

# LIVING EARTH & THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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## Sustainable forestry

Joint issue of the Journals of the Soil Association and the Food Commission



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## THE FOOD COMMISSION

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 Commission Research Charity aims to relieve ill health and advance public education through research, education and the promotion of better quality food.

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## editorial

Welcome to the second joint issue of the *Food Magazine* and *Living Earth*. Readers voted overwhelmingly in favour of the joint venture and both organisations are keen to try it again.

In this issue we look at some of the threats to the future of sustainable agriculture and the world's food supply, and also at some of the positive answers to prevent environmental degradation. On page 9 Tim Lang argues that free trade agreements like the GATT and the private deal between the US and the EC (the Blair House Agreement) will squeeze the food security of small countries, particularly in the third world. GATT will also allow multinationals to own the patent on plants grown by third world farmers — and charge royalties for the seed.

Patrick Holden (page 27) clearly illustrates how the reform of CAP, with its emphasis on set-aside, has failed to dent overproduction. Instead we're left with more intensive agriculture on less land — hardly environmentally responsible.

It's impossible to divorce food from the environment in which it is grown, which is why we feature forests in this issue. In our special four page feature we look at the Soil Association's Responsible Forestry Programme and at positive initiatives for the eco-labelling of timber.

Turning to food products, we've taken a look at commercial soups, especially chicken soup. Our Food Commission survey shows that you would be hard pressed to find much chicken in most brands — in fact, you're likely to get more salt and monosodium glutamate than real meat. Meat products usually have to declare their meat content, but a loophole in the regulations permits soup to have as little meat as it likes, and still call itself meat soup.

Eating less sugar is something we're all advised to do and manufacturers are eager to sell us 'low sugar', 'no added sugar' and 'sugar free' products. But all is not so sweet. The Food Commission found many of these claims to be misleading and some that would break the food regulations.

It's not only sugar labels that can mislead. According to the RSPCA, eggs should be clearly identified as coming from battery hens, in the same way as free range, perchery and barn eggs are labelled. But not everyone agrees. And is free range always better? To join the debate read our Fax Forum on page 34.

We hope you find this second joint issue just as lively, challenging and informative as the first.

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■ Cover picture: Managed Beech Woodland taken by Roderick Leslie.



# BST falls at the fourth hurdle

**The milk-boosting hormone received a thumbs-down from the European Commission this summer, against the advice of its scientific committees. Robin Jenkins reports.**

Thanks to the European Commission, this summer brought a degree of respite for the poor exploited EC dairy cow. The Commission recommended a further seven year ban on the sale or use of Bovine Somatotropin (BST) in the EC. However, it will remain legal to manufacture and export BST from the EC and use of the hormone has already been legalised in India and the Czech and Slovak Republics.

BST has also been banned in the USA but only for 90 days, due to run out in November. The Food and Drug Administration is expected to stall a decision. The drug is also understood to have been banned indefinitely in Australia.

The EC, USA and Australia have ended up banning BST for the same reasons – it makes no sense socially and economically to encourage greater milk production. But the regulatory authorities are now in a pickle of their own making. They will not admit that they are applying a so-called fourth hurdle to BST but they have no other grounds for banning it, having already accepted that the hormone passed their supposedly objective scientific criteria of efficacy, safety and quality (the traditional three hurdles). This muddle now brings the whole regulatory procedure into question.

By introducing a criterion of socio-economic desirability for evaluating genetically engineered products – something the regulatory bodies have adamantly refused to countenance

throughout the seven years of controversy with BST – they have created a precedent that can be used to obtain bans on other genetically engineered products of doubtful or negative value.

Last January the UK Medicines Commission gave the go-ahead for BST, shortly to be followed by the EC Committee for Veterinary Medical Products (CVMP). The latter claimed

■ BST poses no risk to the health of consumers of milk and meat obtained from treated animals

■ BST does not adversely affect the quality of milk or meat

■ BST does not present any undue risk to the health or welfare of the treated animals

This was strange, considering that the report accepted there would be 'an increase in the incidence of mastitis in treated animals'.

This is a strong criticism of the safety-in-use of BST, but the report denied that the rise in mastitis was a direct result of using the drug, saying instead 'this increase is an indirect effect resulting from the increased milk yield of the treated animals'.

The report also accepted that cows injected with BST tended to develop anaemia, and that there were detectable changes in the cow's blood, resulting from metabolic exhaustion. Although BST results in an immediate increase in milk production, it takes sixteen weeks for the cow to compensate by eating

more. The report also accepted that BST milk has less protein and more fat than ordinary milk.

It was suspected that the CVMP was under a great deal of pressure to approve the drug despite the evidence, and the European Commission's announcement appears to undermine the CVMP report. The Commission has stated that the ban follows consideration of the possible damage to the livelihoods of small dairy farmers and might lead to a reduction in beef and milk sales. They also suggested that the CVMP conclusion that BST was safe and effective would only be relevant if there were radical changes in the management of dairy herds, something which could not in their view be enforced.

Just to add to the general disgrace of it all, the EC Ethics Committee meanwhile managed to conclude – presumably on instruction from the EC Co-ordinating Committee on Biotechnology – that there were no ethical grounds for banning BST.

The Commission's recommendation still has to be accepted by the community's agricultural ministers (Council of Ministers), and they will need a legally watertight reason for banning BST – otherwise the genetic engineering industry will take them to court. Will they condemn their own CVMP for reaching conclusions that contradict the contents of their

## BST triple-take

Initial drafts of the official Communication from the European Commission proposing an outright ban on BST surprised most commentators who expected a compromise deal.

Clearly it was too much for the BST manufacturers, and by the time of the Commission's press release in July the ban was proposed for seven years.

Finally, the formal document was released on 16 September and refers to the ban being limited to 'the duration of the milk quotas'.

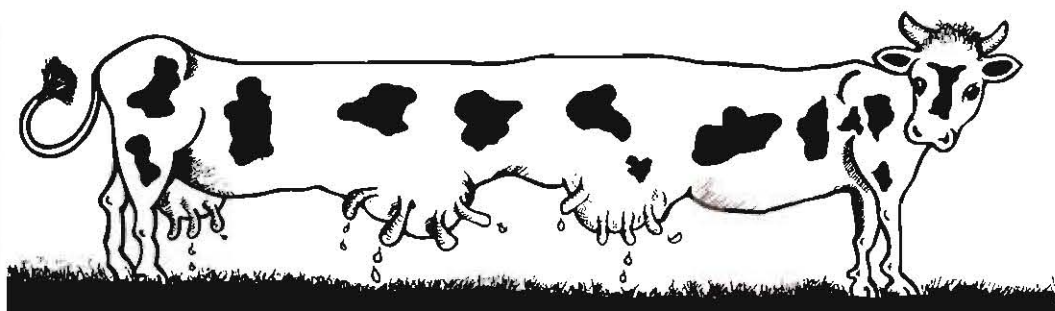
Milk quotas are planned until 31 March 2000, less than six and a half years hence.

And when the Council of Ministers meet the date could be moved again. Watch this space...

own report? Or do they reach for the fourth hurdle and publicly accept the real reason for the ban?

The Australians decided not to approve BST 'solely because of likely trade implications'. The American ban was made on economic grounds because it would have cost an estimated \$15 million per year to buy up the extra milk surplus.

Meanwhile the BST manufacturers are looking forward to the day the GATT agreement is signed. Under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary rules, a national ban on the import of BST milk would have to show that the milk was a health hazard, which the UK and EC committees say is not the case. Even if the use of BST is banned in the EC, we may end up drinking BST milk from countries where the use is allowed.



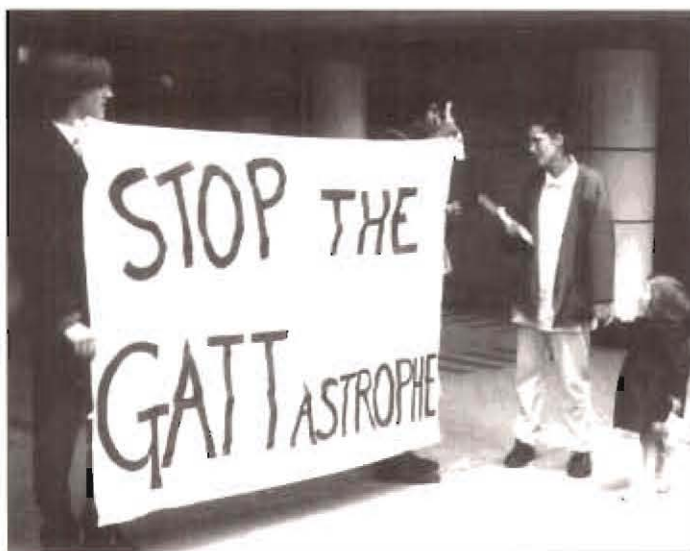


# 'Gene piracy' threatens third world farmers

**Demonstrators took to the streets in London and India at the beginning of October to protest against 'gene piracy' by multinational seed corporations. Sue Dibb reports.**

UK environmentalists are supporting Indian farmers in their struggle against GATT patent laws which may soon mean that farmers will not be allowed to plant seed unless they have paid royalties to a company which holds the seed patent.

