such a warning is unlikely to be seen by consumers. The incident has made me look carefully at fruit from the USA. Not a bad one in sight!

I feel determined to buy soft fruit only when I can see that some are beginning to go bad.

Surely the law should require information about decay-inhibiting treatment to be given to shoppers, not just to retailers?

E Barbara Smith, Greasby, Wirral

*So fruit is only safe if it's going bad, eh?! In fact the law does not require post-harvest treatment labelling on boxes, let alone on fruit and veg displays.*

## Chicken tip-off

I would like to bring to your attention something particularly distasteful — the proposed reintroduction of recycling poultry offal back into poultry diets.

I understood that in order to combat the adverse publicity surrounding the animal and feed production industries following the salmonella scares, poultry producers, feed producers and supermarkets agreed on a voluntary ban on recycling poultry offal.

It has recently come to my attention that because the subject of salmonella is no longer of major interest to the media, there are moves afoot to return to this disgraceful practice. I do not know how far down the decision-making line this has gone but I do believe that discussions have reached a very high level.

I hope you and your excellent magazine can bring pressure to bear to help prevent the reintroduction of this horrible practice.

Anon

*We don't normally print anonymous letters, but this one seems worth pursuing. Any readers with further information?*

## Edible elephant

I wanted to pass along this advert for chicken nuggets which takes chickens (living animals) and turns them into edible toys — trains, stars, aeroplanes, elephants, any shape but chickens. What other creatures



could be ground up into cute shapes?

I find the whole concept deceptive, de-animalizing (de-humanizing) and creepy. Just where will their *imunchinations* take them next?

J Roberts, Common Ground, Vancouver, Canada

## Evening meal

I was reading my latest copy of the *Food Magazine* with interest recently when I bit into an Evening Primrose Oil tablet from Boots. It was so disgustingly sweet that I looked at the list of ingredients.

They read, in order: Sorbitol, Evening Primrose Oil Compound, Natural Flavourings Anti-caking agents (Magnesium Stearate, Silicon Dioxide), Citric Acid, Artificial Sweetener (Aspartame).

I have written to Boots saying I believe it is exploitative to sell this product as a health product.

Kathryn McNicoll, Beaconsfield, Bucks

*We agree there is little here to justify a 'health' label, especially as there are doubts in the USA over the efficacy of Evening Primrose oil generally (let alone in 'compound' form, whatever that is). More on EP oil in the next issue.*

**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.**



Despite the political divisions over Europe, the bureaucrats are still keen to harmonise: the door of the Single Market opens in the New Year.

And with it will come a flood of unresolved problems that the bureaucrats have failed to address. The most amusing, if it weren't so dangerous, must be the labelling laws for low alcohol drinks.

What we call 'low alcohol' the French call 'alcohol free'. What we call a full strength drink, such as the one that reaches parts others cannot reach, the Greeks and Italians would call a 'low alcohol' drink (see pages 8-9). The potential for importing chaotic labelling which could lead to illegal driving is enormous.

Meanwhile the port health inspectors, who check our food on the way into Britain, report that they turned away some 20,000 tonnes of unfit food last year, much of it from the EC (page 4). Such food will escape port inspection, with the importers only prosecuted if it turns out they did not show 'due diligence' — but that could be long after the food was on sale.

And other regulations now coming from the EC show a distinct bias in favour of manufacturers. Proposals for allowing claims on food labels are far weaker than those recommended by our own Food Advisory Committee (page 4). And over 50 additives for food for babies and young children which are not even used in the UK are being proposed for use in the EC. Our own government is likely to accept all but two or three (page 6).

One might turn to the EC's 'independent advisory committees' as a defence for consumers. But, like our own industry-riddled 'advisors' on MAFF and Department of Health committees (see page 7), the EC's Scientific Committee for Food has also been 'captured' by the food companies — except that the SCF need not and does not publish its members' interests. The latest proposals on novel foods, such as those produced through gene technology (see pages 10-11), could allow just one expert to review the product and that one person could be an industry nominee!

Harmonisation may be of benefit to industry. We cannot take it for granted that it will also benefit consumers.

**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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## Now CAP this

There was hardly a good word to be said for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms at a Citizens' Audit held to coincide with the EC Agriculture Ministers' meeting at the end of September in Cambridge. Friends of the Earth and SAFE (the Sustainable Agriculture and Food

Alliance) brought together sister organisations from Germany, France, Belgium, Portugal and Holland to carry out the audit. Participants from environmental, consumer and producer groups concluded that the CAP reforms will cost more, will further damage the economies of the third world, will

not reduce environmental damage from intensive agriculture, will result in further decline of rural populations and economies, will encourage further intensification of animal rearing and will do nothing for public health. The reforms also miss an important opportunity for more environmentally sustainable agriculture.

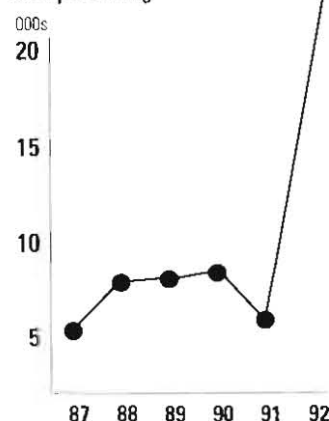
■ Copies of the Citizens Audit Verdict and accompanying factsheets are available with SAE from SAFE, 21 Tower Street, London WC2H 9NS.

## Food poisoning reaches record levels this year

Cases of salmonella food poisoning have reached an all-time high, three times higher than during the 'salmonella in eggs' affair in 1989, according to latest statistics from the

Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC). There have been 23,000 reported cases so far this year (to end of September) compared to 6,500 for the whole of last year despite indifferent weather during the summer. Environmental health experts say increased reporting cannot account for the total increase.

Reported cases of salmonella food poisoning



### Hygiene ignorance

A survey of 18 local authorities has found a poor level of awareness of food hygiene among many food businesses. Only five per cent of authorities said there was a high level of awareness of the new temperature control requirements for foods in their area. Forty per cent reported that awareness was poor. Only 18 per cent of retailers were keeping temperature records as recommended

by the Department of Health guidelines, compared to 22 per cent of caterers and 60 per cent of food manufacturers. (*IEHO Food Forum*, September 1992).

### Training to be on the menu

At the end of July the Government announced that all food handlers would be required to be trained in food hygiene although no timetable for its introduction has yet been set. All food business will need to provide training 'best adapted to their needs'. Larger business with over a certain number of employees (yet to be determined) will also need to maintain an up-to-date training plan for all food handlers, give training to new employees within their first month of work and keep records for inspection by food law enforcement officers.

## 'Hot dirt' test detects food irradiation

A new method for detecting irradiated food by testing the trapped energy found in particles of grit after exposure to gamma radiation has been developed by researchers at the Scottish Research and Reactor Centre near Glasgow.

The process requires separating out tiny particles of silicate minerals, commonly found in earth left on plants such as herbs and spices, which are then rapidly heated to release trapped electric charges in the form of light. Irradiated products can be distinguished by the amount of light released.

The process has been validated for herbs and spices but has yet to be developed for other foods. The laboratory reports that it has already found samples of imported irradiated products that were not labelled as such.

The test is the first to receive MAFF approval as a potential means of ensuring compliance with the labelling laws. A lack of effective testing has undermined food inspectors' ability to enforce the regulations.

### Labels slash sales

The Dutch irradiating company Gammaster has reported a massive downturn in the quantity of food it treats following the introduction of labelling regulations in Holland last August.

Although few products labelled as being irradiated have yet appeared on supermarket shelves, Gammaster's client companies have cut their orders by half, and a leading supermarket chain has decided not to stock irradiated food in deference to public opinion.

Meanwhile the USA's first food irradiation plant, Vindicator Inc. of Florida, has reported losses of \$243,000 in the first quarter of 1992, with net sales of only \$11,000 in the first three months of business.

## Clash over EC food claims

The wrangling over what food manufacturers can and cannot claim in advertising and on food packaging continues with a new proposal from the EC.

While health campaigners say it is an improvement on previous drafts it still falls far short of regulating what has become a minefield of misinformation and half-truths.

