

menu

1

The power of persuasion

Advertisers or parents: who is to blame for children's diets?

2

Feedback: your letters

3

News: Pesticides in water; methyl bromide; safer chemicals in US

4

BST; additives in soft drinks

5

Sustainable consumerism

6

Baby milk advertising

7

Children: Advertisers' Dream, Nutrition Nightmare?

8

Loopy Labels

9

Sweet yog-a-likes

10

National Food Alliance

11

Kids Get Cooking!

12

You're telling us

13

New reports

14

Books

15

Marketplace

16

Back-bites

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

Issue 22 Volume 3 ♦ Aug/Oct 1993

The power of persuasion

'Don't blame us for children's diets, it's the parents' fault', cry advertisers. *The Food Magazine* looks at the industry's response to the National Food Alliance proposals to make children's advertising more conducive to healthy eating.

In June the National Food Alliance published a discussion document, *Children: Advertiser's Dream; Nutrition Nightmare? The Case for More Responsibility in Food Advertising*. Its recommendations, already supported by over forty national consumer, public health, parent and child welfare organisations, call for codes of advertising practice to be updated in line with nationally agreed health and nutrition guidelines to ensure that advertising supports rather than undermines healthy eating. It also criticises the advertising regulatory bodies for secrecy, lack of adequate consumer and health representation and for apparent bias in favour of advertisers. It is intended to promote positive discussion with the regulatory bodies, and the food and advertising industries.

Children have been called 'an advertisers' dream' by one market research company and there is no shortage of advice for food firms wanting to sell to children. Advertisers recognise children as a market of increasing importance with tremendous 'pester power' that has been estimated to worth at least £1.25 billion and growing.

Yet the response from the food industry and their advertising agencies to the publication of the NFA report has been to deny the role that advertising plays. 'There is no sound evidence, as far as we know, that food advertising encourages unhealthy eating', said the Food and Drink Federation, in a knee-jerk reaction to the media before they had even read the report. Strange then that its members spent over £523 million on advertising last year, the vast majority on products that do little to encourage healthy eating, if it is so ineffective.

And one advertising man for Coca Cola was almost hysterical that anyone should dare to question his chosen profession. 'This is a disgrace, an infringement on all kinds of commercial liberty' he told *Marketing* magazine.

But one theme has come up time and again. 'Don't blame us. It's a parent's responsibility to control what their children eat.' If parents manage to control themselves enough to be polite, they might be tempted to retort, 'so why do you make our lives so difficult!'

The National Food Alliance report recognises that there are many complex, interacting factors that influence food preferences and choices, and that improving children's diets means working at several levels at once. Campaigns to improve school meals, the *Get Cooking!* project, improved nutritional education in schools and information for parents are all part of that process. But what is the point of spending a great deal of money on public education if the healthy eating messages children receive elsewhere are undermined as soon as they sit down in front of the telly?

The good news is that many children are becoming more aware of nutrition messages yet the bad news is that it seems to have had little effect on their behaviour. Perhaps if we had some positive nutrition messages on TV that are just as exciting, just as much fun and just as cool as the latest soft drink or chocolate bar, then maybe we'd begin to see some changes. Is that really such a disgraceful thing to ask for?

Judge for yourself. The case for more responsibility in advertising to children is outlined on page 7.

TWO LEGS BAD

I have recently seen an article about the latest dairy industry ploy: genetic manipulation of dairy cattle to introduce human milk protein into cow's milk.

I assume that the purpose of this is to use the milk for infant formula and to market it as the latest 'best' substitute for breastmilk.

The whole area of using human genetic material in animals is disturbing with many implications to be considered. In this particular case the industry has – as is usual – confused the product with the process.

Breast milk has unique qualities which are ideally tailored to promote and support infant growth and development. Breastfeeding not only delivers this optimal 'product' with no middleman (or woman), no processing – thus conferring extra immunological benefit – and of course no profit-making opportunities. Breastfeeding has benefits and satisfactions for women, for babies and for families in addition to its nutritional advantages.

Magda Sachs, Oldham

STARCHY FACTS

In the May/July issue you claim that in the US Heinz sells some baby food products without modified starch while in the UK you would be hard put to find Heinz baby meals without added starch.

Those in the US labelled 'no modified starch' are single or very simple ingredient foods. In this respect they are no different from the Pure Fruits range of baby foods available from Heinz in the UK which also contain no thickeners. However, the majority of the baby foods Heinz produce in this country are recipe dishes with a



Fruit desserts – but we found a lot of water, along with cornflour and modified cornflour added to all three.

mixture of ingredients. To ensure that the texture is consistent, a very small amount (to a maximum of 3.5% – less than half a teaspoon) of modified starch is added to the recipe. This is a nutritious carbohydrate which can be easily digested. Of course starch is a major component of many foods and makes an important contribution to the diet. The wide range of cereals and many of the vegetables used in our recipes contributes towards the starch content of many varieties.

Your article also comments on water used in recipes. Many foods require water to be added in their preparation and cooking just as you would at home. This is important for digestibility and to achieve the right texture and consistency. Water is the most common element in foods and food is an important source of water.

You may be interested to know that Heinz has recently relaunched its entire baby food range including the introduction of 33 completely new recipes. These focus on the greater use of vegetables and fruits as well as introducing many more contemporary recipes.

Dr Nigel Dickie, H J Heinz Co Ltd

(This letter has been abbreviated for reasons of space.)

YES SANCS, NO SANCS

A call from a reader prompted the *Food Magazine* to check whether sanctions against South Africa were still in operation and South African food and drink should still be boycotted.

The answer, as we go to press, is that sanctions are still in operation and the boycott continues. It just depends on the current negotiations reaching agreement on (a) the date of elections in South Africa, which has virtually been settled as we go to press, and (b) agreement on the establishment of an Executive Council for the transitional period.

Phone the Anti-Apartheid Movement on 071-387 7966 for latest developments.

As readers can see we are back with our usual format for this issue of the *Food Magazine*, while we and the Soil Association take on board the results of our questionnaire.

Many thanks to the over 700 readers of the last issue who returned completed questionnaires. On page 12 you can find out how our trial venture was viewed.

In this issue we are focussing on children. We feature the National Food Alliance's report on children and food advertising which was published in June with the backing of over 40 national organisations. This report, written for the NFA by the Food Commission's co-director Sue Dibb, makes recommendations on how advertising to children could do more to support, rather than undermine, healthier eating and is intended to open positive discussion with the food industry and the advertising regulatory bodies. And the good news is that already the Nutrition Task Force, set up to implement the Government's *Health of the Nation* strategy, has made advertising to children one of its priorities.

Also launched in June was the *Get Cooking!* project, supported by over 170 national and local organisations, including the Food Commission, and backed by the Department of Health. The project aims to help give children the practical skills they need to put healthy eating knowledge into practice.

And on page 9, we look at children's yogurts and fromage frais and ask what have food manufacturers done to turn a healthy product into one packed with added sugars and additives such as colours, preservatives and flavourings?

We also report on a study that found that many mothers do not have the financial resources to provide the kind of diet for their children that is recommended. Latest official figures show an alarming increase in poverty over the last decade. One-in-four children – that's over 3 million – are now living in poverty. As further cuts in welfare benefits are being proposed, it is timely to remember that education and skills are not enough. Parents also need the resources to be able to encourage the kind of eating patterns in children that are best for health.

Finally, congratulations to our information officer, Martine Drake, who is taking a part-time post as lecturer at Middlesex University.

Sue Dibb and Tim Lobstein

The Food Commission is Britain's leading consumer watchdog on food. We are independent of 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.

The Food Magazine is published quarterly by The Food Commission

Co-directors: Sue Dibb, Tim Lobstein

Information Officer: Rachel Harris

Subscriptions Manager: Ian Tokelove

© The Food Commission (UK) Ltd
ISSN 0953-5047

The Food Commission
Third Floor,
5-11 Worship Street,
London EC2A 2BH,
tel: 071-628 7774,
fax: 071-628 0817.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UK	Overseas (air mail)
£17.50 individuals	£25.00 individuals
£35.00 organisations	£40.00 organisations

Bulk orders: prices available on request

Designed by Artworkers
Printed by Spiderwebb
Retail distributor: Central Books,
99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN
(081-986 4854)

Pesticide leaks

Details on the ability of toxic pesticides to leach into our water supplies have been revealed by the Washington-based group Disposal Safety International (DSI) on behalf of the United Mine Workers of America.

In reports published this July, DSI reproduce submissions by the chemical manufacturer Du Pont to the US regulatory body, the Environmental Protection Agency, showing commonly used pesticides Oxamyl and Bromacil are leaching into ground water in amounts exceeding European and US acceptable levels.

Oxamyl (trade name Vydate) is used on potatoes and tomatoes to kill insects and worms, and is highly toxic to bees, birds and mammals. Maximum acceptable levels in ground water are set by an EC directive at 0.1 µg/litre, yet the data revealed by the DSI show ground

water samples in the USA where the levels range up to 395 µg/l following normal agricultural use.

Similar figures are published for Bromacil (trade names Hyvar and Krovar), a weedkiller used on railway and roadsides and citrus groves. It is listed by the US authorities as Cancer Group C (possible human carcinogen). Concentrations in ground water studies ranged up to 951 µg/l compared with an EC maximum acceptable level of 0.1 µg/l.