Targets include W R Grace and Co, one of the largest US chemical companies and Cargill, which controls 60 per cent of the world trade in cereals. Grace is accused of infringing the intellectual property rights of millions of Indian peasants by taking out US patents on pesticide products derived from the neem tree which for centuries has been used in India for a range of medicinal and agricultural purposes. Cargill is setting up a hybrid seed processing complex in Karnataka and has been singled out as one company which would flood the Indian market if the GATT draft is approved by the Indian government.



**Demonstrators rally at Cargill's London trading offices in October**

At present, Indian law does not allow agricultural and medicinal products to be patented. But the multinational seed companies see farmers' rights to their own seeds as an obstacle to company marketing expansion. Under GATT, India will be forced to introduce such patents or face retaliatory trade measures. Third world farmers' groups argue that such a monopoly system of patents, combined with open access

to markets, would only be of benefit to large corporate concerns. The US International Trade Commission estimates that US companies in all sectors stand to gain \$61 billion a year from the third world in royalty payments if GATT's proposed patents regime is approved. In return, the third world will get nothing for the knowledge which led to the development of patented products.

In India farmers have reacted by

staging a number of dramatic protests against GATT's proposed patenting measures. In August, 40,000 farmers demonstrated in the Southern Indian state of Karnataka, carrying neem branches as symbols of their collective indigenous knowledge. The previous month farmers burnt down a seed processing plant in Karnataka belonging to Cargill. On 2 October a rally of over one million farmers launched the third world Farmer's Movement Against Transnational Corporations.

The fear of small farmers in the third world, whose agriculture is based on local knowledge and low material input, is that under GATT their seed-stock, animal breeding stock and natural pesticides will gradually become the intellectual property of national and multinational companies. Farmers will then lose their independence and be forced to pay high prices for products that they could formerly provide for themselves.

Indian farmers are proposing collective patents as an alternative form of intellectual property rights which would reward communities for their traditional knowledge of the uses of plants and animals.

■ For more information contact: The Ecologist Campaigns on 0258 473476.

## Property rights and intellectual piracy

In its search for new products, Western science is increasingly turning to traditional knowledge systems. The subsequent patenting of knowledge is dignified under the title 'Intellectual Property' though it is little more than piracy, ignoring all the contributions of indigenous cultures in developing that knowledge and skill. It creates an order in which the original innovators are called 'pirates' while the real pirates

demand 'protection' of their intellectual property rights.

Neem is just one of many plants and organisms that have recently been patented:

■ A variety of Peruvian potato has been patented by Frito-Lay, a PepsiCo subsidiary.

■ Thaumatin, an African berry, is jointly owned by UK sugar firm Tate & Lyle, the US company Lucky Biotech and the University of California.

■ A rice variety, CB-801 originating from South and South East Asia has been patented by Farms of

Texas Co. Other rice varieties developed by Asian researchers are the 'intellectual property' of the Cornell University of USA.

■ Qing Hao, a Chinese medicinal plant, is owned by Rhone-Poulenc of France.

■ Madagascar's Rosy Periwinkle, now used in the treatment of childhood leukaemia, belongs to Allelix, a Canadian Biotech firm, and Mitsui Pharmaceuticals.

■ Source: *The Ecologist*, Vol 23, No6, November/December 1993.

THREE TIMES  
THE HUNGER...  
THREE TIMES  
THE POVERTY...  
THREE TIMES  
THE PROFIT...

GATT



IN WALL STREET  
NO-ONE CAN HEAR  
YOU STARVE



# Critics slam genetic engineering reports

**Two new reports on genetic engineering have caused controversy. Here we report on the Polkinghorne Committee's review of the ethics of biotechnology. Right, Steve Emmott looks at a House of Lords Committee report.**

On 20th September, a government-appointed ethics committee chaired by the Rev Dr John Polkinghorne published their views on the morality of genetic engineering. The report was immediately condemned as a 'recipe for Gene Fudge' by COBAF (the volun-

tary Committee on Biotechnology and Food).

The committee was set up by MAFF after a company breeding animals with human genes, Pharmaceutical Proteins Ltd of Edinburgh, had applied to send their

surplus livestock to the abattoir. The committee concerned itself only with the use of human genes in food-stuffs, animal genes in plants (a concern for vegetarians), and genes from pigs and cows (a concern for Jews, Muslims and Hindus).

This contrasts with a poll last year by *Supermarketing* magazine which found that 85 per cent of people wanted all genetically engineered food labelled. The committee devoted little attention to this issue, but found that genetic engineering did not by itself confer a 'moral taint' on food, and that there is therefore no

case for general labelling.

However, it felt that while the use of 'ethically sensitive' genes in crops and animals should not be prohibited, food containing such genes should be labelled.

In making its recommendations the committee relied heavily on novel and highly dubious arguments (see below) and recommended that the Edinburgh animals could be sold without meat being labelled, if it could be proven that none of their cells contained new genes. This will no doubt alarm the many consumers who might want to avoid such meat.

## MAFF's latest recipe for gene fudge

*Robin Jenkins of COBAF comments on the Polkinghorne Report.*

The Report is constructed on the horns of a dilemma. It admits that 'almost all responses to our consultation from consumer and religious groups asked for some form of labelling as essential for ethically necessary informed choice'. But this has to be squared with the realisation that 'there is a good deal of reluctance on the part of the food industry to accept labelling'.

The Rev. Polkinghorne recommends a compromise, but in order to give it some philosophical respectability and ethical stature he has made use of several interesting fudges.

First he announces the 'principle of dilution' which arises from the fact that genes are not simply extracted from one animal or plant and inserted into another but are replicated in the laboratory between the two. The process is often quite complex and rarely involves the original DNA of the donor being inserted into the recipient. If these are to be labelled, then the phrase 'copy genes of human origin' is suggested.

Secondly he brings in a *de minimis* fudge which is cleverly announced as a 'principle of best endeavour'. In other words, they will do the best they can in the circumstances, but 'it will be quite unrealistic to label every last element of modified food in every product in which it may be incorporated'. Furthermore it 'is not possible to express in precise quantitative terms when such a principle should operate.... we do not, however, think that it will prove difficult to make ethically responsible judgements of this kind'.

The third fudge, or to use the terminology of the Report, the third principle, is that ethical concerns should be limited to the consumption of the genetically engineered organisms themselves. According to this audacious line of argument, there should be no ethical problem over the products derived from genetically engineered organisms because none of the genetically engineered DNA would be consumed. According to this 'principle', cheese made with genetically engineered chymosin is of no ethical consequence, milk produced

by injecting BST into cows raises no moral issues, bread made from herbicide resistant wheat poses no ethical questions. This simply is not true.

The fourth fudge involves a little piece of logic-chopping. The argument goes like this: if a food product derived from a genetically engineered organism is chemically identical to a food product derived from a normal organism then it is the same food product and does not need labelling. This is the argument that has been used against labelling BST milk and cheese made with genetically engineered chymosin. It is as if we had no right to differentiate between free range and battery produced eggs, or to know which foods had been irradiated.

In the meantime, thank you Rev. Polkinghorne for recommending:

- the labelling of edible organisms containing human genes,
- the labelling of products originating from animals containing genes transferred from animals of significance to major religions,
- the labelling of edible plants containing animal genes.

No thanks for the fudges, or for the recommendation that farm animals containing the genes of rats or dogs need not be labelled because neither of these animals is of particu-

lar significance to any major religion.

Thank you Mrs Shephard, the Agriculture Minister, for welcoming these recommendations, but no thanks at all for also welcoming the 'dilution', 'de minimis', 'derivative' or 'identicality' principles.

Those of us who have ethical qualms about certain aspects of genetic engineering are not obsessed with whether or not a minuscule fragment of human or animal DNA passes our lips when we eat a tomato. We all eat human DNA when we kiss and we probably unwittingly consume some whilst travelling on a crowded underground train in the rush hour. That is not the point. The point is that we do not know where genetic engineering is going, what might be round the corner or where it ought to stop. It is a genuine dilemma that cannot be minimised, diluted or logic-chopped out of existence, still less resolved in the name of profit.

■ Robin Jenkins gave written and oral evidence to the Committee on behalf of the National Food Alliance

■ *Report of the Committee on the Ethics of Genetic Modification and Food Use*, HMSO, September 1993, £7.95.

■ The Soil Association's position on genetic engineering will be discussed in the next issue of *Living Earth*.



# Biotechnology - a Lords' prayer

All over the world, the genetic engineering industry is arguing that regulation is bad for business, writes *Steve Emmott of The Genetics Forum*. By threatening to move their operations elsewhere, they are trying to frighten the regulators in one country after another, with the eventual aim of deregulating the industry globally.

With the publication of the House of Lords Select Committee report\* we find that their Lordships have come out in uncritical support of deregulation. Their faith in biotechnology and the casual dismissal of counter-arguments insults all those who gave evidence. For example:

'No case can be made for the universal generic labelling of GMO derived foods or food constituents. The Food Advisory Committee should reject calls for such labelling.'

'Biotechnology products will ultimately gain public acceptance because they are desirable and reliable.'

'In framing the Directives on which the UK regulations are based, the EC took an excessively precautionary line...Work on further process

based EC Draft Directives should cease forthwith; and the "Fourth Hurdle" of socio-economic need must not be introduced as an additional criterion....'

'DTI, in collaboration with MAFF, is the natural champion... of biotechnology and should ensure that public perceptions are based on reason and knowledge.'

'...it is worrying for the industry that its credibility and that of Government is so low, and that groups likely to adopt anti-biotechnology attitudes (Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace) have such a high level of credibility.'