An earlier draft proposed restric-

tions on health claims such as 'good for the heart', 'helps lower cholesterol', 'nutritious' and 'healthy'. Now the EC is proposing to allow virtually anything as long as manufacturers can justify the claim, although the burden of proof will still be on enforcement authorities to show claims are misleading rather than on manufacturers to prove their validity.



## Stressful life for farmed fish

An estimated 50 million farmed fish will be 'harvested' in Britain this year, contributing some ten per cent of the fish in our diet. With catches from wild stock around Europe's shores still falling far short of demand, fish farming appears to be an attractive alternative to importing fish from more distant – and fast depleted – seas.

But this report from the campaigning group Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) raises disturbing doubts about the actual practice of raising fish in cages. Previous reports in the *Food Magazine* have identified the potentially hazardous additives used in fish feed to colour the flesh, and the use of antibiotics and the pesticide Dieldrin, all of

which can leave residues in the farmed fish – and in the surrounding marine environment.

CIWF estimates an average stock density is 15kg of fish per cubic metre, equivalent to keeping a 2 ft salmon in a shallow bathtub. With many thousands of fish being kept together, social stress, disease contamination and – in hot weather especially – loss of oxygen can produce high mortality rates.

Estimates by the industry of 1 kg of fish produced for every 2 kg of fish feed are challenged by CIWF, who show that the true ratio is nearer 1.11. With the fish feed itself made mostly of fish, farmed salmon and trout are being reared at the expense of several times as much

The UK's Food Advisory Committee (FAC) proposed initially that the only claims that should be permitted were those approved by the Chief Medical Officer. That didn't go down too well with the industry and MAFF has now backtracked to a position similar to the one the EC is proposing.

Similarly the FAC's original proposal that food endorsement schemes, such as that operated by the Health Education Authority, should be banned has now been overturned.

The EC's proposals on nutrition claims go some way to setting criteria for defining claims such as 'low fat' and 'high fibre'. But, these are incomplete according to Dr Mike Rayner of the Coronary Prevention Group. 'Under the EC's proposal full fat milk could be called low fat,' he said.

The CPG will be urging MAFF to put pressure on the EC to bring nutrition claims in line with the UK's FAC guidelines.

Other more positive EC proposals, including justifying such claims as 'natural', 'fresh' and 'pure' in equal size wording on the packet are unlikely to weather the storm of industry opposition.

## Port inspectors fear open market

The lifting of EC trade barriers, scheduled for the new year, is alarming port health inspectors whose job is to check food quality on its way into the UK.

20,000 tonnes of foodstuffs were rejected by port inspectors during 1991, much of it from the EC, raising concerns about food safety under the single market. Under the single market such imports will be admitted without inspection and unfit food may not be discovered until it is put on sale. Even then, the importer may be able to avoid prosecution by showing 'due diligence' had been taken.

Responsibility for inspecting foods of animal origin from outside the EC will be transferred to MAFF's veterinary service: this includes meat, fish, shellfish, eggs, dairy products and honey. Such imports will be through specified ports only.

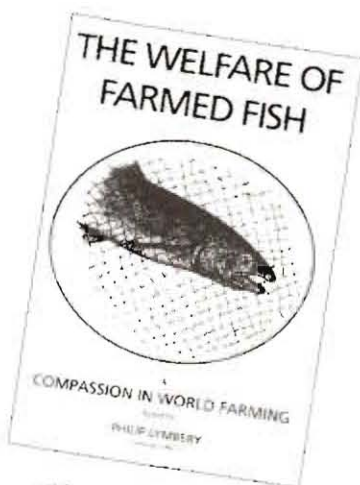
## Company fined over IQ claims

Larkhall Natural Health Ltd have been fined £1,000 with £35,000 costs over claims that its Tandem IQ vitamin pills for children could improve intelligence.

The vitamins were launched after a controversial QED TV programme claimed that a study showed an improvement in the IQ of 12 year olds given vitamin pills.

The case brought by Shropshire Trading Standards said that labelling on the vitamin packets gave the impression that the pills could increase the IQ of most children regardless of their nutritional state. However no improvements in IQ could be demonstrated for children eating balanced diets.

The court accepted that only children with a dietary deficiency were likely to benefit from supplements, although the Medical Research Council remains cautious. 'The effect on British school children, however undernourished, is unlikely to make much difference,' it said after the case.



wild species of 'industrial' fish such as sprat, capelin, pout and sand eel.

■ Copies of the report available for £2.50 inclusive from CIWF, 20 Lavant Street, Petersfield, Hants, GU32 3EW.

## Supermarkets show caution over organics

A survey by the Food Commission has found supermarkets continuing to express interest in selling organic fruit and vegetables. But some are concerned that the recession is affecting sales of such 'luxury' goods.

The survey of 11 leading retail chains found that three chains did not stock organic fruit and vegetables (see table), including Marks & Spencer who abandoned organic produce after a trial marketing period. The Asda chain have reduced their organic outlets from over 90 of their 206 supermarkets to just 25, while Gateway is increasing their outlets to 40 stores, 6 per cent of their outlets.

Sainsbury and Tesco offer organic produce in a significant proportion of their outlets, while Safeway and Waitrose say they now offer organic

### The supermarkets that sell organic fruit and vegetables

	Organic produce	Tropical organic produce
Asda	was 90 now 25 stores (12%)	yes
Co-op	some societies/stores	no
Gateway	40 stores (6%)	no
Iceland	no	no
Kwiksave	n/a (decided locally)	n/a (decided locally)
Marks & Spencer	ceased	ceased
Morrisons	no	no
Safeway	yes (100%)	yes (100%)
Sainsbury	181 stores (56%)	181 stores (56%)
Tesco	larger stores	no
Waitrose	yes (100%)	no

fruit and vegetables in all their stores.

The importation of organic products from tropical countries is only developing slowly. Producers in third world countries will still find it hard to persuade the large chains to show

interest. Instead they may turn to alternative trading organisations such as Equal Exchange and TWIN Trading, who specialise in fair trading schemes with producer co-operatives.

■ Research: Martine Drake and Deborah Hersh

### Geest backs organics

Geest, the banana importers and Britain's largest fruit and vegetable company, are launching a range of organic crops under the label The Organic Way, through their offshoot Oasis Organics.

Already supplying supermarkets with over £4m-worth of organic produce annually, Oasis aims to interest smaller grocery chains, health food shops and specialist caterers. Managing Director Michael Knight accepts that sales may have reached a plateau at present but is convinced there is great scope: 'I don't believe anyone has really tried to market organics'.

■ Outlets for organic fruits & vegetables: opportunities for producers, from the Food Commission, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH. £5 inc p&p.

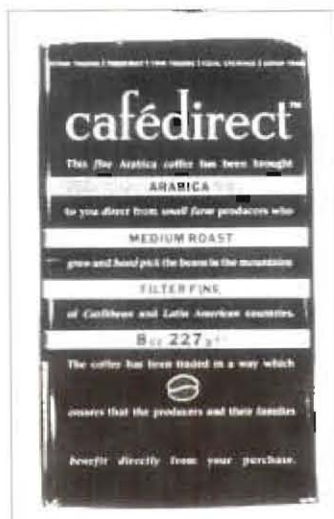
## Logo to mark fair trade

A consortium of UK charities concerned with promoting fair trade with third world producers are launching a 'Fair Trade Mark' in the new year.

Christian Aid, Oxfam, CAFOD, New Consumer, Traidcraft and the World Development Movement have linked to launch the labelling scheme aimed at encouraging retailers and shoppers to support 'people-friendly' products.

'Unfair trade means headline wages and bad working conditions. It locks communities into poverty,' said Fairtrade Foundation Director Paul Johns. The Foundation's charter calls for fair prices to be paid to producers, with support for democratic producer groups, equal rewards for women and men, stable trading relations and encouragement for sustainable methods of production.

■ The Fairtrade Foundation, 20 Dartmouth Hill, London SE10 8AJ. Tel 081-692 9503, fax 081-692 6148.



A product eminently suitable for gaining a Fair Trade logo is Cafédirect, a filter coffee marketed jointly by Oxfam, Equal Exchange, Traidcraft and Twin Trading. Trials in Co-op and Safeway supermarkets in Scotland may lead to nationwide marketing of Cafédirect this autumn.