Fewer surveys of ground water pesticide contamination are collected in the UK than in the US, but Bromacil has been detected in the supply zones of the Wrexham and East Denbighshire Water Company, according to the company's own data:

■ Reports no. 36 and 37, Disposal Safety International Washington (phone 0101-202-293-3963) published July 1 1993, available in the Food Commission library

US signals shift from agro-chemicals

A reduction in the use of chemicals in farming and a greater priority towards protecting children and the environment was announced by the United States government on June 26.

In a joint statement by the three regulatory bodies, the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency, 'incentives for the development of safe pesticides' and the removal from the market of 'those pesticides that pose the greatest risk' will form part of 'the Administration's commitment to reducing pesticides,' said the Commissioner for Food and Drugs, Dr David Kessler.

The US strategy is 'a major landmark in the history of food safety,' he continued. The authorities will endorse the use of 'integrated pest management' and farming methods that substitute the use of beneficial

insects and crop rotation for some pesticides.

The announcement came as the prestigious National Academy of Sciences issued a long-awaited report calling for changes in chemical regulations to protect infants and children. This section of the population may be uniquely sensitive to pesticide residues, the report argues, as they consume more calories per unit of bodyweight and eat fewer types of food than adults.

Data on what children eat and the tolerance levels for residues are considered inadequate to ensure children are protected, and the Academy recommends the authorities ensure that health considerations rather than agricultural production take priority. Currently, pesticide residue tolerance levels are set with regard to economic factors as well as health risks.

A further report, from the Washington-based non-profit Environmental Working Group, also published at the end of June, argues that much of an individual's exposure to pesticides in food occurs by the age of 5 because children eat far more fruits and vegetables in relation to their body weight than adults.

Anxious not to deter parents from giving their children plenty of fruit and vegetables, the report calls for reassessment of agricultural practices. At present, the report warns, a child aged one could easily receive the acceptable lifetime dose for eight pesticides from just 20 commonly eaten foods.

EC fails to ban ozone-destroying pesticide

The European Commission has recommended that member states do not follow the United States proposal to phase out the use of the ozone-depleting pesticide methyl bromide. Instead the Commission has issued a draft proposal to cut usage by only 25 per cent in the next seven years.

Like CFCs, methyl bromide destroys the earth's protective ozone layer. It is considered responsible for 5-10 per cent of depletion so far, rising to an estimated 16 per cent if worldwide use continues on present trends. It is forty times more potent as an ozone destroyer than CFCs.

EC usage accounts for 14,000 tonnes annually, out of a total world use of 66,000 tonnes. Over 600 tonnes is used in the UK largely for sterilising soil before planting crops such as tomatoes and strawberries, often in glasshouses.

The French manufacturer of

methyl bromide - Atochem - strongly opposes an EC phase-out. The French government part-owns the company, and is opposed to phasing out methyl bromide production. This support is reportedly echoed by EC president Jacques Delors. The UK Ministry of Agriculture also supports a 25 per cent cut by the year 2000, arguing that there are few viable alternatives.

However, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands have phased out most uses, preferring to rotate their crops, use integrated pest management methods or sterilise their soil with steam. Supermarket chains including Sainsbury and Tesco have announced codes of practice for suppliers of glasshouse lettuces, tomatoes, cucumbers, celery and peppers, which encourage integrated pest management. Sainsbury claims most of its suppliers have now stopped

using methyl bromide.

'It is essential that the EC, as the second-largest user of methyl bromide, should agree to phase it out,' said Melanie Miller, co-ordinator of the SAFE Alliance project on methyl bromide. 'Consumers should be given more information about the way their food has been produced. The USA is about to require warnings on some ozone-damaging products. Farmers also need support for adopting environmentally sound alternatives rather than other toxic fumigants.' The EC proposals will be referred to the European Parliament for comment before a decision is made by Environment ministers. Briefing materials to help you lobby your MEP and Environment Minister John Gummer are available from the address below.

■ Melanie Miller, SAFE Alliance methyl bromide project, 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH (tel 071 628 9507)



US senate blocks BST

In what may prove to be a landmark vote, the United States Senate voted against the milk-boosting hormone Bovine Somatotropin (BST), known in the US as Bovine Growth Hormone.

The vote to ban the sale, marketing and use of BST until September 1994 came as senators looked for ways to reduce the federal deficit. Senators argued that permitting the drug would increase milk production and cost the US government over \$15m dealing with surplus milk. The ban now forms part of the budget bill currently proceeding through Congress.

The European Commission moratorium on BST ceases at the end of 1993. The UK government has already approved its use.

Meanwhile arguments about the increased risk of mastitis for cows treated with BST continue. Eric Brunner, of University College London, and colleagues around the UK have submitted an analysis of the research trials undertaken by the manufacturer Monsanto, but publication has been blocked by the company refusing to allow the data to be used. In the US, the citizen group Consumer Policy Institute has submitted evidence suggesting that mastitis rates are high and there is also a risk to human health.



Paying for beef: West Africans are receiving EC beef donated at subsidised rates under EC aid programmes. Meanwhile the European Development Fund pours money into supporting West African beef farmers, forced out of business by the dumped beef...

■ For more details see *Brussels Beef Carve-up: EC beef dumping in West Africa* by Peter Madden, Christian Aid Policy Unit, P O Box 100, London SE1 7AT (tel 071-620 4444)

In the UK the National Farmers Union has taken a stand against the use of BST, arguing that it will undermine public confidence in the dairy industry. If it is to be permitted, says the NFU, then all BST milk and milk products should be clearly labelled as such.

End for pig hormone?

A pig growth-boosting hormone, PST, may never reach the market despite extensive trials, following the decision by the leading manufacturer,

Pitman Moore, to scrap plans for further development.

The company's chairman, William Mercer, said the product's market was not attractive enough for further investment, given a protracted approval process and uncertain consumer acceptance.

Campaigners against the use of such animal hormones hailed the decision as a victory for common sense.

■ More details on BST from Genetics Forum, 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH

Soft drinks deregulation may add to additives

Soft drinks manufacturers may replace sugar with artificial sweeteners, following changes to soft drink regulations announced by the government in May.

MAFF's plans to 'lighten the burdens on industry' have led to the removal of regulations requiring a minimum quantity of sugar in soft drinks. It could help see the development of lower sugar drinks which would be welcome news, but manufacturers are expected to maintain the sweetness of their products by using more artificial sweeteners such as saccharin, aspartame and acesulfame K.

Two years ago a Food Commission survey found that many cordials, squashes and soft drinks contained a double boost of sweetness from sugar and added saccharin. The Food Commission also extracted from MAFF the fact that one-in-six children were exceeding safe levels of saccharin in their diets. Rather than reduce saccharin intake, the ministry doubled the level that was considered safe.

Saccharin is just one additive in drinks that has raised concerns. Levels of caffeine consumed by children from soft drinks such as colas, led the Food Advisory Committee (FAC) in 1988 to recommend to ministers that a maximum limit on its use in soft drinks should be set. No action was taken for five years, and now MAFF is asking the FAC to reconsider its advice. At present eight EC countries have a limit of 150mg per litre while in Britain there is no limit. Rather than argue for a standard EC limit, MAFF prefers to give the soft drinks industry the freedom to use as much as it wants.

■ The Food Additives Campaign is currently asking manufacturers what changes they are proposing to make to their soft drinks ingredients. We hope to report the results in the next issue of the Food Magazine.

GATT may force food irradiation

Fears that the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations may lead to world-wide acceptance of food irradiation were heightened this month, following suggestions from the Australian government that banning irradiation may not be allowed.

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has

told the Australian National Food Authority, currently responsible for a moratorium on irradiation in Australia, that under proposed GATT regulations the moratorium could be declared a non-tariff barrier and would have to be lifted, allowing imported irradiated goods into the country. Similar arguments could be applied to all GATT signatory countries.

Meanwhile the Australian government is under pressure to review its moratorium instituted in 1989. It requested a report on the safety of irradiation from the World Health Organisation, but publication of the WHO report has been delayed (due, we understand to 'criticism in Europe') and this may lead to the Australian ban continuing into 1994.

■ Further details from the Food Irradiation Campaign, 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH

European green consumers come to UK

A conference of European consumer organisations concerned with the environment has appointed UK Food Commission staff member Martine Drake to lead its secretariat.

The European Ecological Consumer Co-ordination (EECC), an affiliation of nearly a hundred European organisations concerned with the development of sustainable forms of consumption, agreed at its June meeting to a proposal to run the networking operations jointly from the Food Commission and Parents for Safe Food offices in London. The European Commission is being asked

to part-fund the activities, and funds will also need to be raised to complement any EC money.

The move will broaden the work of the Food Commission and increase its contact with similar groups in Europe. Details of campaigns and organisations in Europe will appear regularly in future issues of the *Food Magazine*.

■ To be put on the EECC mailing list please send details about yourself and/or your organisation concerning sustainable development plans and projects, plus £15 (UK), £20 (EC), or £30 (non-EC airmail) to Martine Drake, EECC, 3rd Floor, 5-11 Werburgh Street, London EC2A 2BH.