Neither their Lordships nor the industry seems to understand why their credibility is so low. The report contains no serious attempt to digest the complex safety, environmental, ethical, consumer and political issues raised by genetic engineering. The report itself deserves little credibility.

■ *Regulation Of The United Kingdom Biotechnology Industry And Global Competitiveness*, House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, October 1993.

## Methyl bromide

The UK and France are continuing to oppose a move to bring the EC in line with the US, by banning the ozone-destroying pesticide, methyl bromide, by the year 2000.

Despite industry claims that there are no alternatives to methyl bromide, organic food producers have developed freezing techniques to replace the fumigation of stored grain. Where methyl bromide is used, Rentokil are reported to have developed low-use methods com-

bined with carbon filters to remove the chemical, but cannot develop the technique while MAFF insists on the use of higher levels as a standard. Rentokil have also suggested carbon dioxide fumigation, but MAFF is concerned that CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere contributes to the greenhouse effect.

The Food Commission and the SAFE Alliance are asking producers to declare their planned use of methyl bromide over the next seven years. For details contact Rachel Harris at the Food Commission, 071-628 7774.

## MAFF accepts mineral oils constitute a food hazard

**New evidence shows mineral oils and waxes to be an even greater hazard than previous thought. So why, asks Sue Dibb, has the government taken so long to ban them?**

It is nearly five years since the government announced mineral oils used in food processing should be banned 'as soon as possible'. But only now does the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food say their use will finally be banned.

In previous issues of *The Food Magazine* we reported how MAFF's original proposal for a ban in early 1989 was never implemented. Oil companies managed to persuade MAFF that the delay was warranted while the companies carried out further safety tests.

This new research has now been considered by the government's expert Committee on Toxicity and it gives even greater cause for concern. Not only does it confirm that mineral oils are a potential hazard to health but also that low melting point mineral hydrocarbon waxes, previously thought to be safe, are among the most toxic of the materials tested. Hydrocarbons were found to accumulate particularly in the liver and lymph nodes of test animals. As a result the MAFF has finally announced that mineral hydrocarbon oils and low melting point waxes will be banned from all food uses, although a spokesperson could still not confirm when this would come into effect.

Two waxes, a high melting point and a high sulphur microcrystalline wax will still be permitted for coating

cheese, for defeathering ducks and in chewing gum base, subject to the setting of adequate specifications.

Mineral hydrocarbons, in the form of white or petroleum oils, were permitted for use on dried fruit to prevent them sticking together, as a wax on citrus fruits, as a glazing agent on sugar confectionery and as a lubricant on machinery where it left residues, in processing foods such as bread, confectionery, jellies and sausages. In the last few years many of these uses have been phased out due to the controversy surrounding mineral oils.

The use of mineral hydrocarbon waxes in chewing gum has aroused heated debate. Chewing gum manufacturers have long argued that they present no hazard. However, the Committee on Toxicity are still not satisfied. In their latest report they state: 'we still consider that these waxes could be available for absorption from the gastrointestinal tract following chewing or swallowing of the gum.' The Food Advisory Committee originally recommended that chewing gum packets should carry labels warning consumers not to swallow the gum or eat it with fatty foods such as chocolate. However chewing gum manufacturers argued strongly against this and the proposal was dropped.

The new regulations are likely to mean that manufacturers will need to reformulate products as low melting point waxes, which will be banned, are typically part of chewing gum base. Wrigley's, in anticipation of the restrictions, announced in August, that they had reformulated their products in 1992. Wrigley's confirmed to the Food Commission that prior to their reformulation their products contained the hazardous waxes.

## Thanks to Food Policy News

After eight years being run on a voluntary basis, the informative newsletter *Food Policy News* has ceased publication. The former subscribers voted to donate their residual funds to *The Food Magazine*, and we wish to thank them and to put on record our appreciation of the considerable time and effort spent by the various editorial teams who put together FPN over the years.



# Codex puts trade before food safety

**New evidence is emerging that the international body charged with setting global safety standards for food is once more putting commercial trade considerations above food safety for consumers. Sue Dibb reports.**

In July the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which develops international food standards, decided not to accept the recommendation of its own expert committees on food additives that a commercial preparation, known by a variety of trade names such as Processed Eucheuma Seaweed (PES) should be classified as different from carrageenan. Instead, Codex, to the surprise of independent observers, decided to accept a Philippine's request that these decisions by JECFA and the Codex Commission Food Additives Committee should be referred back to them for further consideration. Apparently, the UK Ministry of Agriculture representative at the meeting did not attempt to speak out against this astonishing recommendation.

Conventional carrageenan (E407) is a chemically processed seaweed extract sometimes known as Irish Moss which is used by the food industry as a gelling agent and to add bulk in a wide range of products including desserts, fillings, jellies, confectionery, meat and dairy products, soft and alcoholic drinks, preserves and sauces. Philippine Processed Eucheuma Seaweed (PES) differs from refined carrageenan and has not been adequately tested for safety. However the Philippine government has been lobbying hard for several years to have PES accepted as a food grade additive and more-

over, not differentiated from carrageenan, although its specification differs significantly. *The Food Magazine* (see FM 16) questioned the 1990 US approval of PES after it became clear that this was granted after intense political lobbying from the Philippines at a time when the US wanted to appease the Philippine government over withdrawal of American armed forces from the country. Subsequently the US was granted a further three years extension of its naval base lease. In this instance and highly surprisingly, the US Food and Drug Administration approved PES without requesting any toxicity testing.

EC approval of PES has not yet been granted and the EC's Scientific Committee for Food has requested further toxicity tests on the product. In the meantime, however, the Philippine government has continued its pressure. At the Codex meeting were the combined staffs of the Philippines Embassies in Paris and Geneva who claimed that 450,000 impoverished Philippines workers would lose employment and that the country would lose a possible new source of export earnings if PES were not to be classified as carrageenan.

Independent observers argue that this is a gross exaggeration and the World Seaweed Producers Association is also less than happy with the Philippine case, strongly objecting to PES carrying any similar classification to carrageenan.

This is not the first time that Codex stands accused of putting commercial considerations before food safety. In 1991 *The Food Magazine* (see FM13) reported that Codex had refused to approve the JECFA recommendation of a more stringent specification for the additive gum arabic thus allowing cheaper, inferior gums, not tested for safety, to be passed off as gum arabic. This appeared to be the result of an international campaign against tighter specifications by gum arabic trading companies.

Codex is a joint UN World Health Organisation/Food and Agriculture Organisation body with membership of over 130 governments set up to develop international food safety and quality standards which are supposed to protect consumer health and at the same time facilitate trade. However, as the cases above illustrate, these two objectives can lead to conflicts of interest.

Earlier this year the National Food Alliance with the support of over 35 non-government organisations from many countries called for a reform of Codex. The report\* illustrated the industry domination of Codex decision-making; their representatives dramatically outnumbered representatives of public interest groups and



**If the next CAP reform is to pay any attention to sustainable food production in Europe then it will be thanks to groups such as those meeting in Girona, Catalonia on November 11-13. The European Network of Alliances for Sustainable Agriculture, including the UK's SAFE Alliance are holding an open conference examining agriculture in Europe and the alternatives. Details from SAFE (new address 38 Ebury Street, London SW1W 0LU, tel 071-823 5660, fax 071-823 5673).**

even many government delegations. Codex is being given an increasingly important role as, under GATT agreements, it is the international body whose standards will be the basis for harmonising food safety measures affecting human health.

■ *Cracking the Codes: An Analysis of who sets world food standards* by Natalie Avery and Martine Drake, National Food Alliance, 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH. Price £35/£7.50 to voluntary and public interest groups.

## Questions remain over carrageenan safety

Carrageenan itself is not without its food safety controversy. Last year the government's expert Food Advisory Commission reclassified carrageenan from Class A to Class B ie no longer acceptable for use in infant formulae or other foods specially prepared for babies and young children. In a challenge to this reclassification, further toxicological data were then submitted by the large American and other international carrageenan processors.

However the Committee on Toxicity has not been reassured by this additional data and has confirmed its decision of 1992 to reclassify carrageenan and to request new data on the immunological consequences of uptake of carrageenan, particularly across the gut. The FAC and COT also recommended that its specification should be tightened in the EC as well as in the UK.

Carrageenan is widely used to add 'mouth feel' and to replace fat in

a wide range of processed foods. It is popular because it can be called 'natural'. But carrageenan has been associated with ulcerative colitis and intestinal ulcers and for twenty years it has been accepted that low molecular weight carrageenan is a potent carcinogen within the gastrointestinal tract. The new FAC/COT recommendations are intended to eliminate the present possibility of low molecular weight fractions being present in food grade carrageenan.



# GATT – could the French be right?

Perhaps the French (and the Irish, too) are right to be making a stand against the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Tim Lang, puts the anti-GATT view.

On 1 July Peter Sutherland, the Irish former EC Commissioner and key figure in introducing the Single Market, took over from Arthur Dunkel as GATT Secretary General. On 11 August, just six weeks later, he launched the first salvo of his regime. Consumers, he claimed, would be outraged if they knew that prices were being kept high by their governments' failure to complete the new GATT. Mr Sutherland's list of products affected was long: food, cars, clothes, glassware, tobacco, medicine and domestic electrical goods are all costing more because GATT has not been signed.