## Bringing Rio home

*Putting biodiversity back into our food and farming*

a one day conference

Friday 4 December

10.00-6.00

**Linnaean Society,  
Burlington House,  
Piccadilly, London W1**

Speakers include:

Phillipe Moulart	European Commission
Renée Vellve	Genetic Resources Action International
Jeremy Cherfas	Henry Doubleday Research Association
Robin Jenkins	Food Commission
Alistair Burns	English Nature
Michel Pimbert	WWF Int
Simon Wright	Whole Earth Foods

Tickets £10.00 (numbers limited)  
organised by the SAFE Alliance,  
21 Tower Street, London WC2H 9NS  
Tel: 071-240 1811

## UK agrees to more additives in babyfoods

### *The quality of babyfood is not strained but droppeth as a gentle Directive from Brussels...*

The half-hearted attempt by the UK government's Food Advisory Group (FAC) to limit the number of additives permitted in babyfoods has been weakened still further by new proposals from the European Commission.

Last summer the FAC published their views on limiting the number of additives permitted in weaning foods, stating their belief that not only should an additive be safe, but that there should be a 'compelling case of need for its use'. The committee recommended a ban on carrageenan in babyfoods, a ban on synthetic vanilla flavourings and because some concentrated baby juices no longer used preservatives, there was therefore no call for their use in any such juices.

This last piece of logic could have formed the basis for the rest of their report but unfortunately did not. Some manufacturers are now producing babyfoods without the use of modified starches to 'thicken' an oth-

erwise runny mixture, and on the FAC's logic this could have provided the reasoning to ban such thickeners for all products. Regrettably the FAC allowed such starches for up to 5% by weight of the babyfood (more than enough to thicken a jar-full).

Since the report was published, the European Commission has added a further list of over 50 additives it wishes to see permitted in babyfoods, including carrageenan and several types of thickeners, gums, starches and emulsifiers, not one of which is currently used by UK manufacturers.

Once again, the opportunity has been lost. Instead of arguing that if food can be made without these additives then the additives are patently unnecessary, the UK government has agreed not to oppose the EC's

extended list. Only in one or two cases (including carrageenan) has the government asked for further reviews before giving consent.

Meanwhile the UK market for babyfood shows some sign of moving in a more positive direction. A range of UK-made organic ready-to-

eat babyfoods from Organix is being test marketed by Safeways at around 50p per jar. Booker health foods is importing German organic babyfoods to retail at around the same price, and Boots has introduced an own-brand organic range (called, cheekily, Mother's

Recipe). Last year Cow & Gate launched its Olvarit range of babyfoods with more food and less thickener, at a premium price over their regular range.



## Annatto doubts

The widespread use of annatto yellow colouring agent (E160b) in place of the coal-tar dye tartrazine may come a cropper with the European Commission. In the EC's proposals to control additive levels in foods a daily limit of 2.5mg annatto per kilo body-weight has been set, and a list of foods in which it can be used has been drawn up.

The trouble for UK manufacturers is that daily levels are already estimated to approach the EC limit, taking the limited list alone. In the UK a far wider range of foods contain annatto, yet moves by MAFF to argue for an extension of the list of permitted foods will need to be justified by showing that a higher daily limit is acceptable. It is believed that little testing has been done at such high levels.

## Right on Preston

**A feather in the cap for Preston Borough Council's Environmental Health Department, with the launch of *Good Food - Cheap!*, a guide to setting up local food co-ops and purchasing and preparing nutritious food.**

■ Details of the project from Julie Downs, Food Co-op Development Officer, Grange Community Enterprise Centre, Hazel Grove, Ribblesdale, Preston PR2 6PT (tel 0772 653663)



## Milupa ads withdrawn

Complaints by campaigning group Action and Information on Sugars that Milupa's claim of 'natural, wholesome ingredients ... all we add are the vitamins and minerals' failed to make parents aware of added sucrose, dextrose and maltodextrin have led Milupa to withdraw the advertisements voluntarily.

Milupa, Cow & Gate and Robinson have also promised to withdraw free samples of their sweetened baby drinks from Bounty packs for new mothers.

At an estimated 43% sugar this powdered drink is alarming dentists and nutritionists alike for its claims to 'gently soothe your

little one to sleep, leaving him feeling fully satisfied as well as sleepy'. Diluted according to instructions it is as sweet as Coca-Cola and the sugar could obviously sit on the teeth all night.

German parents have successfully prosecuted Milupa for the dental damage their sweet drinks can cause to infants, and in the UK Ribena has settled out of court on similar charges. Perhaps Farleys, a subsidiary of Boots, should talk to their lawyers.

## COMA reveals industry links

Thirty one of the 59 advisors on the Government's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) and its specialist panels have admitted to receiving food and drug industry cash, either benefitting themselves personally or boosting their department's research funds.

The committee members are selected by the Minister of Health to give 'independent scientific advice' on such sensitive issues as the relation between dietary fat and heart disease, and the role of commercial weaning foods and baby drinks.

It had been a poorly-kept secret that a previous head of the COMA Panel on Child Nutrition, Dr Tom Oppe, was a consultant to Heinz. The majority of the present Panel of eight admit to commercial interests. The chairman,

Professor Cockburn, has research grants from the Swedish food and drug company Kabi-Vitrum. Professor Hull is a consultant for Cow & Gate and receives research funds from Boots and Milupa. Dr Poskitt receives fees from Wyeth, Farley and Cow & Gate (and owns shares in Guinness and British American Tobacco). Professor Walker-Smith has grants from Cow & Gate, Nestlé, Wyeth and Bristol Myers, while Ms Shaw has fees from Cow & Gate.

The Panel on Novel Foods has four members and every one has links to food-related commercial interests, including Professor Walker who is a consultant for Procter and Gamble, the company developing the fat substitute Olestra.

The six-member cardiovascular group includes four with links to food

and drug interests, two of whom (Professor Dame Lloyd, Dr Whitehead) have Milk Marketing Board connections.

The main committee of nine has only three members with declared interests, including Professor Cockburn (see above), Professor James who has research funding from Fisons, and Professor Jackson, who was a consultant to Booker and takes funding from the Milk Marketing Board, Nestlé, Seven Seas and five other companies.

Meanwhile the MAFF Consumer Panel has been promised similar details of member's interests for MAFF's Food Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes, the Committee on Toxicity, the Committee on Carcinogenicity and the Committee on Mutagenicity. Watch this space

## Wolves in sheep's clothing

Not content with their existing power, food industry-sponsored bodies have been masquerading as non-government organisations (NGOs) to infiltrate and influence United Nations policy on nutrition.

This summer food industry multinationals, which promote fatty, sugary products throughout the world, presented themselves as NGOs at the Preparatory Meeting of the International Conference on Nutrition in Geneva (see 'Feeding the world on cola' on page 12) where they succeeded in watering down NGO recommendations on improving world diet and nutrition. Such benign-sounding bodies as the International Life Sciences Institute and the International Dietary Energy Consultancy Group are in fact funded by companies such as Coca-Cola and Nestlé, Mars, Cadbury-Schwepes, Pepsi and British Sugar among others.

Their presence caused a debilitating row among NGOs, some of whom were outraged that the food industry could even be permitted to conceal themselves as NGOs. John Beishon, of the Consumers' Association and the International Organisation of Consumers Unions (IOCU), spoke powerfully on this theme and garnered much support from other NGOs. But some of the more naive NGO members could see no problem with co-operating with the food industry. Their anger was directed against IOCU and the NGOs which backed Beishon's statement. In their view, IOCU had shattered the veneer of unity in the NGO camp and, since they prize unity above all else (including, it seems, action to tackle nutrition problems), IOCU and its supporters were vilified.

Vilified, but not isolated. Later UNICEF supported the call for NGOs and industry organisations to be treated separately in the UN system. The behaviour of the industry at UNCED and at the conference now looks set to reverberate throughout the UN and the NGO world.

## New mineral oils research shows toxicity problems

Nearly four years ago the government announced it would ban mineral oils used in food processing. In our last issue (FM18) we reported how the industry and government had delayed that ban while oil companies carried out further research, although the expert committee assessing mineral oils had been quite categorical in their recommendation that the oils should be banned as soon as possible.

Now the results of that research have been sent to the Ministry of Agriculture (MAFF) which has yet to make any official pronouncement. But unofficially we understand that the results concur with previous research showing toxicity in laboratory animals.