Creative consumer co-op folds

The struggle to create alternative forms of trading suffered a set-back with the dissolving of a project to create a national delivery service for fresh organic produce, at its AGM in March this year.

The project, known as the Creative Consumer Co-Operative, began with the belief that the demand for a more ethical means of shopping would soon lead to a national network of farmers linked to local communities. It was defeated by insufficient resources and the depth of the consumer recession.

'The subtle pressures exerted by the current system of food marketing, particularly by the supermarkets, makes it understandably difficult for people to break with a system that offers food conveniently, attractively packaged and at relatively low prices,' said CCC chair John Button. 'Good intentions have proven remarkably hard to convert into a new pattern of shopping.'

To buy or not to buy

Should it be ozone-free or kind to animals? Organic or fair trade? The Ethical Consumer awards for 1993 went to a range of companies promoting alternative, ethical standards. These included Green and Black's (chocolate), Little Salkeld Watermill (flour), Cafedirect (coffee), Milford of London (tea), Doves Farm (wheat products) and Equal Exchange (third world products).

A special award went to the Women's Environmental Network for their campaigning work.

The *Ethical Consumer Guide to Everyday Shopping* is available, price £7.99 from the Ethical Consumer Research Association, 5th Floor, 16 Nicholas St. Manchester M1 4EJ tel 061-237 1630.



Dutch outline sustainable living

An action plan for changing northern lifestyles has been published by Friends of the Earth Netherlands.

Prepared initially for the Rio Summit, the document, *Sustainable Netherlands*, indicates the impact that a sustainable economy would have on present Dutch living standards. Similar figures would apply to UK residents. The use of fossil fuels for transport, industry, heating and agriculture would have to be slashed by 60 per cent in twenty years, and then 60 per cent again in the next two decades. A sustainable water supply would require a cut of 32 per cent in present Dutch consumption levels.

Sustainable agriculture allows just over half an acre per person, whereas current consumption uses more than double that area, largely because of meat production. Meat consumption would need to decline by 60-80 per cent, to around an ounce per person per day.

These dramatic reductions in present consumption levels, with parallel cuts in consumption of other commodities to sustainable levels, are likely to prove socially unacceptable to northern consumers, the report admits.

Yet the 'business as usual' scenario, with current consumption levels continuing unabated, must lead to social catastrophe, with wars (like the recent Gulf war) fought to retain control over dwindling resources and massive movements of population migrating from degraded and famine-struck environments.

The authors look forward to the development of technologies that allow better use to be made of raw materials, with greater attention to the creation of durable goods with replaceable parts, and more locally-sustainable production to minimise the need to transport products long distances.

The plan acknowledges that the environmental movement in the north will not be able to bring about the necessary changes on its own, but must form an alliance with other



movements, consumer organisations, churches and trade unions, for example. But the real stimulus may have to come from the south, from the less developed world capable of challenging the assumptions of the northern lifestyle.

■ *Sustainable Netherlands* from Milieudeferre, Damrak 26, 1012 LJ Amsterdam, Netherlands; tel: 010-31-20-6221366, fax 010-31-20-6275287.

Food for the future

Also from the Netherlands, and almost an exact model of the approach called for in the *Sustainable Netherlands* plan, comes *Manifesto: Food For The Future* published by Oikos (Ecumenical Development Organisation) along with seven other church, consumer, environment, organic agriculture, animal welfare and development organisations.

The document lists a series of steps needed to achieve greater sustainability in food production. These range from alleviating the debt suffered by underdeveloped countries through re-structuring the CAP, to changing our diets away from meat-consumption.

■ Details from Oikos, PO Box 19170, 3501 DD Utrecht, The Netherlands.



Companies break own code



Leading baby milk companies Cow & Gate, Milupa and Wyeth (makers of SMA) are blatantly breaking their own agreed code of practice for promoting infant formula.

Following the World Health Organisation's publication of a voluntary code of marketing which banned the promotion of infant formula products to mothers, the UK's own baby milk manufacturers drew up a weaker version of the code in consultation with MAFF and the Department of Health. The UK version was signed in 1983 by Cow & Gate, Milupa, Wyeth and a fourth major formula maker, Farley (makers of Ostermilk).

Among the agreed measures are the banning of 'general advertising'

by which they meant promotional messages through the media and 'at the point of purchase'. Only information about the price of formula is permitted alongside the products themselves on the shelf.

Yet Food Commission investigators have found that the three leading companies are now all distributing thousands of shelf-edge display boards, for use in pharmacies and supermarkets across the UK, all of which contradict the intention and explicit words of the code.

Past irregularities have been put down to over-enthusiastic sales reps or ignorance by shop owners, but in this case it is clear that the manufacturers have deliberately designed

Shelf promotion which breaks the companies' own agreement.

point of sale promotion methods, despite the agreed prohibition.

'The UK voluntary code is little more than a public relations exercise,' said Patti Rundall of the campaigning group Baby Milk Action. 'It relies on honour and trust - which clearly have little value to these companies. It is time they followed the WHO code, as a matter of law.'

A European Directive on marketing infant formula also prohibits point of sale promotions. The Directive has been passed and member states have until June 1994 to introduce the necessary legislation.

Milking the market

In the USA Nestlé is filing a court action against leading US formula companies, Abbott and Bristol-Myers, along with the American Academy of Pediatrics, for operating a code of marketing practice similar to the UK code.

Nestlé claims that such codes are biased because they only permit marketing through health services, requiring visits by the company to hospitals and clinics. Setting up the salesforce needed to market in this way is, says Nestlé, a conspiracy to block newcomers from the lucrative US market.

Completely disregarding the code, Nestlé have launched a print and TV advertising campaign for their baby milk brand 'Good Start' sold under their Carnation label - and have seen sales leap 79 per cent to \$56m last year.

The same could happen in the UK, except that our voluntary code will shortly be superseded by an EC directive. This will limit formula advertising to 'publications specialising in baby care and scientific publications'.

Baby milk adverts mislead

Two complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority concerning the promotion of baby milks were upheld in adjudications earlier this year.

The first concerned adverts by Crookes, a subsidiary of Boots, which misrepresented the results of survey of mothers by implying that feeding with formula milk such as Farley's Ostermilk was particularly suitable for certain women, including, it was reported, mothers who wanted to return to an active sex life after giving birth.

The second concerned adverts by the same company for its Junior Milk designed for babies over six months. The ASA found the company had misled readers by implying that low

levels of vitamin D and high levels of saturated fat made cows milk unsuitable for infants compared with Farley's product.

The ASA has no legal powers against advertisers. It can only request that publications do not carry offending adverts. The Food Commission would like to see pre-vetting of adverts in sensitive areas such as the marketing of baby foods. Also, offenders should be required to repeat their advertisements, at their expense, with the text over-printed with a prominent message saying: 'this advertisement was found not to be legal, decent and honest and we apologise to readers'.

Advertisers make their own rules

The Advertising Standards Authority is undertaking a review of its self-regulating Code of Advertising Practice which, as the National Food Alliance points out, is long overdue. But who is the ASA asking for help?

The ASA Code is drawn up by the advertising industry itself; its defence being that 'restraints which are self imposed are more likely to be readily acceptable'. Thus it comes as no surprise to discover that the Advertising Association (AA) which represents advertisers, agencies and media is, in its own words 'playing an active role'. The AA reports in its July newsletter to its members that a policy document has been drawn up and derived from

consultations 'with many interested parties'.

However consumer and public interest organisations have clearly not been considered as 'interested parties' and have been unaware that a review is underway let alone involved in drawing up new proposals.

The Nation Food Alliance has already criticised the ASA for its lack of openness and its lack of consumer and public health consultation.

■ The NFA suggests that organisations wishing to make an input into the code revision process should contact Matt Alderson, Director General, The Advertising Standards Authority, 2-16 Torrington Place, London WC1E 7HN requesting a copy of the policy document.

Children: Advertisers' Dream, Nutrition Nightmare?

Advertising could do more to help children eat more healthily, says the National Food Alliance. Sue Dibb outlines the case for greater responsibility from advertisers and the regulators.

There is growing concern over children's diets and increasing recognition of the role that diet during childhood plays, not only in preventing ill-health in childhood but in preventing diet-related diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke and some cancers in later life.

Children's food choices are influenced by interacting factors including taste preferences, exposure to and availability of foods, parental and peer group pressure, social, cultural and educational influences as well as advertising. Advertising is a highly visible and influential part of a company's marketing strategy.

Young children particularly may not fully understand the purpose of advertising and even many older children are unclear. Pre-school children think the purpose of advertising is to inform, rather than to sell. Understanding its true purpose, though, is no protection against the influence of advertising. And research has shown that children are more responsive to and influenced by advertising than adults. They are three times more likely to remember adverts and are brand conscious by the age of four and easily able to correlate characters and adverts.

Children are also a major influ-

ence on household food purchases. Their 'pester power' influences what goes into the family shopping basket, and the more a product is advertised, the higher the level of request for the product.

In 1992 over £523 million was spent advertising food and soft drinks. Ninety per cent of child-oriented advertising is via television – three times the rate of advertising generally. Food adverts on children's television are dominated by pre-sweetened cereals, confectionery, fast food, snacks and soft drinks. Advertising of such a narrow range of products cannot be said to encourage healthy choices or promote a varied and healthy diet.