Why then did consumers not rise in their millions and storm their MPs' offices? Because, I suggest, no-one

quite believes that a trade treaty generated by the world's powerful countries, promoted by a handful of transnational corporations and neither read nor understood by politicians, could possibly deliver an answer to the world's problems.

As the *Food Magazine* goes to press, everything apparently hangs on the farm deal between the US and the EC, known as the Blair House agreement (see box). But why are GATT and the Blair House deal meeting resistance?

Firstly, because the deal does nothing to halt the underlying pressure to increase farm productivity. Unless there are taxes on fertilisers or pesticides, as advocated by many in the anti-GATT movement, output will continue to rise and farming methods to intensify – more output, more 'efficiency', more machines, fewer people (see Patrick Holden's opinion article on page 27).

Secondly, because of growing sympathy for farmworkers and small-scale farmers. Even the middle class consumer now fears unemployment.

Look at the spontaneous support for British miners in 1992 – unthinkable two years earlier. Across the EC as a whole, farmers have declined from 17 million in 1970 to 9 million in 1990. France, for instance, has lost 4 million farmers since the 1950s and many French city-dwellers have relatives in or were themselves born in the country.

Thirdly, because of politics. Most agree that the USA came out of Blair House best. Before the Common Agricultural Policy began producing surpluses in the 1970s, the USA dominated world trade in food. It wants that pre-eminence back.

Fourthly, because key hurdles remain. The Blair House agreement is not the GATT, but a private US-EC deal. The deal exposed the hypocrisy that GATT is a world deal. Blair House has only been signed by the European Commission and has not been formally ratified by member states. Not many EC states want to announce to their farmers that there may be further price cuts even if GATT and Blair House go through.

Perhaps it is time to listen to what the French are saying.

■ Tim Lang is chair of the UK Sustainable Agriculture, Food & Environment (SAFE) Alliance and co-author with Colin Hines of *The New Protectionism: Protecting the Future Against Free Trade* (Earthscan, 1993).

## The Blair House agreement

This is a private deal between the world's two largest food trading blocs, the USA and the EC. It is designed to ensure that trade liberalisation will lead to minimum damage to their own internal markets while leaving them both strong enough to share domination of world trade. The agreement includes restrictions on how much farmers will be supported by their governments:

■ 21% cuts, by volume, in EC subsidised food exports over 6 years. Yet to be clarified is whether the cuts are to be made gradually or whether there will be 'sudden death' in the sixth year.

■ Value of exports to be cut by 36%.

■ Internal Supports cut by 20%.

■ Limits on oilseeds: 10% of land taken out of production and industrial oilseed use limited to 1 million tonnes.

■ Compensation for EC farmers taking land out of production (the 'set-aside' scheme).

■ Curb of EC beef exports to Asia.

■ US to cut wheat exports from 19.7 million to 14 million tonnes.

■ A 6 year 'peace' clause which prevents EC or USA taking unilateral action against each other.

## Food, Farming and Society

*Towards a New Model*

*Five regional seminars on Linking Farmers and Consumers*

Following the Soil Association's conference on 29 October, the Soil Association and the Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association have organised six seminars to develop links between farmers and consumers.

- ▶ Fresh local produce
- ▶ Organic and biodynamic food at reasonable cost
- ▶ Support for ecological farmers
- ▶ Developing local communities
- ▶ Sharing responsibility for our environment

The seminars will focus on practical ideas for linking farming to the local community, focusing on practical examples already working in Britain and around the world.

Further details from Eric Booth, Organic Food and Farming Centre, 86 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB. Tel 0272-290661 Fax 0272-252504

Places are limited to 30 and please book at least two weeks before the seminar.

All seminars will cost £15.

12 November 1993 Hereford

January 1994 E.Counties

February 1994 Scotland

February 1994 South

March 1994 North

## FREE TRADE OR FAIR TRADE?

This is a two day conference organised by Farmers World Network and aimed at all those interested in agricultural trade and relations with developing countries. It promises participants a chance to discover whether free trade is compatible with sustainable agriculture and to learn more about direct selling, farmshops, farming co-operatives and lobbying. It will be held on 27 & 28 November at The Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire.

■ For more information contact Farmers World Network on 0203-696969 x338.



# Storm brews over RSPCA symbol

**A scheme to give an RSPCA 'seal of approval' to livestock practices has run into criticism from other animal welfare groups, who fear the RSPCA has compromised its position by endorsing some intensive farming practices.**

A RSPCA 'Freedom Foods' symbol is to be given to farmers, abattoirs, hauliers and supermarkets who conform to specified standards of animal care. The symbol will appear on meat, egg and dairy products and will guarantee, according to the RSPCA, that 'the animal has been reared, handled, transported and slaughtered in a compassionate manner'. Production premises will be regularly inspected by the RSPCA.

The RSPCA's standards have been criticised by animal welfare campaigners for being too low and effec-

tively allowing farmers to gain approval for intensive farming methods and cruel practices. It has also come under fire from Compassion in World Farming for allowing debeaking of poultry and the use of farrowing crates for breeding sows.

It is understood that the RSPCA takes the view that it is better to have realistic criteria that can be agreed with many farmers rather than setting stiffer criteria which will only be acceptable to a few. The standards being adopted by the RSPCA are not as high as those required by the Soil Association. The main points of departure are summarised in the table.

■ For more on animal welfare concerns, see Fax Forum, page 34.

**The Soil Association Handbook on Animal Welfare is available price £2.50 from: The Soil Association, 86 Colston Street, Bristol, BS1 5BB.**

## Animal welfare standards compared

	RSPCA Freedom Foods	SA Livestock Standards
Outside access	not required	must be allowed in good weather
Organic feed	not required	70-90% of diet
Farrowing crates	permitted	not permitted
Pig tail docking	in some circumstances	not permitted
Poultry debeaking	permitted	not permitted
Electric goads	in some circumstances	not permitted
Barn/perchery egg production	permitted	not permitted

# Food inspectors condemn tests on Australian meat

Australian meat exports destined for Europe are not being adequately tested for hormone residues, according to the Australian Food Inspectors union (PSU).

Although nine growth-boosting hormones are permitted in Australian meat production, none are allowed for meat exported to the EC. Yet the only direct checking for hormone use relies on the detection of implanted capsules, and only one of the nine hormones can be detected by this method.

Other detection methods are considered too expensive, says the union. At the same time, the number of inspectors has been cut from 2000 to 1400 in the last five years, and another 750 are due for redundancy in the next three years.

■ Details from Felicity Rafferty, Public Sector Union, Level 5, 191-199 Thomas Street, Haymarket, Sydney, Australia (tel +61-06-282 4188, fax +61-06-282 4548).

# EC penalties for hormone abusers

The European Commission is proposing an 'unrelenting' campaign against livestock farmers caught using illegal hormones.

Producers should give written undertakings not to use hormones as part of their applications for all CAP aid hand-outs. Anyone caught infringing the regulations would be banned from receiving EC aid for a year following a first offence, and for an indefinite period on a subsequent offence. The names of those convicted would be published 'prominently'.

EC inspectors estimate that a farmer can gain £80-£160 per animal by using hormones. Recent estimates (*Animal Pharm*, 1992) suggest that the market in banned veterinary drugs is worth over £30m in the UK, and over £800m in Europe.

**Increasing numbers** of water samples show excessive levels of pesticides, according to official figures published in July. Samples showing excess pesticides rose from 23,159 in 1991 to 30,618 in 1992. *Drinking Water 1992*, HMSO, 1993, £25.

**The checking of food quality** by public analysts continues to decline. 1992 figures show most local authorities are sampling food at the rate of 1.1 samples per 1000 people, whereas the EC recommends at least 2.5 samples per 1000. Only in Scotland is the rate consistently above the EC minimum. *Annual Report of the Association of Public Analysts for 1992*.

**Jellied eel lovers** are warned by MAFF to avoid consuming eels caught in the Humber, the Yorkshire Ouse or the Thames, because of excess levels of dieldrin (an organochlorine pesticide) in their flesh. Lower levels have also been found in eels from the Itchen, Severn, Test and Trent. (Details from MAFF Pesticide Safety Directorate, tel 071-238 6711)

**The Lady Eve Balfour Memorial Lecture**, to be delivered in the new year, will be given by Jonathon Dimbleby. Details from the Soil Association, 0272-290661.

**For the first time in the UK**, university students have an opportunity to specialise in organic farming at degree level, following the launch of the University of Wales BSc in Rural Resources Management. Further information from Nic Lampkin on 0970-622248.

**Organics for schools.** Closer links between schools and organic farms are being encouraged with a new activity pack for schools launched by the Soil Association in August. The pack *Food, Farms and Futures — The Organic Option*, is aimed at primary schools and is designed to fit into National Curriculum key stage 2. Details from the Soil Association.



# Heart-break hotels

**Homeless adults living in bed and breakfast hotels are failing to eat a healthy diet.**

A study of thirty homeless adults living in bed and breakfast hotels in Liverpool has found that none were eating healthily. All exceeded recommended sugar, salt and saturated fat intakes, and all were eating insufficient dietary fibre and complex carbohydrates.

Many of those surveyed were consuming cheap 'filling' calories from pies, chips, cakes and biscuits. Food was costing an average 77 per cent of their weekly income. The majority shopped at local corner shops, usually every day, and half said they did not have enough money to last the week.

With VAT charged on take-away

foods and no 'eating out' allowance now being given to homeless people, the provision of cooking facilities is essential the report's authors argue, yet none of those surveyed had access to a kitchen.