The question which MAFF has so far failed to answer is why it delayed its initial ban for nearly four years under apparent pressure from the industry? The *Food Magazine* will be pressing Food Minister Nicholas Soames for an answer.



**Mars, having set their hungry sights on Eastern Europe, picked a winner with Czechoslovakia's javelin thrower, Jan Zelezny, who won a gold medal at this summer's Olympic Games. The translation reads 'Good Luck'. With advertising like this the Czechs will certainly need it!**

## US call to ban milk from BST cows

The US General Accounting Office (GAO) has called for a ban on sales of milk and beef from cows treated with the milk-boosting hormone, bovine somatotropin (BST), known as BGH (bovine growth hormone) in the US.

The hormone increases mastitis in cows which are then treated with

antibiotics. The GAO fears that the concentration of antibiotics in milk and beef might be raised and pose unknown health risks to consumers. The GAO report calls on the US Food and Drug Administration to stop authorising the marketing of dairy products from BGH-treated cows

# Chaos looms on low-alcohol drinks

**Drinking drivers may find UK labelling laws for 'low-alcohol' drinks confusing. But come the single European market we could import products labelled 'alcohol-free' that contain over 20 times the alcohol as our own 'alcohol-free' drinks. Tim Lobstein reports on the labels that could send heads spinning.**



At 3.4% alcohol, the Heineken could be called a low-alcohol drink by Greeks and Italians, but not the Fosters at 3.6%. Kronenbourg at 5.0% is full-strength by all countries' standards, but Swan Light at 1.0% could be called 'alcohol-free' in France, Italy and Spain. Everyone would call Kaliber (0.05%) an 'alcohol-free' drink, except in Luxembourg, where it must be called 'low alcohol'.

Are you confused when you scan the supermarket shelves for a suitable drink for drivers, trying to remember that the UK allows four categories of under-strength brew?

There's 'reduced alcohol', 'low alcohol', 'de-alcoholised' and 'alcohol-free'. On the shelf we also find other categories, such as 'partially fermented' and the meaningless word 'light'. As for the drinks themselves, some apparently low-alcohol products have more alcohol per glass than other full-strength products.

But if that's bad enough, just wait till the single European market arrives in the new year. The Italians, for example, happily allow a drink with 3.5% alcohol to be called 'low-alcohol', the Danes say it must have less than 2.7% alcohol, the British draw the limit at 1.2%, the Dutch stop at 0.6% if it's beer, and don't allow the phrase to be used if it's wine, while the Irish don't have a definition of 'low alcohol' at all!

A similar problem arises with so-called 'alcohol-free' drinks. In the UK a manufacturer would be prosecuted for labelling a product with more than 0.05% alcohol as 'alcohol-free', but in France a product with up to 1.2% alcohol – over twenty times as much – can legally pass as 'sans alcool'.

The European Commission is trying to find ways of unifying the definitions of low- and no-alcohol drinks. They are currently proposing that different countries' definitions should initially be allowed within relatively wide tolerance bands, and that step-by-step these bands should be made more uniform until all countries are using the same definitions.

The model is remarkably like the Exchange Rate Mechanism for the Community's currencies, in which wide bands become narrower until we have one currency – and it may suffer similar 'fault lines'. With alcohol, though, the wide variations in definitions may seriously mislead consumers who want a low-alcohol drink before driving; and each time the definitions change drinkers will have to be re-educated to comprehend the new definitions.

There is an alternative method of labelling which the Food Commission would like to urge the European Commission to consider. Firstly, the definitions should be dropped, and all claims to being low- or no-alcohol products should be prohibited on any beverages containing alcohol.

Secondly the actual amount of alcohol present in the container as purchased should be declared clearly on the label, rounded up to the nearest whole millilitre (ml).

The bottle of French Light wine, shown in the picture (right), would say it contains 27 ml of alcohol in the bottle, while the Belgian export lager (left) would declare 14 ml in the can.

The scheme would identify the Fosters can as containing 16 ml, while the larger (but weaker) can of Heineken has 17ml. The stronger Kronenbourg would admit to 25 ml alcohol, while the smaller Swan Light would say 4 ml. The Kaliber, with barely

a quarter of a millilitre alcohol in a can might round this figure up to 1 ml. All a drinking driver needs to know is how much alcohol they should drink. The safest choice is of course none, and Kaliber gets pretty close. Around 30 ml alcohol will take some people over the legal limit for driving.

That is, unless you are driving on the Continent. To make your life wonderfully complicated, each European country has its own blood-alcohol limit for drivers!

#### Hidden ingredients

The additives and ingredients used to make modern drinks have to be declared on the label ... but only if the drink contains less than 1.2% alcohol!

The majority of manufacturers use additives to improve the head on beers, increase shelf life and impart a better colour and better flavours. Sulphite preservatives, artificial sweeteners, enzymes and stabilisers are all used in a variety of popular drinks. Yet they are only declared on those with little alcohol.

The labelling laws serve to reinforce the popular belief that 'low-alcohol' drinks 'taste of chemicals' and are 'full of additives'. In fact just the same cocktail of additives may be found in regular full-alcohol products.

The EC is proposing ingredient labelling for all drinks but it is expected to be some time before any agreement with industry is reached.

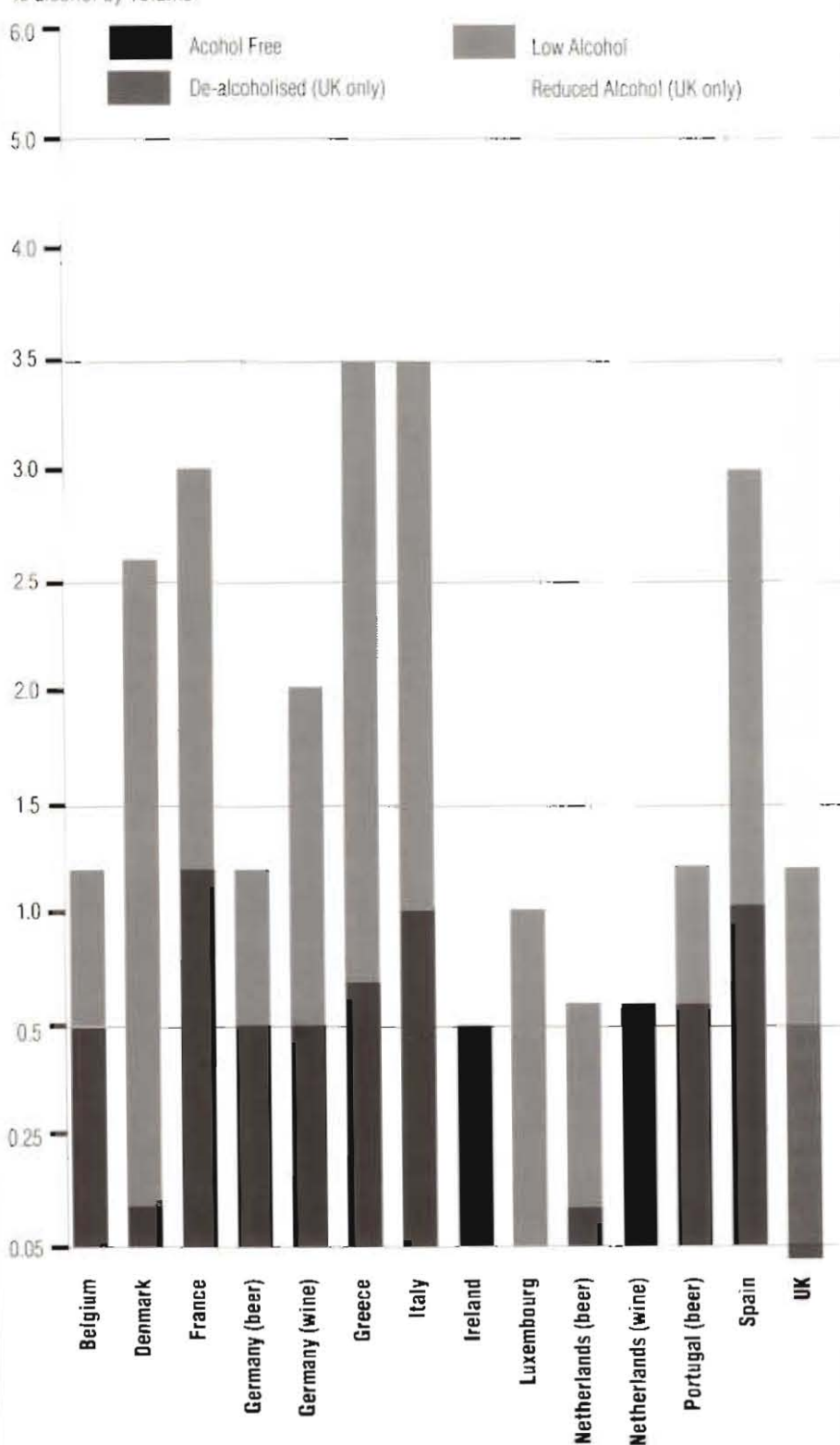


This French 'light' wine can be called 'reduced alcohol' in the UK but at 3.5% is stronger than many full-strength lagers such as the Belgian export lager beside it (at 3.0%). The wine cannot be called 'low alcohol' in Britain or indeed in France, but if it were sold in Italy it could! Meanwhile, the French would happily call the Belgian lager a 'low-alcohol' product. Confused?