Advertisers strongly defend their

right to 'commercial free speech' but the NFA asks whether it is socially responsible for the advertising regulatory authorities to permit a situation which in effect is counter to and undermines official government health policy. The NFA believes that advertisers do have a responsibility towards public health and that advertising regulators should translate that responsibility into clear rules for good practice.

The National Food Alliance makes a number of recommendations (see box) and also puts forward options for more responsible advertising practices that could encourage healthier eating, for example, that children's television be an 'ad-free' zone, as it is in parts of Canada,

and/or that there be greater restrictions on the timing, frequency or ways in which foods are advertised. In Holland for example, confectionery adverts are not permitted until after 8pm.

The NFA also recognises the positive role that advertising could play in promoting healthier eating. The report outlines options for pro-nutrition public health advertising to children and more advertising for foods such as fruit and vegetables to ensure that advertising promotes a more nutritionally balanced and varied diet.

■ *Children: Advertisers' Dream, Nutrition Nightmare?* by Susan Dibb is available from the National Food Alliance, 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH. Price £25 (£7.50 to non-profit and public interest organisations).

National Food Alliance recommendations

The following recommendations are supported by over 40 national organisations including the British Dental Association, The British Heart Foundation, Institute of Child Health, National Children's Home, National Confederation of Parent Teachers Associations and the Faculty of Public Health Medicine.

Recommendations:

1. The Nutrition Task Force should institute a systematic review of advertising and use its influence with government and other regulatory bodies to develop new practices and procedures for more responsible food advertising, particularly to children.
2. Advertising regulatory bodies, in consultation with public health and consumer bodies, would draw up new codes of advertising practice and procedures which better reflect current, nationally agreed health and nutritional guidelines.
3. Advertising regulatory bodies should have an obligation to consider the total

and cumulative effect of advertising, not just of individual adverts.

4. The food and advertising industries should consider their social responsibility to develop products, as well as marketing and advertising practices, that are more conducive to healthier eating.

The structure of regulatory bodies:

5. The Advertising Standards Authority and the Independent Television Commission should be reconstituted to become public interest/consumer protection bodies. Public interest representation and input should be increased to become at least half of the representation on advisory, code development and decision-making bodies.
6. Appropriate medical and health advisors should be drawn from a wider range of expertise and they should be more fully consulted by the regulatory bodies. Names of advisors and their judgements should be a matter of public record and a register of interests should be published.

Procedures:

7. Pre-vetting of broadcast advertisements for all products should be reintroduced. For non-broadcast adverts, a pre-vetting system should be introduced for sensitive areas such as particular food groups, advertising to children and adverts making health claims.
8. If regulatory bodies uphold complaints there should be wider sanctions to include corrective advertising and/or apologies, and/or fines. Announcements should be made in the medium in which the original advert appeared with the same prominence.
9. There should be greater openness in the procedures of the regulatory bodies. Agendas and minutes of meetings and research reports should be published, and there should be open access to the process of interpretation of guidelines and codes. Transparency should also be increased by the greater participation of public interest representatives called for elsewhere in this report.
10. Advertising in professional publications should be brought under the same regulatory control as other advertising.

Loopy labels

With the *Food Magazine's* reputation as the private eye of the food world, our eagle-eyed correspondents have been mingling with high street shoppers looking for examples of cheeky labelling.

Butter puffs

Our first example comes from a regular Marks & Spencer shopper, who noticed their St Michael Butter Puffs biscuits contain lots of puff but not a scrap of butter.

Schedule 7 of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 (Misleading Descriptions) says the word 'butter' shall not be used in the name of any biscuit unless (a) at least half the fat used in the biscuit is milk fat, and (b) at least 7 per cent of the biscuit consists of milk fat.

We contacted Marks & Sparks who told us there was no problem. 'The name Butter Puff is a generic one, used by all the major retailers. It is perfectly legal, even though they contain no butter,' said their press officer Nick Herbert.

'Brandy Snaps contain no brandy,' he continued, 'Cream Crackers no cream. Biscuit labelling over the years has produced some anomalies.'

We also contacted United Biscuits, whose

Crawford's Butter Puffs are also completely deficient in butter. Their spokeswoman Rebecca Shepherd said

the name indicates only that butter is intended as an accompaniment to the biscuit. She also said that the name 'Butter Puffs' is listed under the Food Regulations allowing certain foods to use the name of a dairy product without carrying dairy connotations.

And indeed she's right. The EC called for a list

of reserved names which have now been passed into law as the Dairy and Dairy Product (Protected Designation) Regulations 1990. Somehow Butter Puffs managed to get included along with old friends such as butter beans, peanut butter, and cream soda.

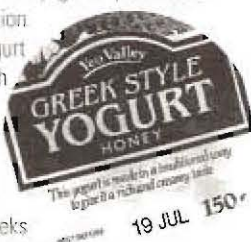
Greek-style yogurt

Thanks to a sharp-eyed reader, the *Food Magazine* is able to nip in the bud a nasty diplomatic incident in the making.

Shoppers may think this yogurt represents an honourable Greek tradition. The carton contains yogurt along with honey, which is fair enough, but then has the temerity to add modified starch.

Some would argue that this serves the Greeks right. Their massive adoption of cows milk to make their Greek yogurts over the last two decades (with government grants to help Greek peasants to learn intensive cattle rearing methods from the Dutch) has pushed genuine Balkan sheeps yogurt nearly off the shelf.

And sharper-eyed readers tell us that even some sheep yogurt cartons have a small sticker admitting to 10 per cent added cows cream.



Nestlé's Cappuccino

Unsweetened says the label, but the ingredients list is: Whole milk powder, Lactose, Instant Coffee, Stabiliser E399.



Lactose is a less sweet tasting form of sugar, a sort found in milk. The product is over 50 per cent sugar (lactose).

What Nestlé have done is take

the idea of cappuccino (made with strong coffee and hot milk) and extracted the milk and the coffee. Then they put back all the sugar the milk contained but only some of the milk in the form of milk powder. And then they added instant coffee, and an additive to stop it going lumpy. Nutritionally you lose on the other valuable components of milk – such as the calcium – which you might obtain from genuine cappuccino.

Chlorella algae

The label may not tell you, but articles by journalists say a lot. According to a report in *Best* magazine, Chlorella powder, made from the algae found in ponds, is a 'good all-round supplement'. Chlorella has three times as much protein as beef and over 20 vitamins and minerals including zinc, iron, folic

acid and vitamin B12.'

According to biochemistry textbooks, the protein content of Chlorella is 40-60 per cent of the dry weight. The protein content of dehydrated stewing steak is over 70 per cent.

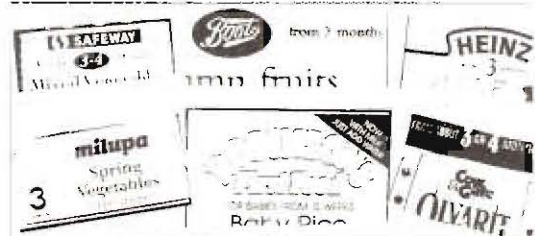
The amount of Chlorella protein in one capsule (made by Solgar) would work out to less than one third of one gram. Taking the maximum of three a day, the total protein in a whole week's capsules would come to the amount found in just one ounce of stewing steak. And beef includes 21 vitamins and minerals, including zinc, iron, folic acid and vitamin B12.

And in case you thought Chlorella was ideal for non-meat eaters, the capsules we examined were made of gelatin, a protein derived from skin and bones – usually from cattle carcasses!

Baby foods break draft directive

Although currently awaiting its final legislative processes, the European Commission draft directive on infant weaning foods states clearly that no products should indicate consumption prior to the age of four months.

An original draft, preferred by manufacturers, had allowed baby foods to be promoted as suitable for babies aged three months, but health experts



and consumers won the battle, insisting that this would undermine breast feeding and endanger the nutritional health of the baby. Four months was the earliest that should be recommended, even if parents chose to offer weaning foods at an earlier age.

But far from taking the forthcoming directive into account, manufacturers are continuing to promote foods as suitable from three months, with Heinz even re-launching their range with a new 3-month label.

They must be pretty sure that the legislation will remain inactive for a long while yet.

Cheeky label competition

If you come across some dubious claims or odd labels, let us know. We like to keep the food industry on its toes, looking over its shoulder and watching its back, preferably all at once!

A free subscription renewal for the best example published every time.



Sweet yog-a-likes

Healthy natural yogurt and fromage frais have given way to a range of sweet substitutes. In this special report the *Food Magazine* investigates the pots of look-alike alternatives aimed at children and, increasingly, babies and toddlers.

Yogurt and fromage frais are good sources of protein, calcium and some B vitamins. But, as our survey shows, babies and children are being sold a lot more besides: we found added sugar in virtually all products, and we found thickeners, colourings and flavourings as well.

The Department of Health's recommendations to reduce the sugar in our diets specifically exempts the sugar naturally present in milk and instead focusses on 'non-milk extrinsic' (NME) sugars which include regular packet sugar, brown and 'raw' sugar, treacle, honey, fruit syrups, purees, concentrates and juices.



Adding sugar to healthy products ensures that baby's first teeth are sweet ones. This particular product breaks the labelling laws by not declaring the colouring agent used. Virtually all colourings are banned from foods for babies and young children.