'There are occasions when it is not appropriate to have cooked meals all the time,' commented Lord Skelmersdale in a 1992 debate on the plight of homeless people. 'The meal allowances payable under the old rules were too generous.' The authors of the Liverpool study point out that members of the House of Lords receive £60 per night subsistence allowance for attendance at Westminster.

■ Sean Stitt, Glenys Griffith and Diane Grant, *Heartbreak Hotel: Homelessness and Diet*, paper presented to the Social Policy and the City Conference, University of Liverpool, July 1993. Contact Sean Stitt on 051-231 5240.

## Report shows poor diets of children leaving home

The charity NCH (National Children's Homes) is publishing a report in November showing that many young people living independently for the first time cannot afford a healthy diet and are frequently ill.

■ Contact NCH on 071- 226 2033.

## School Meals Week

The week of November 30 is National School Meals Week and will include local as well as national events. For more information contact Arnold Fewell, the Local Authority Caterers Association on 0609 775686.



## Cookit

Cooking for Beginners is how authors Eliza Stephens and Robert Muir describe their new book, *Cookit*. Published to tie in with *Eat Up*, Channel 4's autumn series on children's food, the book covers basic cooking skills for young people and includes lots of recipes for healthy meals for family and friends. *Cookit* by Eliza Stephens & Robert Muir is published by Bloomsbury, price £8.99.

## Late school dinners increase children's junk food habits

Secondary school children served school dinners after 1pm spend 40 per cent more on snacks during the morning than pupils who get lunch earlier. The survey of 114,000 children from 150 schools by the catering company BET, also found that children who munched on snacks during the morning were less likely to eat a proper lunch.

Late lunch times and haphazard morning breaks are a result of pressures to meet the demands of the National Curriculum, the survey found. BET recommends starting lunches as early as possible combined with a mid morning break which offers nourishing snacks. This is important as many children do not have breakfast before leaving home.

The report also notes a trend towards vending machines in schools which encourage children's snacking. These are sold to schools to generate income but their downside is that snacks are nutritionally poor and children treat food with less respect.

■ For more information contact BET on 0344 3004444.

## Get Cooking! gets going

The Get Cooking Project is running a seminar on 29 November for all those interested in, or who already run, a food club or cooking class for young people. The purpose of the day will be to share experiences, to discuss ideas for the future and to analyse barriers to progress. It will be held at the Department of Health in London.

■ for further details send a SAE to Get Cooking! 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH. Tel: 071-628 2442.

## Babymilk sponsorship

There was uproar at the International Congress of Nutrition in Adelaide this September, following revelations that the Congress had accepted substantial support from formula milk manufacturers Nestlé and Nutricia (Cow & Gate).

Accepting formula industry funds 'is like a Lung Association meeting accepting funds from the tobacco industry,' complained Professor Latham of Cornell University. The infant formula industry 'promotes a product which undermines good infant nutrition and not infrequently leads to serious malnutrition, gastroenteritis and even death.'



Breast milk is a valuable world resource, argues this booklet, part of the Catholic Institute for International Relations' series of booklets on global issues. A \$7 billion industry has developed which is systematically destroying that resource in order to replace breast milk with manufactured baby foods. Available from CIIR, Unit 3, Canonbury Yard, 190a New North Road, London N1 7BJ. Tel 071-354 0883. Price £1.20.



## Flour, chocolate and beer take the organic and ethical prizes

Wholemeal flour from Little Salkeld Watermill gained two top awards this summer – taking the top trophy as overall winner of the 1993 Soil Association Organic Food Awards, and also being named as a category winner in the Ethical Consumer Awards.

Also a double-winner, Green and Black's organic chocolate gained awards at both events, and so did The Caledonian Brewery, makers of Golden Promise organic beer.

■ The Watermill at Little Salkeld is a genuine water-powered mill run by Nick and Ana Jones. It produces four blends of stoneground flour made from Soil Association standard organic grain, for sale locally and by

mail order.

For details phone 0768-881 523.

■ Green & Black's chocolate is made from organic cocoa beans grown by 600 small producers in Togo, West Africa, who farm in the existing rainforest and agree a sale price averaging £200 per tonne above the world price.

Details from 071-229 4452.

■ Golden Promise beer is made with organic barley and hops and is brewed by The Caledonian Brewery in direct-fired open coppers, the last ones in Britain.

Details from 031-337 1286.

Other winners to collect an award at the Soil Association's ceremony, held for the first time at the

annual Henry Doubleday Research Association Organic Food and Wine Fair in July, were:

■ Midsummer Foods Sunflower Oil, an unrefined, organic oil imported from France.  
Details 0926-410022.

■ Yeo Valley Natural Yogurt, made by Yeo Valley Farms near Bristol from organic milk.  
Details 0761-462798.

■ Graig Farm Smoked Bacon, made from organically certified meat and only available locally or by mail order. Details 0597- 851655.

■ Baby Organix, ready to serve baby foods made from organic ingredients and without added thickeners. Details 0202-715156.

■ Sainsbury Little Gem Lettuce, a UK-grown organic lettuce.  
Details from 071-921 6127.

■ Duchy Original Oaten Biscuits, milled from organic grain at Shipton Mill, Gloucestershire.  
Details 0666-505050.

Other winners of the Ethical Consumer Awards were:

- Doves Farm organic products
- Milford of London teas
- Cafedirect fair trade coffee
- The Body Shop animal-friendly products
- Equal Exchange fair trade activities
- Caurmie Soap Company animal/eco-friendly products
- Bio-D Company eco-friendly products
- Women's Environmental Network green consumer activities.

■ For more details on the awards and the procedures for entering for 1994, contact the Soil Association (0272-290661) and the Ethical Consumer Research Association (061-237 1630).

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who are regulated by the Law Society in the conduct of investment business.



# Branching out

Trees? Timber? What have these got to do with the Soil Association and organic food? Quite a lot, as it happens. The SA's Responsible Forestry Programme means more than managing forests, as Francis Blake reports.

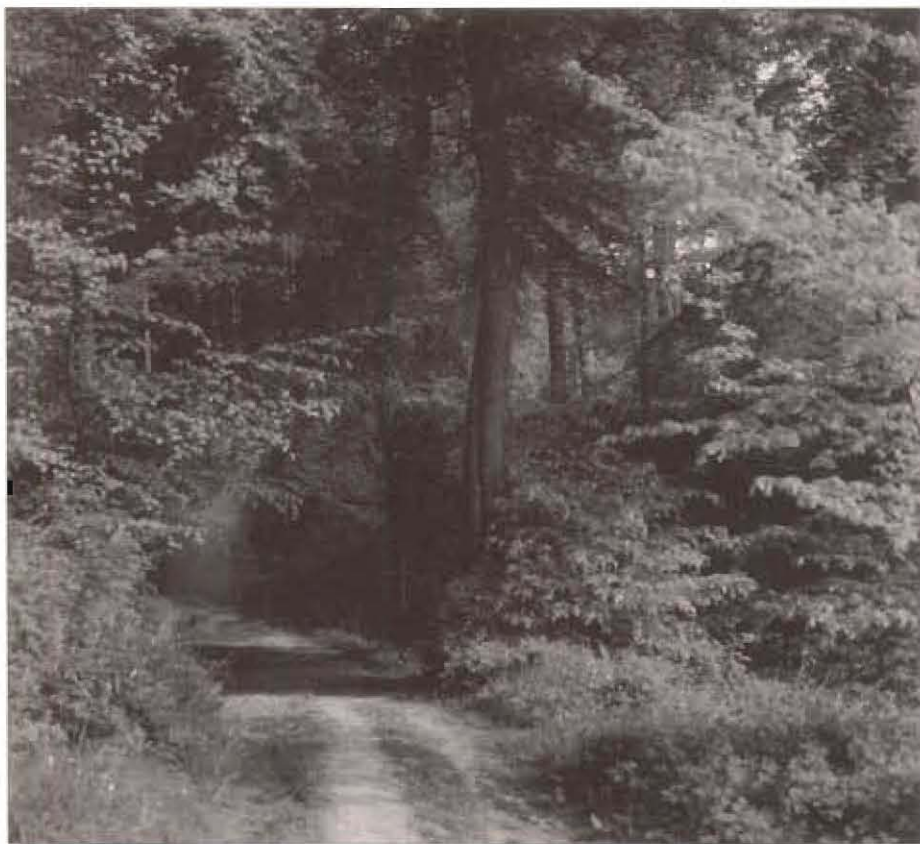


Photo: Roderick Leslie

**Y**ou cannot divorce food from the environment from which it is grown – this is a central tenet of the Soil Association's philosophy. A healthy environment, not only at the level of the crop and the farm, but also the surrounding countryside and the macro-environment, will produce healthy food, both crops and livestock, which in turn enable us, as consumers of that food, to be healthy. As the Soil Association's founder leader Lady Eve Balfour said: 'Health, whether of soil, plant, animal or man, is one and indivisible.'

Clearly it is not just our local environment, for our diet is a global one. And this global environment of necessity includes, and is critically effected by, the trees and forests by which our food production and land use is so intimately connected. It is, for me, one of the most exciting things about the Soil Association's message – the bringing together of diet, nutrition and health of mankind on the one hand

with that of the environment, all other life, and its resource on the other. Our great late President, Fritz Schumacher, recognised this with his normal penetrating clarity and he campaigned with equal vigour both for organic farming and for responsible use and management of forests. In fact we recently unearthed a remarkable film produced by him shortly before he died called *On the Edge of the Forest*, which is still available on video (see page 16 for details).