## How countries compare

### The differing standards for low alcohol and no alcohol drinks

% alcohol by volume



# Ingene-ious food?

## What is genetic engineering?

In simple terms genetic engineering allows genes from the cellular DNA of one living organism to be introduced into another in often a more precise and speedier way than via nature or selective breeding. Much of the work carried out to date has transferred genetic material between plants or animals of the same species. For example genes from pigs that are prolific breeders have been introduced into pigs that produce leaner meat to produce a pig that is both leaner and has lots of piglets.

However genetic modification can also go beyond what can be achieved by conventional breeding. It is now possible to transfer genetic material between species, for example from a fish and insert it into a tomato, in this case to produce tomatoes which suffer less damage when frozen. These transgenic plants or animals are then able to pass the same characteristic onto their offspring.

## Is it safe?

Proponents of gene technology argue that their practices are little different from conventional breeding and therefore safety concerns are minimal. However independent researchers argue that genetic engineering cannot simply be compared to natural processes which are subject to intricate, limiting mechanisms. In contrast genetic engineering leads to combinations that in many cases would never occur by natural gene exchange, produced in an uncontrolled or artificial way in an environment which lacks the natural selection processes. New metabolic pathways could be opened up with consequences which may not come to light for some time.

Even the transfer of genetic material within a species may have safety implications. For example, scientists developing a genetically modified strain of potatoes that were more resistant to crop damage also found that the levels of natural toxin, solanin, had been increased to such a level that the potatoes were then poisonous to eat. The potential escape of genetically modified organisms into the environment also raises concerns over their ecological impact.

In the UK new genetically engineered foods are



scrutinised by the Ministry of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP). Unlike the safety assessment of additives this procedure is entirely voluntary. Neither does the Committee consider whether there is a 'need' for the novel food or ingredient. Additives' manufacturers on the other hand have to establish that there is a need for their product. This discrepancy between the two approval processes raises the question of why additives, which might be consumed in minute quantities, are submitted to more stringent safeguards than novel foods that could be consumed in much greater quantities.

The procedure that the EC is proposing for the assessment of novel foods will be mandatory although the current draft regulation proposes weaker controls than currently exist under the voluntary UK arrangement. Among the shortcomings of the EC proposals is the recommendation that the need for assessment should be determined by the manufacturers of the product itself who will conduct their own studies. The proposed approval process is unclear but could rely on one individual to review safety. And there are no provisions for labelling genetically modified foods. This draft is actually weaker than the industry itself has proposed. Many people in biotechnology now recognise that a clear legislative framework is necessary to allay consumer fears.

The issue is likely to cause a storm in the European Parliament when it is debated later this year.

## To label or not to label

Consumers are increasingly concerned about the way their food is produced and are demanding information on which to base clearer choices. Terms such as 'organic', 'vegetarian' and 'free range' are now familiar labels in supermarkets. Food that has been irradiated must be labelled and there are proposals for labelling pesticides used after harvest on fruits and vegetables. If the milk-boosting hormone BST is used commercially consumers and retailers have said they want such milk labelled. Therefore it comes as little surprise that consumers also want information on whether genetic engineering has been used during food production.

A survey for the trade journal *Supermarketing* in August showed that 85 per cent of consumers thought that supermarkets should clearly label genetically engineered foods with only 9 per cent disagreeing. While some consumers may wish to avoid these foods, 48 per cent of those in the *Supermarketing* survey indicated that they would choose genetically modified foods. So far food manufacturers it could even be competitively disadvantageous not to label.

At the moment consumers are being denied this choice. There is no legal obligation on manufacturers of genetically modified foods to label their products. The Government's Food Advisory Committee (FAC) has recommended a confusing double standard for labelling. It recommends labelling for only two categories – foodstuffs from any organism modi-

fied by genes from outside its own species, and for 'novel food products of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) which do not contain the DNA of the GMO but which are different from conventional foods'. A similar category of foodstuffs made using GMO organisms but which are supposedly identical to conventional products (such as cheese made from GM-chymosin) need not be labelled, says FAC. Foods made by transferring genetic material within the same species would also be exempt.

FAC's suggestions have found favour with none. The majority of the industry is opposed to any kind of labelling and consumer organisations found their rationale inexplicable.

Consumer and public interest groups in Europe argue that labelling should be based on consumer understanding of the issues, including their moral concerns, and not simply on scientific assessments of risks. Indeed labelling should not relate in any way to risk or perceived risk, as a food's safety is a separate issue.

In the USA, where there are no labelling requirements, there is now a considerable backlash against the idea of genetically modified foods (see box). One industry commentator recognises the short-comings of the US approach:

'... just because the regulators do not insist on labelling recombinant foods does not mean that we should not label them. If we deny consumers the

knowledge that a product is engineered, we deny them the opportunity to choose biotechnology for themselves — as well as denying ourselves a chance to build brand identity. And that is no way to build a market.' ('Letting the Consumer Choose', *Bio/technology*, Vol 10 July 1992)

## Ethical concerns.

In addition to possible concerns over safety, the genetic manipulation of plants and animals for food gives rise to a number of ethical concerns. For example would some people consider it cannibalism to eat food into which human genes have been inserted? Sheep into which a human blood clotting factor gene has been incorporated to produce medically valuable human proteins in their milk, could be used for food.

People with religious dietary laws may not wish to eat food to which genes from animals whose flesh is forbidden has been transferred — for example pigs for Muslims and Jews or cattle for Hindus. Already in the United States cattle have been modified to carry the porcine growth hormone from pigs.

Similarly vegetarians may be unhappy about vegetables with genes from animals, for example tomatoes with fish genes or potatoes with chicken genes. And should we be concerned about the use, as animal feed, of organisms containing human genes?

These are not easy questions to answer and the government has set up an ad hoc study group to look at the situation. While scientists may be able to supply 'rational' answers as to why the above practices may be acceptable, for many people it will remain a matter of personal choice.

## What's new

One of the major areas of research is the identification and introduction of pest- and disease-resistant genes into plants. While this may potentially have benefits in reducing pesticide use on crops there are concerns that such genetic changes could result in a crop becoming more vulnerable to a new disease.

Increasing natural anti-pest toxins in crops may also have dangerous consequences for humans or animals eating the resulting food as defence mechanisms that are effective against pests and disease may open up new metabolic pathways in people as well.

Another potential downside to such developments is that pests themselves evolve in response to changes in their hosts. In the same way that pests can become resistant to chemicals, resistance by genetic modification may also become ineffective after a relatively short time.

Another much talked about application of genetic engineering is herbicide-resistant crops. This allows farmers to use stronger weedkillers on their fields without affecting the crops. Environmentalists argue that this kind of development has no environmental

## US consumer boycott

Vice President Dan Quayle's announcement earlier this summer that testing and labelling of genetically engineered foods would not be required has caused a storm of protest from consumer and public interest organisations.

Led by the Pure Food Campaign, consumers are being urged to boycott all genetically engineered foods, dubbed 'Frankenfood', before any products have even hit US supermarket shelves. The Campaign has also mobilised 1,500 of the country's top chefs to boycott genetically engineered foods in their restaurants.