Yet manufacturers of yogurts are cashing in on the 'healthy' aspects of yogurt while adding various forms of NME sugar to attract sweet-toothed customers. In one small 50g pot of Nestlé's Chambourcy Hippo Tots fromage frais we found the equivalent of nearly four sugar lumps worth of NME sugars.

With cartoon characters and colourful packaging, manufacturers make a point of targeting children with their sweeter products. Now they are moving into baby and toddler age-ranges. St Ivel's Baby and Toddler yogurts are sweetened with fruit-based concentrates; Baby Danone fromage frais boasts '50% fruit' but also adds regular sugar (we estimate about 10% of the product).

When we looked at the shelves-full of milk products in the leading supermarket chains we found not a single example of plain yogurt or fromage frais marketed for children and babies. Of twenty products aimed at younger eaters, sixteen were sweetened with both added sugar and added fruit base (and in thirteen of these there was more sugar than fruit base). The level of sweetness was typically higher than would be obtained if parents made their own blend with freshly pureed fruit.

Top of the pots: cosmetics and sugar

Milk and fruit are recommended ingredients for a healthy diet, but as the table shows, the high levels of sugar and the extra additives make a mockery of a healthy product. The table shows the additives and the estimated amount of added sugar (including the sugar in the processed fruit purees and concentrates) found in leading brands.

Yogurts	Added sugars by weight	Added sugars by energy	Additives etc
Nestlé Chambourcy	9.2%	30%	preservative, flavour, colour
Eden Vale Munch Bunch set	8.3%	28%	flavour, colour
Eden Vale Munch Bunch regular	9.1%	35%	thickener, flavour, colour
Sainsbury Mr Men set	5.3%	17%	colour, flavour
Sainsbury Mr Men regular	5.4%	18%	thickener, flavour, stabiliser
St Ivel Baby & Toddler	6.7%	21%	flavour
St Ivel Fiendish Faces	6.9%	28%	thickener, flavour, stabiliser, colour
Dairy Crest Dennis the Menace	9.8%	36%	thickener, stabiliser, flavour, colour
Heinz Yogurt Desserts	5.3%	34%	water, thickeners, oil
Cow & Gate Yogurt Desserts	6.0%	31%	water, thickener, oil
Plain yogurt with two teaspoons fresh mashed strawberries	0.6%	4%	—
Fromage frais			
Gervais Baby Danone	14.7%	54%	colour
Nestlé Chambourcy	10.4%	24%	flavour, preservative, colour
Nestlé Chambourcy Hippo Tots	19.1%	37%	flavour, preservative, colour
St Michael CoCo the Clown	11.6%	31%	thickener, flavour, colour
Sainsbury Mr Men	7.8%	20%	—
Tesco Tom & Jerry	9.7%	23%	thickener, stabiliser, flavour
MD Foods Thunderbirds	12.5%	28%	flavour, stabiliser
St Ivel Fiendish Faces	10.3%	25%	thickener, stabiliser, flavour
Eden Vale Munch Bunch Pot Shots	9.9%	24%	thickener, flavour, colour
Heinz Fromages Fraise	5.0%	30%	—
Plain fromage frais with two teaspoons fresh mashed strawberry	0.6%	2%	—

All yogurts are assumed to have 7.5g milk sugars, and all fromage frais 5.7g milk sugars per 100g (ref McCance, HMSO), and to contain 10% added ingredients unless otherwise declared. Starch-thickened products are assumed to have 0.5% starch unless water is added, in which case 3.5% starch. Where possible we took strawberry varieties as the standard.

Nestlé say that the preservative is a carry-over from the fruit base, and that most products have it but don't declare it.



Despite the 'No Added Sugar' declarations, these products were all sweetened with NME sugars in the form of fruit-based concentrates and purees.

Research: Sue Gibb, Tim Lobstein and Pat Revan. Some data has also been published in the *Daily Mirror*.

The appliance of the Alliance

In this issue of the magazine there are reports of two new publications from the National Food Alliance. The NFA has also just produced an expanded and updated Directory and has been playing an active role in the government's Nutrition Task Force. Jeanette Longfield, the NFA's co-ordinator, gives the background to this explosion of activity.

This year's Annual General Meeting in June was a very satisfying affair for all sorts of reasons. To begin with, it was being held in the conference suite of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). It was at NCVO, some eight years ago, that the Alliance was born. So it was a kind of homecoming to hold the AGM at NCVO's new and prestigious offices at Regent's Wharf in North London.

While swans swam serenely by on the Grand Union Canal, some sixty members and invited guests listened to an immensely entertaining presentation by Professor Mike Lean, recently appointed Rank Professor of the Department of Human Nutrition at Glasgow University.

Transparencies appeared and disappeared from the overhead projector at a dazzling speed, one moment challenging cherished beliefs that fast food is 'junk', the next revealing research which showed a distressingly low 8% of mothers made baby food for their babies. Regular *Food Magazine* readers won't need reminding of the poor nutritional quality of some commercially prepared baby foods. The audience also heard about the NFA's successes from the past year. Prominent among these was the publication of *Children: Advertisers' Dream*.

Nutrition Nightmare? The case for more responsibility in advertising (see page 7). Sue Dibb, the author, arrived at the event almost exhausted from an endless round of interviews with the media. The day began with a live interview on BBC Breakfast News and was followed by Sky News, mentions on innumerable local radio stations up and down the country and, of course, coverage in national daily newspapers. But this is just the beginning.

Over forty national organisation support the report's recommendations and the NFA now has to capitalise on the wave of popular interest and begin the long, hard battle to improve the system of advertising control. Encouragingly, an examination of food advertising, particularly to children, is one of the twelve priorities developed by the Government's Nutrition Task Force.

This Task Force was set up in December last year as part of the Health of the Nation initiative and its remit is to make sure the dietary targets of this policy are fulfilled. The targets are not easy ones. By the year 2005, for example, the proportion of fat in the average diet should have fallen by at least 12% from its current level of about 40% to no more than 35%. Although the amount of fat which people are eating has been falling, this is largely because people are eating less of everything. The proportion of fat in the diet has remained stubbornly high for years and amongst children there is worrying evidence that the proportion of fat is even higher than the average.

The NFA can take at least some credit for the fact that the Nutrition Task Force has recognised that one important way to tackle this problem is to get to grips with the advertising which encourages kids to eat fatty, sugary food. Both Professor Philip James, the NFA President and Geoffrey Cannon, the NFA Chair, sit on the Task Force. Representatives from NFA observer organisations,

such as the Scottish Consumer Council, the Health Education Authority and the British Dietetic Association, are also members.

Equally important is the representation of NFA members and observers on all of the Task Force's four working groups: the food chain; catering, the NHS and health professionals, and education (the public, schools and the media).

The NFA is also involved in another area close to the heart of the Task Force – cooking! In late June, the *Get Cooking!* project was launched in the House of Commons with all-party support (opposite). Backed by an astonishing 170 local and national associations, this NFA initiative also seems to have caught the imagination of the public.

Such publicity for the NFA is more than welcome. Yet, because it is so recent, many journalists and members of the public alike are curious about what the NFA is and what it does when it's not in the media spotlight. The new NFA Directory answers all these questions, summarising not only the NFA's aims and activities but also providing details about the work of all its 33 members. And this year, for the first time, there is also information about the 11 organisations with observer status. If you're interested in food policy we recommend, as they say in the adverts, that you don't leave home without it!

■ NFA Directory of Members, June 1993, Price £5.95 inc p&p

■ **National Food Alliance,**
3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street,
London EC2A 2BH.
Tel: 071-628 7261

Officers:

Professor Philip James (President)
Geoffrey Cannon (Chairman)
Jack Winkler (Treasurer)
Jeanette Longfield (Co-ordinator)
Peta Cottey (Assistant Co-ordinator)

**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 public interest organisations. Its purpose is to develop food and agriculture policy in order to improve the health of the general public, increase knowledge and appreciation of the way in which food is produced and distributed and the effect this can have on human health and the environment.

Members of the NFA include:

Action and Information on Sugars
Baby Milk Action
British Organic Farmers
Campaign for Real Ale
Caroline Walker Trust
Children's Society
Christian Aid
Committee on Biotechnology and Food
Common Ground
Coronary Prevention Group
Council for the Protection of
Rural England
Elm Farm Research Centre
Food Additives Campaign Team
Food Commission
Friends of the Earth
Genetics Forum
GMB (Britain's General Union)
Henry Doubleday Research Assoc
Institute for European Environmental
Policy, London
McCarrison Society
Maternity Alliance
National Farmers' Union
National Federation of City Farms
National Federation of Consumer Groups
National Federation of
Women's Institutes
National Forum for Coronary
Heart Disease Prevention
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
British Medical Association
Consumers' Association
Guild of Food Writers
Health Education Authority
Institute of Trading Standards
Administration
National Consumer Council
Royal Society of
Medicine Food and Health Forum
SAFE Alliance
Scottish Consumer Council
Welsh Consumer Council

Kids Get Cooking!

The *Get Cooking!* project was launched at the end of June in the House of Commons with all-party support and the backing of 170 national and local organisations. Co-ordinated by the National Food Alliance in association with *BBC Good Food*, *Get Cooking!* is funded by the Department of Health under the Health of the Nation initiative.