It was therefore a welcome invitation, and no surprise, when the World Wide Fund for Nature invited the Soil Association to investigate the development of a certification system for sustainable forestry and timber use. It is a natural progression of our remit and an obvious area in which to use our expertise. Members can be assured that it has taken neither financial nor human resources away from our organic work.

In fact the Responsible Forestry Programme has more than paid for itself and has been granted £45,000 by the Overseas Development

Administration – the largest grant that the Soil Association has ever received. Dorothy Jackson, co-ordinator of the Programme, said 'I am delighted that the ODA is supporting our work with this generous grant. The funds will help us to complete the development work needed for our scheme and put the Responsible Forestry Programme on a firm financial footing. It is particularly encouraging to get funding for the tropical side of our work, as this is the most costly.'

The Soil Association is renowned for providing positive answers and our Responsible Forestry Programme carries forward the tradition. WWF has set a target of 1995 by when they would like to see all wood imported into this country coming from sustainably managed sources.

However, nobody could agree how to define sustainable, still less how to identify it. We are proud that the Soil Association's Responsible Forestry Programme is providing answers to both.



# Timber labels you can trust

**Dorothy Jackson, Co-ordinator of the SA's Responsible Forestry Programme, describes the first steps being taken towards the eco-labelling of timber.**

**T**he demand for sustainable timber is increasing. Good wood policies are being adopted by wood users of all kinds, from local authorities and architects to artisans and shoppers.

But this potentially powerful influence on the timber trade has been frustrated because of the lack of control over timber labels which has made it impossible to identify which timber is from genuine sources. This has created real dilemmas for buyers trying to decide which woods have the lowest environmental and social impact.

Many people now avoid tropical timbers altogether, but this undermines tropical producers who are managing their forests well, such as the small scale community forestry projects in Mexico and the Pacific. And by switching to temperate timbers we may unwittingly help to fell old growth forests in

Canada or Russia, or damage local communities and wildlife habitats through industrial tree plantations.

The answer lies in independent timber labelling schemes such as our Responsible Forestry Programme, which assesses each forest individually. Our certification system is still being developed, and is modelled on the Soil Association's Organic Symbol Scheme which has been tried and tested over more than 20 years. The four key components are:

- Standards for forest management. Responsible forest management holds forests in trust for future generations, not only through sustainable timber yields but also by maintaining the forests ecological functions, protecting water, soils and wildlife, upholding indigenous peoples rights and ensuring that forestry activities benefit local communities.

- Inspection of forests to verify that forestry standards are being met.

relatively easy for British producers to qualify for a certificate of responsible forest management.

In addition, labelling will raise public awareness of the timber supplies on our own doorstep, and the need to manage them responsibly if we are to avoid unsustainable demands on other countries resources. The British woodland landscape which we value, but also take for granted, is a result of thousands of years of manipulation to meet human needs. Managed woodlands retain their important diversity of plants and animals, their productivity and their recreational value.

But management costs money and will be abandoned if markets cannot be found for the predominantly low-grade products woodlands produce. Timber labelling can help by increasing sustainable timber and coppice products' access to the growing 'green' market, so financing the costs of management and protecting our countryside.

- Inspection of mills and processing centres to ensure that timber can be traced through the manufacturing chain.

- Contracts and licences to prevent mis-use of the label.

The Responsible Forestry Programme has an eight-member advisory board of experts in forestry, anthropology, ecology and the timber trade. Inspections are carried out by qualified professionals. Our Responsible Forestry Standards are being developed in consultation with environmental and human rights groups, government bodies, the timber trade and specialists in forestry, law, anthropology and ecology.

Having field tested our standards and procedures with the help of local woodland owners, we are now carrying out the first full trials of our system in France and Romania. If all goes well, we'll be reporting on the first labelled products in the next issue of *Living Earth*.

■ *Generic Standards for Responsible Forestry and Responsible Forestry Standards for British Forests and Woodlands* are available from the Responsible Forestry Programme, Soil Association, 86 Colston Street, Bristol, Avon BS1 5BB, Tel: 0272 290661. Price £2.50 each.

## Global forestry stewardship

The independent timber labelling movement is gaining ground internationally. Four timber certifiers are already operating in the USA, and new schemes are being set up in several other countries. If these initiatives are to gain credibility, consumers must be able to trust that the organisations issuing them are reputable and operate responsibly.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which held its inaugural meeting in Toronto in October, is establishing itself as an international organisation to monitor timber certificates, including that of the Soil Association, and ensure that those registered with the FSC operate to comparable standards. The FSC will evaluate the certifier's forestry standards and inspection procedures, the impartiality of the organisation and control over the use of its label.

The FSC has evolved over the past three years through discussions involving foresters, environmental groups and concerned timber traders such as the Ecological Trading Company and Woodworkers Alliance for Rainforest Protection. In March 1992, a meeting was held in Washington DC of some 50 individuals with interests in timber labelling. A seven member interim board was elected to steer the preparatory work leading up to the formal establishment of the organisation.

The interim board sought feedback on the aims of the FSC through a wide ranging series of consultations in Switzerland, Great Britain, Peru, Papua New Guinea, Sweden, Brazil, Ghana, Malaysia and the

## A green window of opportunity for British timber

Timber production in Britain is increasingly part of the international debate on 'sustainable' forestry, writes Ian Rowland, of the Soil Association's Responsible Forestry Programme.

Tropical countries insist that temperate countries must impose the same standards on their own forestry practices as they are demanding from tropical forests and will reject timber labelling unless it is also applied in the temperate regions.

British timbers, especially hardwoods, are generally produced with better environmental safeguards than most imported tropical timbers. A level playing field of consistently applied standards will make it



## What you can do

The timber trade will only improve its practices if it sees a clear demand for wood from well managed forests, or if it is controlled by legislation. Legislation is still some way off, so in the meantime the trade must be convinced that buyers are concerned about timber sources and will vote with their purses.

You can help to get the message across by asking questions when you buy wood products. Every customer enquiry increases the timber seller's awareness of demand, paving the way for changes in purchasing policy. Don't be fobbed off by glossy brochures or certificates. Politely ask the supplier the following questions:

- 1 Where has the product come from?
- 2 Is the forest managed according to a clearly defined plan?
- 3 Have indigenous peoples' rights been respected?
- 4 How has the environment impact on logging been minimised?
- 5 Is the yield of timber being maintained through replanting or regeneration?
- 6 If the product is from a plantation, was natural forest cleared to make the plantation?
- 7 Has the forest been inspected by an independent organisation with defined principles of good forest management?

Recommend the supplier to contact the Soil Association Responsible Forestry Programme for more information.

Pacific North-west (USA and Canada). The opinions of individuals and organisations were also sought through workshops, meetings and by sending out 7,500 questionnaires.

The FSC's interim board and working groups have developed a set of draft Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship, and a proposed Charter and Standards for the organisation which also includes the rules that certifiers must obey. The Principles and Criteria set out the FSC's concept on forest management that is environmentally viable.

Much work still needs to be done to establish the FSC as an authoritative umbrella organisation for certifiers, and to refine its basic documents. But the FSC is already having an influence. The International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), which has always opposed timber labelling as either impossible to implement or a discriminatory trade restriction, has just announced that it will establish a timber labelling scheme by the year 2000. The credibility of the ITTO scheme remains to be seen, but it is clear that the trade is getting the FSC's message.

# Good wood – truth or trickery?

## Mike Read explains why we need independent timber labelling.

Next to optimism, a healthy dose of scepticism is the most important quality for an environmentalist these days, for all is not what it seems. In recent months no fewer than five cases of misleading claims applied to wood have been referred to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). More are likely to follow.

'Green cons' are more frequent, more subtle and in some quarters more cynical than ever before. In the US for instance, organisations named the Evergreen Foundation, the Environmental Conservation Organisation and the Sahara Club all turn out to be industry funded, anti-environmentalist groups. Here in the UK, the vogue for 'Green Consumerism' has led to a wave of disingenuous, misleading, inaccurate and downright bogus claims being applied to an enormous variety of products.

Rarely could the situation be more complex or more important than the timber trade – a trade which directly and indirectly makes a substantial contribution to global deforestation. Claims of 'sustainable sources', 'well managed forests' and 'replanting' have become commonplace over the past year or two, but are based at best, on little more than good intentions. The confidence created in the consumer's mind that buying the product is a 'green' thing to do is rarely warranted. However, it is heartening that so many companies believe in the value of having good environmental credentials.

The first case taken up by the ASA was of a company called 'NHG Timber'. Their advert claimed 'sustainable sources' for sapele (a popular and now much depleted African timber) but after investigation NHG Timber was requested to withdraw the claim.

Then the Malaysian Timber Industry Board had to withdraw an advert claiming that theirs was 'one of the world's best conserved forests'. Their advert also made the outrageous claim that the indigenous people of Malaysia are being 'bettered' by Malaysia's logging procedures.

Most recently the claims made by Craft Supplies and Magnet Trade have been referred by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to the ASA, and deci-

sions are awaited.