This is not encouraging news for Calgene Inc, the US company planning to launch its Flavr Savr tomato, genetically tweaked to stay firm longer. Critics argue that Calgene's 'supertomato' is unnecessary as there are already tomatoes that last 35 days — others are sceptical about its claims for improved flavour.

The Pure Food Campaign is calling for the same premarket testing of all genetically engineered foods as for food additives and for labelling of products.

benefits.

Other developments are designed to lengthen shelflife or prevent storage damage to fruit and vegetables. US companies and the UK's ICI are developing a genetically modified tomato which stays firmer longer.

Many patent applications relate to the production of enzymes and amino acids. Some are designed for 'functional foods' for which there is a growing demand particularly in Japan.

Perhaps the best-known genetically engineered product is Bovine Somatotropin or BST — the milk-boosting hormone whose secret trials caused a storm of protest. This product has yet to be given EC and US approval — both have agreed a moratorium until more is known about its safety and potential impact on the dairy industry.

## UK Campaigns

A number of consumer, animal welfare organisations and trade unions are uniting under the name of the Committee on Biotechnology and Food (COBAF) to urge the UK Agriculture Minister, John Gummer to push for a fundamental re-drafting of the EC's proposed legislation for the assessment of novel foods.

The Committee which includes the Food Commission, Genetics Forum, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the RSPCA and the Vegetarian Society are demanding that all genetically modified food is labelled and properly assessed and authorised before marketing.

Written by Sue Dibb

## Vegetarian cheese

Traditionally cheese is made using rennet from calves' stomachs, which contain the enzyme, chymosin, that coagulates milk. The demand for rennet now exceeds supply and a number of alternatives have been developed. The Dutch company Gist-Brocades has developed a chymosin produced by genetic modification of a bacteria. Two other companies have developed similar products. An alternative, discovered in Japan, is a naturally occurring mould fungus called *Mucor miehei* which acts in a similar way to chymosin to coagulate milk but is not a genetically modified organism.

All three of the chymosins produced by genetic modification have been approved by the voluntary UK Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes since 1990.

The advantage for cheese producers and retailers is that they can call cheeses made from these alternative 'rennets' 'Vegetarian' and charge premium prices for them. This cannot be justified when much 'non-vegetarian' cheese is also produced using these same alternatives to rennet and is on sale more cheaply. This is a secret that manufacturers would rather keep to themselves. Safeway, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Dairy Crest and St Ivel all told the *Food Magazine* that their regular cheeses may be made from non-animal alternatives.

# Feeding the world with cola

**At the end of the summer, around 500 delegates from over 130 countries gathered in the splendour of the Palais des Nations in Geneva to prepare solutions to the problem of hunger, malnutrition and diet-related diseases. There was precious little sign of progress.**

The statistics of the global food and health problem stagger the imagination: an estimated 780 million people are chronically undernourished, 192 million children under five suffer protein-energy malnutrition and an incredible 2000 million are deficient in micronutrients such as vitamin A, iodine and iron.

Paradoxically, in the midst of this widespread undernutrition, the problems of overnutrition are also increasing. The roll call of diseases caused or exacerbated by fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt is familiar to most people in the rich world. Unfortunately heart disease, cancers, diabetes and so on are now becoming familiar to citizens of poor countries too. It is estimated that half the countries of the world are currently having to grapple not only with hunger and malnutrition but, at the same time, with a growing incidence of chronic diet-related diseases.

In an attempt to devise global solutions to these ubiquitous problems the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) are hosting an International Conference on Nutrition (ICN). Regular readers will recall that the NFA's chair, Geoffrey Cannon, was included in the British Government's delegation to a preparatory meeting for the ICN in spring this year. The Geneva gathering was the penultimate stage in preparations for the ICN itself, which will take place in Rome at the beginning of December. As such this preparatory committee ought to have been the forum for the development of bold and imaginative solutions to this human tragedy.

Instead, it was the scene of political horse-trading, infiltration by the

food industry and much empty rhetoric. Throughout the week long event, attention was focused on the 20 or so pages of the Draft Declaration and Draft Plan of Action produced by the ICN. By the end of the week the delegates had succeeded only in lengthening it to some 30 pages, with the key areas still the subject of fierce controversy. It was widely agreed, for example, by most of the non-government organisations (NGOs) present that international debt and IMF-imposed structural adjustment policies were responsible for much of the starvation and malnutrition suffered by poor people in poor countries. The logical solution, therefore, would be to lift the burden of debt repayments and change the conditions for structural adjustment. However, in the Draft Declaration this clear policy recommendation was turned into the following woolly wording: '...alleviation of debt could contribute... to the nutritional well-being in... low income countries' (emphasis added). The international bankers had, it seemed, triumphed again over compassion.

At the other end of the scale, the food industry fought hard and dirty to water down the recommendations on diet-related diseases. The food industry was present in force with some 30 or so representatives, compared to only nine people who had been able to find funding to represent NGOs from the south. Whilst some food industry organisations wore their colours plainly, others masqueraded as 'scientific' organisations and as ordinary NGOs (see 'Wolves in sheep's clothing' on page 7).

In this guise, the food industry poured scorn on the seminal WHO report, *Diet, nutrition and the preven-*

*tion of chronic diseases*. The reason for their attitude was not difficult to discern. This document proposes population nutrient goals which are appropriate for the whole world's population. It recommends, among other things, that fat should comprise a maximum 30 per cent of dietary energy and that refined sugar is not a necessary part of the diet at all. Such recommendations would, of course, blow a large hole in the profit forecasts of those parts of the food industry producing and exporting fatty, sugary products. Thus, instead of endorsing global nutrient goals, the Plan of Action currently states that, 'Governments should... consider which dietary targets are appropriate... and provide advice to the public... relevant for different age groups and lifestyles and appropriate for the country's population'. It would be more honest for the text to read, 'appropriate for the food industry's profits'.

In a rare moment of frankness, one food industry representative, who was being interviewed by a Channel 4 film crew, revealed their true colours. He said, on film, that cola was important for developing countries because, when water supplies were contaminated, it was safe for children to drink cola! A modern day version of 'let them eat cake'?

NFA, along with the Consumers' Association, other UK groups and NGOs around the world, does not intend to let these vested interests go unchallenged. NGOs will be working hard in the run up to the ICN to change the wording of the key conference documents and, most importantly, to turn those words into action. Watch this space...

■ The new address of the Alliance is  
3rd Floor, 5-11 Worship Lane  
London EC2A 2BH  
Telephone: 071-628 7261

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  
Henry Doubleday Research Assoc.  
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  
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:

British Dietetic Association  
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)

## Food and poverty cause child ill-health

Poverty is the key to children's ill-health, and nutritional intake is a key indicator of health status, concludes Give Us a Chance – Child Poverty and the Health of the Nation, a joint statement by three leading organisations.

In their response to The Health of the Nation White Paper, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Health Visitor's Association and the Save the Children Fund believe that children should be put at the heart of health strategy. In addition, equality should be an underlying principle: despite basing itself on the European targets set by the WHO's Health For All by the Year 2000, the UK government's White Paper omits the first of the WHO targets – to achieve greater equity in health.

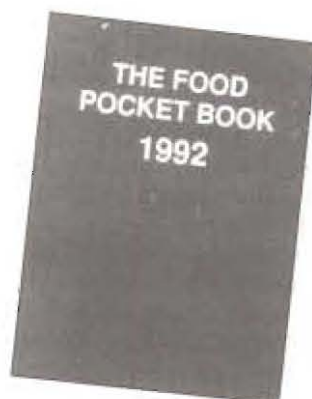
The group believes that the social causes of ill-health are the central challenge to government, and the emphasis on individuals to change their own behaviour is insufficient.

Many diseases of adulthood and childhood relate to poverty and nutrition in the early years and survey after survey has shown that families on low income 'cannot afford to eat the kinds of diets recommended by nutritionists'.

'Where children and adults have insufficient money to feed themselves properly, and where they are exposed unnecessarily to illness and accident risk factors due to the conditions they live in, intervention by the health services alone will not be enough to help them,' says the statement. 'The White Paper needs much clearer focus on tackling poverty and inequality for a healthy strategy to achieve real and lasting improvements in health.'



■ Copies of the statement are available from the Policy and Research Unit, UK Department, Save the Children Fund, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD (tel 071-703 5400, ex 307).