Get Cooking! wants every young person to have the chance to develop the skills and confidence to be able to cook. 'Cooking is a life skill. Unless we teach our kids to cook, any claim to be able to eat or live healthily is hollow,' said Dr Tim Lang, secretary to the project, speaking at the launch.

The aim of the project is for parents, youth organisations and schools to set up Food Clubs where children can learn to cook in a way that is fun as well as educational. To assist, *Get Cooking!* has published a pack, containing over 20 recipe cards that teach key cooking skills, and which includes advice on everything from shopping, kitchen hygiene and equipment and how to set up a Food Club.

At the Parliamentary launch David Blunkett, opposition spokesman on health, said, 'Both as a parent and a politician I am delighted about *Get Cooking!* A culture where people cannot cook is a much impoverished culture.' But he also warned, 'Perhaps we also need to launch a *Get Washing Up!* campaign.'

***Get Cooking!* commissioned MORI to conduct a survey of the cooking habits of 7-15 year olds throughout the UK.**

The results showed that:

- 93% know how to play computer games
- 61% can programme a video to record something on TV
- 77% can use a CD or music centre
- 54% can bake a cake
- 38% could cook a jacket potato in the oven

Half of all the children say they help in the kitchen once a week or more and a third say they prepare a meal on their own once a week or more.

Asked what dishes they could make, barely half say they could boil an egg. The answers also included:

- 88% toast
- 71% baked beans on toast
- 67% salad
- 58% cakes and biscuits
- 47% sausages and burgers
- 45% scrambled eggs
- 23% spaghetti bolognese

Whatever their skills, the good news is that three out of four children said they wanted to learn more about cooking with boys almost as keen as girls.

- 87% agreed that it's important for children/young people to learn to cook
- 81% agreed that cooking is fun.
- Only 26% thought that cooking was too complicated and
- Only 14% thought that it was boring.

An OPCS survey of adults found that mothers were the most influential member of the family in teaching both men and women to cook, with 89% saying they learned to cook from their mother and 32% from school. 45% of men said they learned to cook from their partner.

80% of women said they prepare every meal consumed in the home, with 18% of men saying they never cook. 75% of women, compared with 57% of men, said all boys should be taught to cook. 54% of women identified courses at school (such as home economics) as where they acquired their cooking knowledge. The majority of adults had learned to cook young - 63% by the age of 11.

Cooking up a storm

The *Get Cooking!* project, backed by the Department of Health, is a welcome initiative. But what, asks Sue Dibb, is the Department of Education doing to ensure home economics stays on the curriculum?

Ninety-three per cent of 7-15 year old children know how to play computer games and 61 per cent can programme the video but one in two children cannot boil an egg. Even fewer can cook a baked potato, scramble eggs or make spaghetti bolognese.

These MORI poll findings confirm the sad state of cooking skills among young people in the UK today and have persuaded the Department of Health to fund a project to get children cooking.

The Department of Health has recognised what health campaigners have been saying for a long time: that good advice to eat more healthily is not enough. Apart from knowledge, people also need skills and resources. The *Get Cooking!* project, backed by £60,000 of Department of Health money, wants every young person to have the chance to learn to cook. Fine words and great intentions, but it's a shame that the project is not also backed by the Department of Education which has the responsibility for setting out what our children learn at school.

Under their powers, the subject that used to be known as home economics is under threat. Changes to the National Curriculum now mean that home economics has been effectively downgraded by being incorporated into 'design and technology.' In theory a child could have just one food lesson in three years. And children are likely to be found designing a pizza on a computer, rather than getting their hands stuck into a bowl of pizza dough.

In practice the amount of practical cookery children learn at school depends very much on the enthusiasm and commitment of under-resourced home economics teachers. That often means teachers running cooking clubs during lunch breaks or in their own time after school, something that the *Get Cooking!* project wants to encourage. Such enthusiasm should be admired and supported but why do we have to rely on the good will of over-worked, dedicated teachers?

In accepting Department of Health funding the *Get Cooking!* project has effectively excluded itself from campaigning politically to see practical food studies given greater priority on the National Curriculum. If education is about learning survival skills for life, then learning how to eat healthily, affordably and enjoyably should surely rank more highly in schools.



■ The *Get Cooking!* pack is available from the National Food Alliance, 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH. Price £12.50 plus £1.50 p&p. Bulk order rates available.

You're telling us!

We asked you to tell us what you thought of the joint *Living Earth/Food Magazine* – and you did! Nearly 250 *Food Magazine* subscribers (and over 500 *Living Earth* subscribers) sent in the questionnaire, and several wrote letters giving additional comments. This is what you said:

There was an overwhelming vote in favour of the joint issue. Two thirds of *Food Magazine* readers (and three quarters of *Living Earth* readers) thought the joint issue was better than their regular journal. Barely one in ten respondents felt the collaborative magazine was worse than their regular journal.

The magazine was generally thought to be provocative and stimulating. The most common negative comments from *Food Magazine* readers concerned the presence of advertisements – either against them in principle or against specific adverts such as organic meat or toothpaste. In fact the Soil Association sold the advertising space, as they do regularly in *Living Earth*, and the Food Commission received no income from the advertising.

Some also found the magazine too dense, with too much text and too much information. 'I won't

What do you feel about the advertisements in this magazine ...

	<i>Food Magazine</i> readers	<i>Living Earth</i> readers
Don't mind	29%	33%
Only 'friendly' ones	63%	66%
Don't like	8%	1%

read it all before the next one is due,' was one comment. 'Can't you make it shorter?' But deciding what to leave out is the problem – there were contradictions about which articles were disliked. While some said there was too much on farming, for example, others said that is just what they liked and wanted.

Another area of concern for *Food Magazine* readers was the loss of independence that a merg-

Which subjects are of greatest interest to you ...

	<i>Food Magazine</i> readers	<i>Living Earth</i> readers
Nutrition	83%	63%
Food additives	80%	58%
Food labelling	77%	51%
Pesticides in food	76%	69%
Supermarkets	68%	37%
News generally	68%	65%
Food irradiation	67%	46%
Product surveys	64%	41%
Organic farming		
/ growing	55%	83%
Agricultural policy	53%	60%
Children's food	48%	21%
Animal welfare	45%	55%
Book reviews	43%	36%
Bio-engineering	39%	34%
Gardening	34%	61%
SA symbol scheme	26%	43%

Compared with your usual magazine, do you feel this issue is ...

	<i>Food Magazine</i> readers	<i>Living Earth</i> readers
Worse	7%	11%
Same	25%	13%
Better	68%	76%

Sample size: 517 *Living Earth* readers, 242 *Food Magazine* readers. (Figures include 58 readers who subscribe to both magazines.)

er of magazines might imply. Some readers felt it would stifle the Food Commission's ability to look critically at organic farming or even the Soil Association itself.

Interests vary between the two sets of readers, of course. Issues such as food additives and food labelling are favoured by *Food Magazine* readers while *Living Earth* readers voted for organic agriculture and gardening. Both groups expressed an interest in nutrition and in pesticides in food.

There were a wide variety of names suggested for the joint magazine, with the word *Living* and the word *Food* dominant. Apart from the ones mentioned in the editorial, we also liked *Fit Food Review*, *Fruits of the Earth*, *Food Wise*, *Living Proof* and *Pure Truth*. And how about *Green Stuff*, *Growing Concerns*, *World Harvest*, *Ceres*, *Bio*, *Aware* and *The Soil and Food Axiom*?

Many thanks to all those who replied, and to all the readers and subscribers who care about what they eat and what they read.

NEXT ISSUE

The Soil Association and the Food Commission have yet to decide on how best to continue their relationship. *Living Earth* is a six-monthly magazine at present, so any merger would imply the *Food Magazine* alternating between the two formats. We would also need to ensure that people subscribing to both organisations do not lose out by getting duplicate journals.

In the meantime we are working on several features including the following:

Coming soon in the *Food Magazine*

■ **Fast Food five years on:** What has happened to our burger chains in the five years since the Food Commission published *Fast Food Facts*? We examine the menus and the nutrition details to see what we've gained and what we've lost.

■ **Animal-friendly meat:** Can you be a meat eater and kind to animals? The RSPCA thinks so, and is launching a symbol scheme. The Soil Association already has one. Compare the two in our special symbol guide.

■ **Hydrogenated fats:** are they worse than ordinary vegetable fat? Why do manufacturers use them? One merge manufacturer swears against them – and tells the *Food Magazine* exactly why.

■ **A drinkers' guide to instant soups:** we take a second look at the quickest of all 'meals' – the instant soup in a cup.

■ **A gourmet guide to baby foods.** We rate the leading companies for quality and value in a special brand-by-brand survey.

Tea for tiny tots

Tea is a common drink for many one year olds born to low income mothers (*European Journal of Public Health*, 1993). Over a third of 350 mothers gave their babies tea, usually in a bottle. Greatest tea consumption was in the Midlands with 46 per cent of the women giving their babies tea compared with 15 per cent living in the south-east.

The survey focused on women with a history of low birth-weight babies which resulted in the selection of a predominantly socially disadvantaged sample. The researchers found that many mothers in the survey lacked the resources and access to good quality food, to provide the kinds of diets for their children recommended by health professionals.