WWF and others are determined that unverifiable claims of ecological acceptability should be removed. So far the British Code of Advertising Practice, overseen by the ASA has been put to good use. Now, following the receipt of a report on the legal options and prospects commissioned from Bristol-based law firm Osborne Clarke, WWF is very seriously considering using a prosecution under the Trade Descriptions Act or the little known Control of Misleading Advertisements Regulation to shock the trade out of its complacency. It is patently obvious that industry self-regulation has failed yet again.

Clearly, if there is to be any chance for the timber trade to be turned around and hauled towards sustainability there is a need for an independent, international and credible system for monitoring forestry, timber processing and trade according to agreed standards. Furthermore these must be agreed standards which take ecology, human rights and biodiversity into account as well as the need for sustainable yields of products from the forest.

Enter the Soil Association's Responsible Forestry Programme and the international umbrella organisation, the Forest Stewardship Council founded this October in Toronto. Much rests on the successful development of these initiatives but with consumer support, the commitment of those directly involved, and a little luck they may just achieve what governments have singularly failed to do. So stay sceptical, but also stay optimistic.

**Mike Read is an ecologist specialising in the international plant trade. He is a member of the Responsible Forestry Programme's advisory board.**

## Help make every tree count

Relive the ancient tradition of celebrating trees in public places. Common Ground's annual National Tree Dressing Day is on 4th December. For an information pack send A4 s.a.e. to Stephen Turner, Common Ground, 41 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9HJ.



# Forests in trouble

After a decade spent campaigning against the destruction of tropical rainforests, environmental groups are now looking at the rather different range of problems facing forests in temperate areas, as Nigel Dudley reports.

**D**uring the 1980s, much attention was paid to tropical forest loss, and especially to threats facing the biologically rich but fragile tropical moist forests. Temperate and boreal (northern Arctic) forests were, in contrast, considered relatively secure. Today, the complacent attitudes of many Northern governments are facing increasing criticism.

Environmental activists in developed countries are being backed up by politicians in the tropics, who are frustrated by being singled out for attack about their own forest policies when they believe that things are little better in temperate areas. Conservation groups such as the World Wide Fund for Nature and Greenpeace are now running campaigns that focus on forest issues throughout the world.

There are nevertheless important differences between problems facing temperate and tropical forests. The total area of temperate and boreal forest is stable at present. Whereas there seems to be little problem of quantity, the quality of many temperate forests is, from an environment standpoint, undergoing a rapid decline. Natural or old growth forests are being felled and replaced by plantations. Semi-natural forests are undergoing an intensification of manage-

ment that destroys many biodiversity values.

Pollution, bad management and imported pests combine to reduce tree health throughout Europe and North Africa.

In some ways conditions of temperate forests are even more critical than in the tropics. There are less areas of temperate than tropical forests under conservation management. Unlike the tropics, where reserves are usually designated according to biological richness, many temperate forest reserves have been chosen mainly because they are of little timber value. Large areas of 'forest' reserve in Alaska and Lapland, for example, have no tree cover at all. In addition, less old growth forest remains in temperate than tropical areas: perhaps one per cent in Europe, five per cent in the USA, and so on. Even Russia, long hoped to contain massive reserves of natural forest, is now found to have been heavily logged over in many areas of Siberia.

Although some individual governments are addressing issues of temperate forest losses, international efforts have been hampered by infighting and political manoeuvring. A Council of European Ministers conference in Helsinki in June 1993 agreed four resolutions regarding forestry, but these were considerably watered down from original proposals. Significantly, European governments refused to commit themselves to target of sustainable forest management by the year 2000, despite pressure from the Netherlands and the USA, the latter an observer at Helsinki, and in spite of the same governments pressing tropical countries to meet such a target at the International Tropical Timber Agreement talks, which took place shortly afterwards. Far from working together to tackle a global problem, temperate forest governments succeed in perpetrating a twin track approach to forest management, simultaneously lecturing tropical countries while declining to set themselves such stringent targets.

**■ Nigel Dudley is author of the WWF International report *Forests in Trouble*, and is currently working on issues of forest quality and a report on the South East Asian timber trade.**

## The forests of Western Australia

In July 1977 E.F. Schumacher made his last film, set in the forests of Western Australia, writes *Barrie Oldfield*. An entire eco-system was put at risk for the sake of perhaps 30 per cent of sawn timber from the trunks of the 300 year old trees. Giant Karri were being toppled to feed the Japanese paper industry, its produce lasting a fraction of the time it would take for its replacement to grow.

In the film Schumacher expressed the disparity between the economics of western man and the lessons of nature. The forests of Western Australia provided visible proof that we had confused nature's bountiful capital with her annual increment, risking our future security for our present passion for wealth.

Schumacher was President of the Soil Association, and also initiated the 'Scatter Research Project for Trees' to encourage people everywhere to plant not only native trees but also interesting and productive trees.

**■ Barrie Oldfield is President of The Men of the Trees in Western Australia, life member of the Organic Growers Association of WA. He produced Schumacher's last film, *On the Edge of the Forest*.**



Fritz Schumacher

*On the Edge of the Forest* is available on VHS video cassette Au\$80 or £45 (includes air mail by return of post) from M. B. Oldfield & Sons, 3 Over Avenue, Lesmurdie, 6076 Western Australia.

Excerpts of the film will be shown at the Soil Association AGM, London, 6 December.



# CHECKOUT

**In a special report by the Food Commission we take a close look at popular canned and packet chicken soups**

## Chicken missing

**How much chicken do you get in chicken soup? They don't tell you on the label, and the companies aren't keen to talk. So we put our team of Food Commission Soup Snoopers to work...**

**M**ost meat products have to declare their meat content. You can tell how much meat there is in a frozen burger or a tin of stew by reading the small print. But a loophole in the regulations permits soup – both canned and packet soup – to have as little meat as it likes without declaring the quantity, and yet call itself a meat soup.

So the Food Commission surveyed thirty popular chicken soup products on the supermarket shelves – and found some with virtually no chicken meat, and several with more salt, and even more monosodium glutamate, than chicken.

Chicken meat is a source of several valuable vitamins and minerals, and is especially rich in vitamin B<sub>3</sub> (niacin) – one large portion of meat can supply an adult's entire daily needs for this vitamin.

But chicken soup is another matter. A caterer typically allows 80g of chicken carcass per serving (NHS catering recipes) and a home-made Cock-a-Leekie can allow as much as 450g (1lb).

But canned soup is unlikely to use more than 10-15g of carcass for a portion, and packet soup, when made up with water, is likely to have less than a gram of chicken per serving.

This means the vitamin content can be very low. For example, to get

a daily dose of vitamin B<sub>3</sub> an individual could consume either

■ 5oz roast chicken breast, costing about £1, or

■ 6-8 portions of home-made chicken soup, costing about £1, or

■ 30 bowls of canned chicken soup, costing over £6, or

■ 70 cups of reconstituted chicken soup powder, costing over £10.

But perhaps far more alarming than the absence of enough real chicken to justify the name chicken soup, is the presence of substantial amounts of salt – often exceeding the amount of chicken.

We found products where chicken came eighth, tenth, or even thirteenth on the list of ingredients – and one with no chicken at all. At the same time salt was listed as fifth, fourth and even second ingredient. Even monosodium glutamate and chicken flavouring agents were listed higher than chicken.

We believe it is high time the manufacturers came clean and were obliged to declare the meat content of their products, in the same way that chicken stew and chicken nuggets must.

We look forward to the day when manufacturers have to list their recipes showing the percentage of each main ingredient, and we urge the UK government to support the European Commission's proposals to introduce this labelling rule (known as quantitative ingredient declaration, or QUID). Even if only a few people read the small print on the labels, the fact that the companies have to declare the recipe might embarrass them enough to improve their standards.

## Soup standards

There are no standards for the amount of meat in powdered soups. It is possible to sell chicken soup with no chicken meat at all, or just chicken fat. We have obtained the specifications from one manufacturer of Instant Chicken Soup supplied to the catering industry which reads as follows:

% of ingredients	
Modified starch	32.17
Dried glucose syrup	14.15
Salt	11.23
Dried onion	9.55
Hydrolysed vegetable protein	9.33
Beef fat	9.01
Monosodium glutamate (621)	6.4
Chicken fat	3.22
Caseinate (milk protein)	1.28
Starch	1.07
Flavouring	0.96
Acidity regulators	0.50
Emulsifier	0.38
Dried parsley	0.16
Preservative (sulphur dioxide)	0.10

■ **Research: Gemma Snowden, Tim Lobstein**



# No soup prizes!

**Our investigation of chicken soups found little to crow about! Tim Lobstein reports.**



**Illegal label:** The only product to say 'Chicken Flavour', this soup admits it contains no chicken at all. Its ingredient list includes flavour enhancers and antioxidants but it does not say which ones, and thereby breaks the labelling regulations.

In our survey of 30 commercial soups we found none to recommend. The amount of chicken was often lower than the amount of salt, and virtually all products were boosted with added colourings, flavourings and flavour enhancers to try and turn a bland, watery product into something pretending to be rich and meaty.

A look at the food laws reveals that there are no regulations over the amount of chicken in packet soups, and only a voluntary Code of Practice for canned soups. Only four of the manufacturers that we surveyed were prepared to tell us the amount of chicken in their product.

It is quite possible to sell a packet soup as being chicken soup, and put no chicken meat in at all. With canned soups, the Code of Practice recommends minimum amounts of meat, and these have been set low enough that most manufacturers are happy to comply. The amounts recommended are shown in the table below.