£82m was spent last year advertising chocolates, and £71m on breakfast cereals. Only one man in five goes shopping regularly by himself, while nearly half of all women do. Sainsbury is big, but ranks ninth in Europe's supermarket chains, with two German chains more than double Sainsbury's size.

There are many similar gems in this booklet, but it's barely worth £16.95 unless you love statistics. Details from NTC Publications: fax 0491-571188.

Behind the tourist images of Scotland's lochs and glens lies a world of catering that depends on low pay and long hours. Following the tradition of excellent Low Pay Unit studies, *Hard Cheese – A Study of Hotel and Catering Employment in Scotland* is available for £7.25 inc p&p from the Scottish Low Pay Unit, Freepost, Glasgow G3 7BR.

**Manchester Low Pay Unit** reports that school-leavers who had previously been covered by minimum wage legislation are being paid as little as 90p an hour.

Food retailers are among the low-paying employers, with youngsters being paid £1.40 an hour compared with the legal minimum for adults of £3.08 an hour.

## HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH? The consumer society and the future of the earth

Alan Thorn Durning  
Earthscan, 120 Pentonville Road,  
London N1 9JN £8.95, ISBN  
1853831344

How much consumption is enough? Alan Durning divides the world into 1.1bn over-consumers, 3.1bn who consume enough but no more, and 1.1bn people whose life is blighted by insufficient food, shelter, warmth and health.

He quickly makes us, the over-consumers, look as nasty, stupid, selfish and destructive as we really are, and goes on to show how consumerism never satisfies but only cultivates more consumer needs. We are divorced from the process of production and ignorant of the human and environmental costs of creating what we consume.

Some things may change.

Pressure from environmental and animal welfare groups has led to more information being available on the way our food is produced. But often this only leads to a choice of, say, dolphin friendly tuna or free range eggs (at a premium price) while tuna are still over-fished, dolphins are still drowned in the nets, chickens imprisoned in batteries and we eat far more protein than our bodies need.

If there is no moral justification for overconsumption, why do we do it? Conspicuous consumption gives our lives meaning, says Durning, yet instead of filling a vacuum consumerism makes one. And where is the way out? The last chapter describes a 'culture of permanence' but evaporates into religious epiphanies and pious hopes.

This is hardly surprising as Durning does not attempt to analyse the roots of consumerism, roots which lie in capitalism and its imperative of economic growth (an impera-

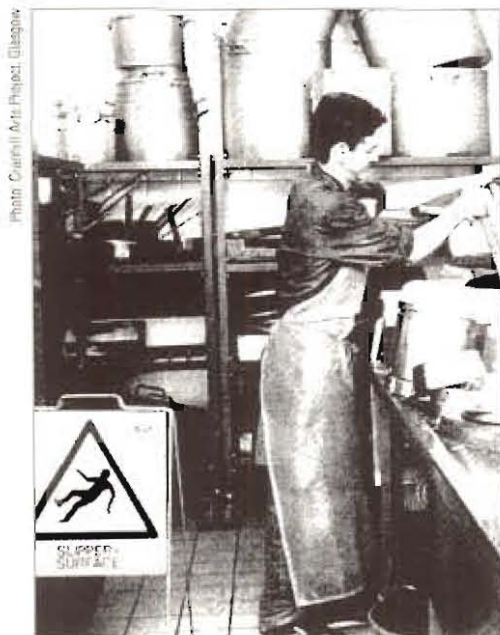


Photo: Corbett Arts Project, Glasgow

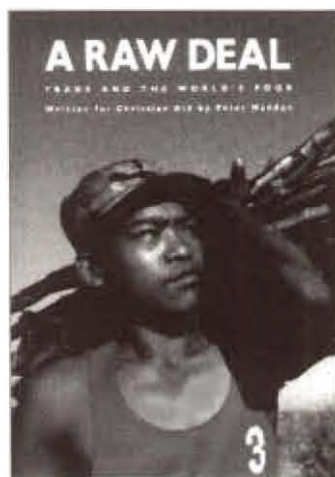
tive shared by orthodox socialism).

It is fashionable to propose 'sustainable growth' these days. It may pose no threat to capitalism while in slump, but if 'recovery' occurs it will be on the back of a deliberate stimulation of consumption, at the expense of the poor and the environment.

Is there a way out? Take food: few of us have spent any part of our lives growing our own food. We have no idea how much land we indirectly requisition around the world to produce our food, how much cruelty it involves, how much people are exploited in the process. Have we the right to eat and remain ignorant of these things? What is a morally justifiable diet?

The African population is currently growing at about 3 per cent per annum, while the European population is growing at one tenth this rate. Yet every European baby will be at least 32 times as destructive of the environment as an African baby. As consumers, the European population is thus growing three times faster than the African. Who is in greater need of population control - or greatly reduced consumption - or both?

Robin Jenkins



### A RAW DEAL: TRADE AND THE WORLD'S POOR

Peter Madden for Christian Aid  
Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London  
SE1 7RT £3.99, ISBN 0904379169

The need to increase the benefits of world trade to developing countries is a pressing concern as GATT negotiations continue. This Christian Aid booklet explains current inequalities and makes policy recommendations for how these could be reduced.

It includes quantitative analysis

of current trade barriers to exports from developing countries. These have increased over recent years even though they were already higher than those imposed by the developing countries on their imports. They also discourage processing of raw materials in the country of origin.

Even without such public policy barriers to fair trade, small countries are powerless against large trading companies. Eighty per cent of world banana trade, 83% of world cocoa trade, and 85% of world tea trade is, in each case, controlled by just three companies.

The booklet's recommendations cover such issues as the means to ending protectionism, the promotion of fairer trade patterns and the future regulation of trade. They include the extension of GATT to limit the operation of international corporations and impose minimum working conditions. Objectives like these may seem unrealistic at present but need to be restated if only to remind us that a better alternative could exist.

This book is a most accessible introduction to current thinking on the problems of world trade. Its excellent diagrams and graphs on, for example, who gets what from the cost of a banana or a jar of instant coffee, provide excellent educational and campaign material.

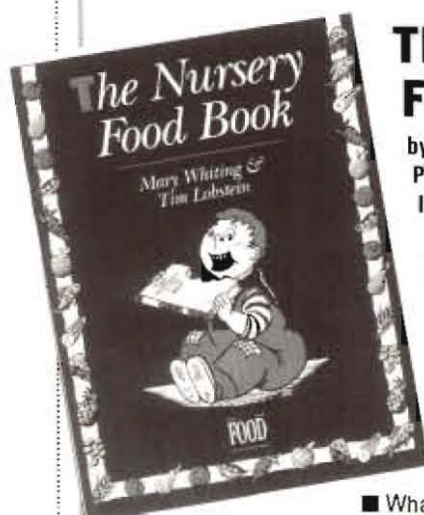
Peter Snell

### SINCE 'SILENT SPRING' — THIRTY YEARS OF PESTICIDE POISONING

Thirty years ago the book 'Silent Spring' altered the public to serious new threats to humans and the environment from chemical pesticides.

This factsheet from Greenpeace catalogues the continuing and growing worldwide problems from pesticides since Rachel Carson's book was first published in 1962.

Copies are available from Pesticides Project, Greenpeace Communications, 5 Baker's Row, London EC1R 3DB.



### The Nursery Food Book

by Mary Whiting & Tim Lobstein  
Published by Edward Arnold  
ISBN 0340-559357

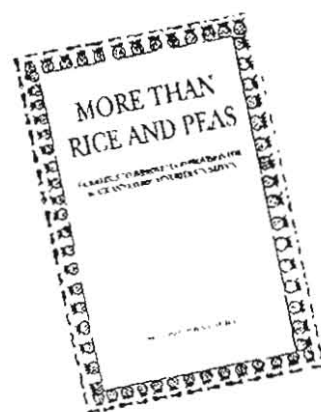
This book is about food in nurseries and nursery classes. It offers tips, recipes, advice and expertise.

The Nursery Food Book will answer such questions as:

- What would be a healthy main meal for three year olds?
- What if children only want chips?
- What if we have a group of children from mixed cultures?
- What food activities can young children do?
- What if it's someone's birthday?

Available from Publications Dept,  
Food Commission, 3rd Floor  
5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH.  
Price £9.99 (includes £1 p&p).