The report raises concern about the levels of caffeine the young drinkers may consume but it fails to point out tea's effect on reducing absorption of iron from the diet. Iron deficiency is most prevalent between the age of six months and two years.

The survey also found that many women were introducing cows milk into children's diets earlier than the six months minimum which is recommended and there was a strong link between bottle feeding and early introduction of solid food. Two-thirds of mothers gave packet, jar or tinned foods as their baby's first foods while only 8 per cent gave home-made foods. The researchers found that free commercial samples given in hospitals or in free Bounty packs had a strong influence. They conclude that 'the practice of distributing such food as free samples cannot be regarded as health-promoting.'

■ A. Oakley, L. Rajan. What did your baby eat yesterday? *European Journal of Public Health* 1993, 3:18-27

Baby milk and diabetes

A report in *Scientific American* (Oct. 1992) found evidence that early exposure to a protein in cows milk

may sometimes lead to juvenile diabetes.

For several years it has been clear that the incidence of diabetes parallels the consumption of cows milk in various countries and that breast-fed babies appear less likely to develop the disease.

Now a joint Canadian-Finnish team have identified the cows milk protein which interferes with proteins in the pancreas. Because a baby's gut in the first three months lets through large protein molecules any immune reaction it has to the cows proteins will also interfere with the pancreas proteins, and increase susceptibility to diabetes.

Rather depressingly, the article concludes 'Worried parents should not pull the formula bottle out of the baby's mouth yet; other approaches including vaccines, may prove to be far more practical.'

Bio-engineering developments

A feature in *Nature* magazine (June 1993) discussed the assessments of risks relating to the spreading of genetic characteristics from engineered species to wild ones: for example the transference of virus resistance from an engineered plant to a wild cousin, which might then become a virulent weed.

In the process of reassuring readers that the evidence pointed to there being little risk of such calamities, the article listed some of the 370 permitted field tests currently underway, mostly in the USA. These include:

- a modified potato able to produce chicken enzymes
- Virus-resistant varieties of alfalfa, corn, cucumber, potato, squash, tobacco and tomato
- Herbicide-tolerant varieties of alfalfa, oilseed rape, corn, cotton, potato, soybean, tobacco and tomato
- Insect-resistant varieties of apple, oilseed rape, corn, cotton, potato, rice, strawberry, tobacco, tomato and walnut

Brain fatty acids

Researchers at the Craig Dunain Hospital, Inverness, have found that over a quarter of patients diagnosed as schizophrenic showed significantly deviated (some higher, some lower) levels of essential fatty acids in their body cells (*Schizophrenia Research*, 1993).

Fatty acids are especially important in the development of neural and vascular tissue, including brain cells. Dr Iain Glen, who heads the Highland Psychiatric Research Group, said it was too early to say whether there was a problem for these patients in absorbing and utilising the necessary nutrients from the diet, or whether their diet was simply deficient. However, Dr Glen referred at a press conference to evidence linking schizophrenia to poor diets, and to not being breastfed as a baby (breast milk being a better source of essential fatty acids than formula milk).

Dr Glen's research report was co-authored by David Horrobin, of Scotia Pharmaceuticals, suppliers of Evening Primrose Oil which can supplement the fatty acids in the diet.

Consensus against sugar

A report by the joint Department of Dental Public Health at London Hospital Medical College and University College London analysed the recommendations of 115 scientific reports on diet and health between 1961 and 1991, and found that the vast majority recommend a reduction in the consumption of extrinsic sugars.

Intrinsic sugars as contained in fruit were not regarded as harmful to health. The consensus view was that extrinsic sugars (packet sugar, honey and processed fruit products) should amount to no more than 10 per cent of the total calories in the average diet.

The document *Sugar and Health, Monograph No 1* analyses the expert

reports for dietary guidelines issued by 36 countries and the World Health Organisation.

■ Details from Dept of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London, 68-72 Gower Street, London WC1E 6EA

Iron supplements

A criticism of the role of baby milk manufacturers who imply that parents should buy follow-on commercial milk powders to give older babies enough iron is published in *Health Visitor* (July 1993).

Nutritionist Gay Palmer argues that manufacturers of follow-on milks are causing alarm among mothers and health workers by implying that babies deprived of these products may suffer iron deficiency and develop anaemia. She points out that milk other than breastmilk is not a good way of giving iron, even when the product is heavily fortified. Parents should be aiming to give their children a balanced diet including iron-rich foods, rather than iron-fortified processed milk products.

Spreading obesity

A massive indictment of government food and health policy over the last decade was published at the end of June — not by the Food Commission but by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

The report *Health Survey for England 1991* found that one in five men and one in four women can expect to be medically obese by their fifties on present trends, and that these figures are far higher than a similar survey found only five years earlier.

Blood cholesterol levels are also a source of worry: seven out of ten adults have concentrations above the desirable level.

The New Protectionism: Protecting the Future Against Free Trade

by Tim Lang and Colin Hines
Earthscan, 120 Pentonville Road,
London N1 9JN, ISBN 1853831654,
£10.95

International Trade

The Consumer Agenda

by the National Consumer Council, 20
Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W
0DH, ISBN 0948231777, £14 inc p&p
UK, £17 overseas

De-regulated and globalised free trade is heralded as the salvation for capitalism's current depression. But the reality is that such economic 'freedom' leaves a trail of destruction in its wake, damaging both the environment and public health, and destroying traders who have no access to the massive capital resources of the multinationals.

Tim Lang and Colin Hines argue that further liberalising free trade, as governments and institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD demand, will worsen social living conditions and the global environment. Furthermore, the embodiment of free trade, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), does not make adequate provision for sustainable growth, environmental protection or public welfare.

It is time, the two authors recom-

mend, that human needs are taken care of. These needs have to be protected from the forces of free-trading corporations, and hence the title: *New Protectionism*, ie people before trade. This is not the protectionism of nationalistic trade barriers that the GATT was instituted to remove, rather it is a call for rational recognition of our human needs and a those of the environment – a shifting of emphasis to correct the imbalances.

The fault lines of free trade ideology are identified in a discussion that incorporates both the arguments of mainstream economists and the views of current less orthodox thinkers concerned with the impact of trade on the physical and human environment. The language is approachable and the book thoroughly indexed and referenced.

Lang and



Hines' opposition to the view that ruinous competition should rule stands in contrast to that given by the National Consumer Council in their latest book *International Trade – The Consumer Agenda*.

This is the culmination of policy documents published since 1989 by the conventional and Government-funded consumer organisations, arguing for trade liberalisation in the name of price, choice and freedom. The book pays particular attention to the harmonisation of markets in Europe and the experiences of orthodox consumer organisations. It examines the case against protectionism with respect to consumers, drawing upon test cases and reference to mainstream economic (including World Bank and OECD) reports. The book is fully referenced but contains no index.

Recognising ecological and conflicting economic interests, the book states that the needs of the environment and development must be integrated into trade policy, but a trade policy of liberalisation based on the current draft GATT text – with provisions for environmental

protection by international agreement. How such agreement is reached in the face of a global free market philosophy is not fully addressed.

Examples of barriers to trade currently in operation that are damaging to developing countries (eg the multi-fibre agreement), and reference to World Bank reports declaring how trade can aid the environment both by improved technology and reduced poverty are used to justify following the free-trade package. Arguments against protectionism are provided, however these tend to rely on the failures of past measures: for example the book suggests that the principle of the CAP is flawed because it doesn't protect the environment.

The book identifies many of the common concerns of anti-free traders, though some, such as the impact of debt burden and structural adjustment programmes on developing countries under free trade, are not given here. The case for a greater say for consumers in policy making is clearly made, but the book does not share the concerns of many public interest groups about the undue influence of wealthy countries and industry in relation to the new Multilateral Trade Organisation (MTD) or the Codex Alimentarius.

The book is a thorough examination of the implications of trade policy for consumers. It, and *New Protectionism*, should be read together to stimulate a much-needed debate on our future trading needs.

Martine Drake

COULD YOU HELP THE FOOD COMMISSION?

The Food Commission, the publisher of the *Food Magazine*, is an independent organisation with very limited funding. We receive no money from industry, none from government, and we take no advertisements in the magazine (those in the last joint issue were all on behalf of the Soil Association). Last year our readers and supporters contributed nearly £1,500 in small donations – enough for us to buy a much needed computer. If you believe in the issues we raise and would like to help more, please support us with a donation.

Please make cheques/POs payable to: The Food Commission UK Ltd

send to: The Food Commission UK Ltd,
FREEPOST KE 7564,
London EC2B 2DF

I would like to make a donation to The Food Commission.

- ☐ £5.00
☐ £10.00
☐ £20.00
☐ other £ _____
☐ Please tick if you would like a receipt

Name: _____

Address: _____

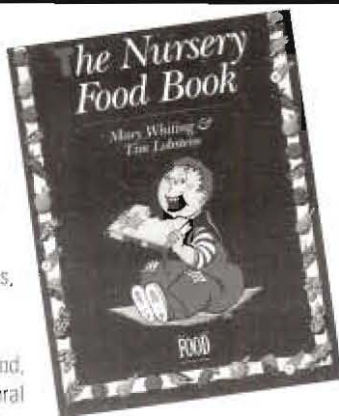
market place

THE NURSERY FOOD BOOK

by Mary Whiting and Tim Lobstein
Published by Edward Arnold

* How do you get under-fives to eat good food? * What is a healthy main meal for a three year-old? * What about puddings, sweets and birthday treats? This lively and practical book explores all issues relating to food, nutrition, hygiene and multicultural needs. It offers tips, recipes and sample menus along with cooking, gardening and educational activities involving food.