## BOOKS



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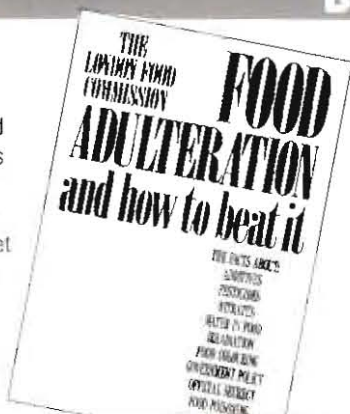
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## BOOKS

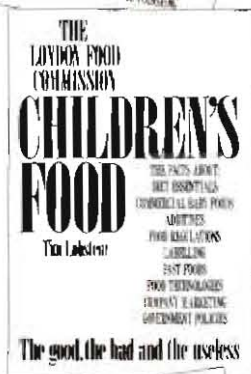
### Food Adulteration

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.



### 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.

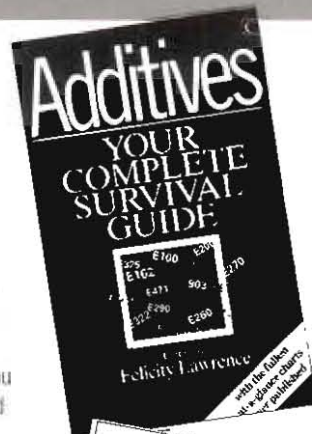


### Additives - Your Complete Survival Guide

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.

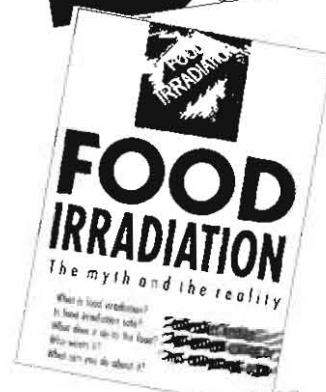
288pp ISBN 0-7126-1269-6 Normally £4.75, but for Food Magazine readers just £3.50 including postage and packing.



### 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.

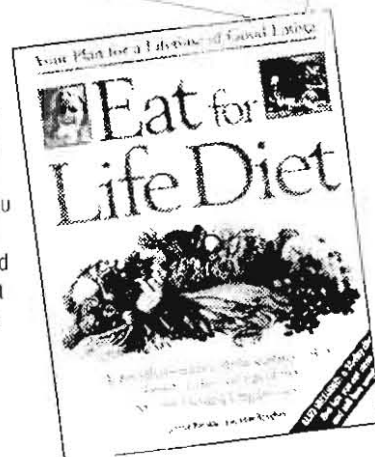
224pp ISBN 0-7225-2224-X £6.50 including post and packing.



### Eat for Life Diet

Whether you want to lose weight or just be sure you are eating healthily, the answer is the same: follow the WHO's recommendations. And if you want them translated into everyday language, with a range of menus and recipes to try out, then you will want this book. Written by dietitian Anne Heughan and journalist Jeanette Marshall.

160pp ISBN 009-175342-2 £9.99 including post and packing.



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## Doghurt

'Many dog owners are committed to a health-food regime and want their animals to have the same opportunity,' says a company called Armitage Pet Products. 'There is a fast-growing trend towards healthy eating for dogs and we are producing treats to meet these needs.'

So now you can buy Good Boy Choc Drops in a sugar-free version, along with Good Boy Yogurt Drops. Figures for the dog treats market (yes, they really measure such things) show soaring sales in the last five years from £39m in 1986 to £74m last year. Armitage's marketing director Patrick Newton hopes to swell sales even more with what he calls 'natural treats for dogs' though we fail to see anything natural about them.

'Our research shows that the market has the capacity to increase still further,' he declares, 'as a high proportion of dog owners still do not feed treats on a regular basis.'

Funny. Aren't treats, by definition, something for a special occasion?

## 'V' sign to MAFF

Someone, probably not very far from the Meat and Livestock Commission, persuaded MAFF to make a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) about a Vegetarian Society leaflet being sent to schools.

The ASA, which has never before commented on materials sent to schools, accepted the Ministry's line that the leaflet, entitled *Do You Love Animals? - For School Dinner?*, 'played upon children's credulity and inexperience'.

The Society appealed against the decision three times, pointing out that all facts were true - and that phrases such as 'the rape rack' (the restraining bars used when sows are inseminated) are used by farmers. The ASA finally conceded that if the leaflet told the truth then it could not exploit a child's credulity. But it still ruled that the leaflet was 'capable of causing distress'.

Over 400,000 of these leaflets have been distributed in the last five years, and not one complaint has ever been received from schoolchildren the Society says. The only distress it seems to be causing is to the meat marketers and their friend Mr Gummer.

## Mac-ety Mac, Mac-ety Mac

If you thought you could escape McDonalds by taking a train, beware. The catering on several European routes has been taken over by the burger chain, with Big Macs being served on board, 14 hours a day from 7 am.

The Swiss version of our own BR buffet car is a bright red carriage with the word McDonalds in man-high lettering. 'Our dining cars fit into traditional Swiss trains like a flower on an Alpine pasture,' claimed a spokesman for the US company.



## Food and sex

Ha, thought that would catch you. The word food always does. Visitors to Sheffield's Meadowhall shopping centre will be able to treat themselves to the ultimate of sins, a restaurant devoted to products made with chocolate.

The Chocolate Factory will show the chocolate-making process on view while customers are served sundaes and gateaux. The place is designed to appeal to women, being staffed by 'beautiful young boys' and 'being a bit like having an affair, with all the guilt,' according to the idea's originator, Paula Reeve.

'Our researchers had never seen anything better received in 12 years of testing restaurant concepts,' she said. 'The women couldn't see straight.'

## Chemists' Charter

Along with every other organisation in the UK, every local authority and health authority is devising its own Charter showing what wonderful things it is doing for service users.

Derbyshire Family Health Services has one, full of words like 'quality initiative' and 'commitment standards' (eh?). Amongst the pious phrases are a few practical schemes, including a couple for pharmacies.

One for your local chemist is a recycling scheme for hypodermics, and another caught our eye: 'a pilot project on the promotion of baby foods through pharmacies'.

Quite how such commercial activities, promoting wallpaper paste instead of proper food, can be a health benefit to the population is beyond us. Unless the idea is to increase the number of patients

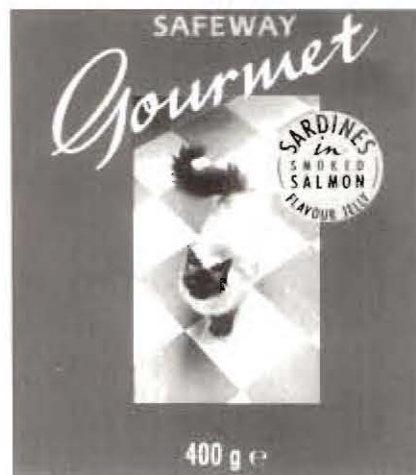
## Fishy business

Finding ways of making nutritious fish into something tasty and appealing has long been a challenge to the nation's marketing folk. Now Safeways have done it. Costing no more than regular sardines, their own-brand Sardines in Smoked Salmon Jelly are a must for health-conscious Islington supper parties. Indeed, so highly-rated is the product that it has just won the coveted 'paws and claws' award.

The what? Yes, I'm sorry to say the label on the can might put fussy eaters off a bit, as it features a long hair Siamese against a nicely tessellated floor.

Rated by Britain's twelve feline inspectors as worthy of star place in the *The Good Cat Food Guide*, anyone is allowed to buy it for 33p a small can, 49p large.

'Our gourmet cat food is proving extremely popular with customers,' declared John Durkan, Safeway Product Manager for Pet Food. Note the word 'customers', not 'cat-owners'.



## Man's best friend?

Enough of this pet food nonsense. The sobering thought has been raised in the *Lancet* that, despite international guidelines on adequate nutrition for refugees, relief programmes often fail to provide sufficient vitamins and minerals to provide refugees with their minimum daily needs.

UK researchers pointed out that pet food is more nutritious and balanced than the typical refugee ration, and contains higher levels of several nutrients than the same quantity of ration. 'It is essential,' they say, 'that refugees are provided with a diet that is at least as good as the one we feed our cats and dogs'.