An excellent handbook for nursery nurses and anyone caring for young children.
£9.99 including £1 p&p



FAST FOOD FACTS

by Tim Lobstein
Published by Camden Press

* Chips covered with textile dyes * Fish batter made without milk or eggs * French fries cooked in beef fat You don't have to avoid fast food but you do need to know what is in it. Full of useful tables of nutrients and additives, this book gives a unique look into the secretive world of fast food catering.
£5.95 including £1 p&p

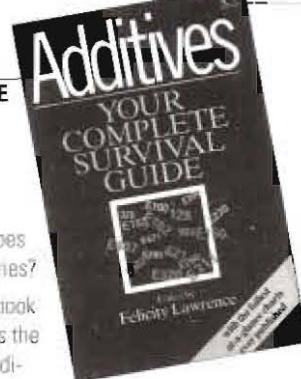
FAST FOOD FACTS



ADDITIVES - YOUR COMPLETE SURVIVAL GUIDE

Edited by Felicity Lawrence
Published by Century Hutchinson
Which are dangerous and which safe? Why are they used? How does the UK compare with other countries? With comprehensive charts, the book explains 'E' numbers and examines the evidence for and against each additive. Everything you need to know, but which the food industry would rather you did not ask!

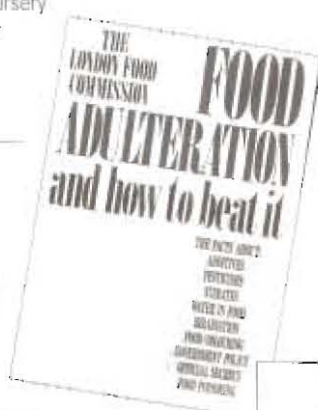
SPECIAL OFFER Normally £4.95 including p&p, now just £3.50



FOOD ADULTERATION

by the London Food Commission Published by Unwin Paperbacks

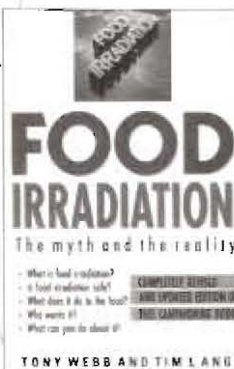
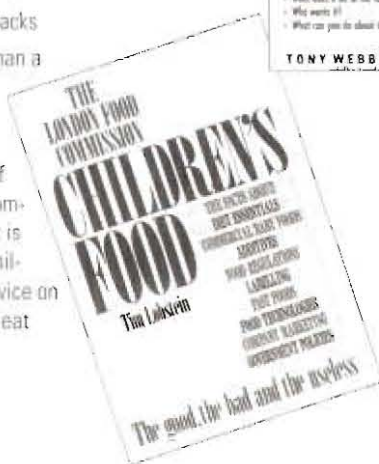
A penetrating expose of the shocking state of food quality in Britain; revealing the facts on additives, pesticides, nitrates, food poisoning and irradiation. We deserve better food, but we will only get it if we demand it — and this book spells out what our demands should be.
£5.95 including £1 p&p



CHILDREN'S FOOD

by Tim Lobstein
Published by Unwin Paperbacks

* Teething risks sweeter than a doughnut? * Fish fingers less than half fish? * Beef burgers up to 40% pig fat? Armed with this book full of the trade secrets of food companies, you can judge what is good, bad and useless in children's food. Plus sound advice on how to ensure our children eat healthily.
£4.75 including 80p p&p



FOOD IRRADIATION

by Tony Webb and Tim Lang
Published by Thorsons

Good food doesn't need irradiating. Yet the UK government has now legalised it, and is pressing the rest of Europe to follow. This book explains exactly what the process is and what it

does to food.
£6.50 including £1 p&p

ADDITIVES GUIDE

Published by Channel 4
A handy fold-out guide to all the new EC 'E' numbers. Only £2 including p&p



FREE

with every order! Published by Channel 4, a 16-page booklet worth £2 giving the inside story of Britain's food industry.



ORDER TODAY

Send your order to

Publications Department,
Food Commission, 3rd Floor, 5-11 Worship Street,
London EC2A 2BH

Cheques payable to The Food Commission (UK) Ltd.

Overseas purchasers should send payment in sterling, and add £2 if requiring airmail delivery.

Name _____
Address _____

Food Irradiation @ £6.50
Children's Food @ £4.75
Fast Food Facts @ £5.95

Additives Survival Guide @ £3.50
Additives fold-out @ £2.00
Nursery Food Book @ £9.99
Food Adulteration @ £5.95

TOTAL PAYMENT _____

☐ Yes, please send me my free copy of This Food Business

Green leavers

Despite many years at MAFF, the last ten of them (1972-1982) as its chief scientist, Frank Raymond has now had a change of heart.

We have to cut the amount of chemicals farmers use, he declares, if we have a hope of reducing the surplus mountains.

'Set aside is going to fail in the longer term,' he claimed in a statement to the press. 'We should now be thinking about what might complement it or replace it. The problem is that we know damn all about the alternatives. We have done exceedingly little research on this although the need was quite clear 12 years ago.'

And who was MAFF chief scientist at the time?



Thick ear

The producers of carrageenan, the seaweed extract used as an additive (E407) to thicken liquids and bulk out foods, must be feeling a bit sore.

Last year they saw their precious commodity being tarnished by the government's Committee on Toxicology (COT) which had objected to an EC proposal to allow the stuff in baby foods. There are fears that the thickener can degrade into a possible harmful form in either the food or in the gut, and that impurities in the additive may add to the problem.

The manufacturers wanted the decision changed, and offered more research data to justify their faith in carrageenan. Now the COT have said not only should it continue to be banned from baby foods, but they are unhappy with the quality of the additive, and have told MAFF that from now on far tighter purity specifications should come into force.

Piggy banking

That pigs can easily suffer stress is hardly surprising, given the way most are treated. But now you can opt for pigs with their stress-susceptibility genetically removed.

What is more, according to a report in *Farmers Weekly*, 'the big benefit to the meat trade from totally stress-free pigs comes from...' (no, not happy pigs and farmers living in gentle harmony, but) '... a 0.5% improvement in pigmeat water-holding capacity. This is worth about £1 per pig.'

Meanwhile Roche, the pharmaceutical giant, has shown that adding large doses of vitamin E to pig feed in the last few days before slaughter helps 'to improve meat shelf-life and retain a fresh colour for a longer period.'

Clear as milk

Here is the news (from the Veterinary Products Committee).

'The Committee examined evidence relating to five applications for UK product licences, and an application to vary an existing product licence. These related to two ectoparasiticides, one hormonal product, one antihistamine, one analgesic and one viral vaccine.'

'The Committee provisionally agreed (subject to confirmation at its next meeting) to recommend that all six applications should be granted subject to certain conditions being met by the applicant.'

And that was how they announced that they were permitting the milk-boosting hormone BST ('one hormonal product') to be used on British farms as soon as the EC lifts its moratorium.

Woman from Mars

Research into why we eat what we do received a £900,000 boost with the announcement of the second phase of the Economic and Social Research Council's programme for 1994-1996.

Project proposals had to be submitted by June 30, and will be scrutinised by leading academics. Or will they? The usual pattern for Research Councils is to let the academics decide the priorities, with perhaps an interested observer from the relevant ministry. This time we see a committee of eight voting members, including four academics, one person from the government-and-industry-funded Agriculture and Food Research Council, one from MAFF, one from the Department of Health, and one Maureen Edmonson from Mars!

Mars spent £37m in 1991 telling us what we should eat to help us work, rest and play.

Beefing up the ministry

Gillian Shephard (née Watts) is the new MAFF minister, the first woman to head the place in its 102-year history.

But don't expect a big shift from the 'if God meant us to be vegetarian he wouldn't have given us teeth' views of her predecessor. For generations the Watts family has made its money as Norfolk cattle dealers, a trade going back to the fifth century when the Saxons were running out of grass in Denmark and turned their attention to deforesting East Anglia.

She hopes to carry on her predecessor's work lifting the 'burden of regulation' from the food industry. 'Deregulation is wanted by farmers, consumers and those who deal with food safety,' she announced, clearly having been briefed only by her farming and food industry chums.

Below: Gillian Shephard, the farmers' new friend



Gum-bagged?

Gummer may yet again become the farmers' favourite, if rumours put about by ex-Tory treasurer Lord McAlpine prove correct.

He wrote in *Country Life* this spring that the Cabinet has been considering merging the Environment and Agriculture ministries. The irony is that Environment has the senior minister (a Secretary of State, no less) but MAFF, with over 11,000 staff, is far the bigger establishment and has much the greater financial clout, what with the EC's CAP budget and all.

What's more, Gillian Shephard speaks fluent French and passable German and Italian, and is well set to dominate CAP negotiations. So perhaps Gummer's promotion is just a little earner for a few months, till Gill finds her feet and swings her handbag.