Even then, the word 'meat' is defined under food regulations as including connective tissue (gristle,

#### The industry's Code of Practice for canned soup

Meat soups	6% meat
Kidney soup	6% meat (4% kidney)
Poultry soups	6% raw carcass
Tomato soup	3% tomato solids
Meat & vegetable soup	3% meat
Poultry & vegetable soup	3% raw carcass

rind, skin and sinews) along with fat and internal muscle such as diaphragm, tongue and tail meat. Poultry meat also includes gizzard and neck. Cooked meat products, such as canned soups, can include offal, such as intestines, rectum, lungs, feet, brains, stomach and spinal cord, subject to the BSE regulations prohibiting some cattle offal.

## More salt than chicken meat

It wasn't just the quality of the meat allowed, nor the low quantity that disturbed us. It was also the ingredients that are added to try and turn the soup into something tasty.

Salt came high in the list of most products – some soups provided over a half of the maximum daily salt intake of six grams recommended by the World Health Organisation.

Also high in the ingredients list came flavour boosters such as monosodium glutamate and hydrolysed vegetable protein, along with unspecified 'flavourings'.

In many cases the quantity of these ingredients exceeded the amount of chicken: we found thirteen out of twenty packet soups had more salt than chicken, and twelve of the packet soups had more flavour booster than chicken.

Not only does the flavour need a boost if there is too little chicken, but the product may also look rather too thin and watery. Most products used thickening agents such as modified



Two remarkably similar products, the differences being (i) the fat has been reduced in the slimming product, (ii) the slimming product has an added vitamin pill, and (iii) the manufacturers have put about half the content in the second sachet – which alone accounts for most of the lower calorie count.



starch and maltodextrin — a gum-like starch similar to that used on the back of postage stamps. Lastly, the majority had added colouring agents to try and provide the chicken colour that a soup drinker would expect.

Although none of the products are technically fraudulent, we believe that any product containing only traces of an ingredient should not be able to use that ingredient as its main product name. At best, these products should be termed chicken flavoured soup.

As regulations are being removed from food specifications we are unlikely to see legally-enforceable minimum levels of chicken required in these products.

But we can require better consumer information to make a choice, and this means insisting that soups containing meat should abide by the general regulations for other meat products which require a declaration of the amount of meat present in the product.

We might also request that the parts of the animal being used are also described. At the very least, this might encourage manufacturers to improve their standards.

## Thirty chicken soups: the salt, flavourings and colourings that take the place of real chicken

	<i>Salt per serving</i>	<i>Flavour boosters</i>	<i>Colourings</i>
<b>Canned soups</b>			
CAMPBELLS Cream of Chicken	2.5g	FM	B
GATEWAY SOMERFIELD Cream of Chicken	2.8g	FHM	B
HEINZ Big Soup Chicken & Vegetable	2.0g	M	B C
HEINZ Cream of Chicken	3.0g	M	B
HEINZ Weight Watchers Chicken & Noodle	3.0g	H	B
NESTLE HOLBROOKS Creamed Chicken	2.6g	FM	B
SAFEGWAY Cream of Chicken	1.5g	HM	B
SAINSBURY Chicken Soup	2.8g	HM	B
SMEDLEYS Creamed Chicken	2.2g	FHM	B
TESCO Cream of Chicken	3.0g	FHM	B
<b>Packet soups</b>			
BATCHELORS Chicken Noodle	N	FMSr	—
BATCHELORS Cream of Chicken	N	FMSr	—
BATCHELORS Cup a Soup	N	FMSr	R
BATCHELORS Slim a Soup	N*	FMSr	R
BATCHELORS Snack a Soup Chicken & Mushroom	N	FMSr	C
BOOTS SHAPERS Chicken Noodle & Sweetcorn	0.8g*	F*H*	A
CROSSE & BLACKWELL Thick Chicken	2.0g*	FMSr	—
GATEWAY SOMERFIELD Cream of Chicken	2.2g*	F*M*	T
KNORR Chicken	1.5g	FMSr	T
KNORR Cream of Chicken	1.9g	FM	—
KNORR Low Cal Super Chicken Noodle	2.0g*	FM* Sr*	—
OSEM GOURMET CUISINE Chicken Flavour	1.3g*	F*H*M*	—
SAFEGWAY Instant Chicken	1.0g*	F*H	R
SAFEGWAY Chicken & Vegetable	1.8g*	F*H*M	R
SAINSBURY Cream of Chicken	1.7g	FH*	—
SAINSBURY Reduced Calorie Soup in a Cup	0.8g*	F*H*M*	B
SAINSBURY Soup in a Cup	1.3g*	F*M*	R
SYMINGTONS Chicken Noodle	3.2g*	FH*	R X
TESCO Soup in a Cup	2.6g*	F*M	R
WAITROSE Cream of Chicken	?	F*H*M*	R

\* an asterisk indicates that this ingredient exceeded the amount of chicken in the recipe.

**Salt** figures are calculated from the salt or sodium levels given by manufacturers (N = would not disclose, ? = unavailable).

**Flavourings** (F) are usually not specified, but other flavour-boosting ingredients are, including Hydrolysed Vegetable Protein (H), Monosodium Glutamate (M) and Sodium 5'-Ribonucleotide (Sr).

**Colourings** include Annatto (A), Beta-carotene (B), chemically-treated Caramel (C), Riboflavin (R), Turmeric or Curcumin (T) and in one case Canthaxanthin (X) a colouring associated with retinal damage.

The only pack to indicate how much chicken it contains: 'less than 10% Chicken'. A good deal less, in fact, as it contains more salt than chicken. Boots admitted to us that the product actually contains only 1.9 per cent chicken, less than 0.2 grams per serving.



# Misleading sugar claims

We're advised to cut down on the amount of sugar we eat. On average about a fifth of our calories come from sugars, yet we should be eating around half that amount – no more than 60g a day, that's about 12 teaspoons.

Food and soft drink manufacturers have been quick to jump on the sugar bandwagon and claims about 'low' and 'no' sugar are proliferating on the labels of soft drinks, snacks and baby foods. But are they always so helpful?

A Food Commission investigation has found many of these claims to be misleading and some that would break food regulations.

**E**C law now says that if a manufacturer makes a claim about a nutrient, such as sugar, the amount of that nutrient must be declared in the nutritional information on the pack. Rather belatedly the UK is planning to implement this regulation in November, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and manufacturers will have to comply, or break the law.

The Food Commission found many products, purchased from supermarkets in September, that would not comply with the new regulation as they make sugar claims without telling you how much sugar is actually in the product.

Here we show some of the products where claims are not all they might at first appear. We think these kinds of claims are not only unhelpful and confusing to consumers but undermine manufacturers who are making genuinely helpful and responsible claims.

## Low sugar claims

Low sugar products should contain less than 5% sugar according to government guidelines and proposed EC legislation. But we found products containing far more sugar and still described as 'low sugar'.

## No added sugar

You would expect this claim to mean 'no added sugars of any kind' but we found manufacturers using this claim to mean 'no added sucrose' while adding all kinds of other sugars. Some of the examples we found include:

- 'no added sugar' Grizzly Bars containing 10% honey;
- 'no added sugar' Holly Mill Raspberry Cereal Bar containing concentrated fruit juices;
- 'no added sugar' Meridian Apricot spread containing sugars from fruit juices;

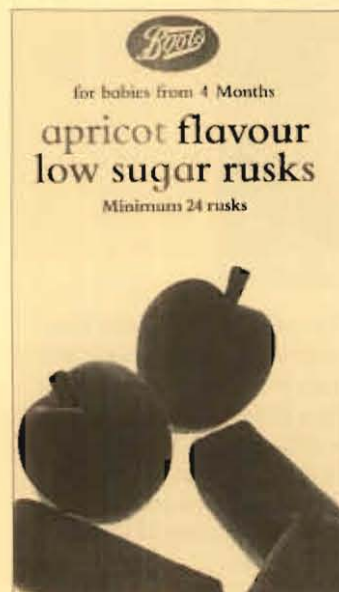


## ▲ No added sugar

All these products claim to contain 'no added sugar'. But all include added sugars of one kind or another such as honey or fruit sugars. Despite making a claim, none of the products declared their sugar content. After November this will be illegal.

## ► Boots low sugar rusks

This product fails to meet a low sugar standard. The ingredients list declares 7.9% sugar and 11% glucose syrup, far higher than the 5% permitted to make a 'low sugar' claim. Babies' developing teeth may be at risk from the sugar in this product.





■ 'no added sugar' Boots First Harvest apple and banana pudding for babies containing added sugars in the form of concentrated apple juice.

We believe that 'No added sugar' should mean 'no added sugars of any kind'. We think it is also misleading to use this claim on sweet foods such as drinks, juices, desserts, jams etc as it is likely to be misleadingly interpreted as meaning a 'no' or 'low sugar' product. We think this claim should only be allowed on foods that also meet the proposed criteria for a low sugar claim which is less than 5%.

## Sugar free

The number of sugar-free soft drinks appearing on supermarket shelves is growing rapidly. Some, like the new Pepsi Max, are sweetened with artificial sweeteners and are a market extension of 'diet' cola drinks which have been around a long time. Now 'sugar-free' fruit juice drinks are also available.

Proposed EC legislation will allow sugar-free drinks to contain up to 0.5% sugar, though they are primarily sweetened with artificial sweeteners. Fruit juice drinks will contain a small amount of sugar from the juice. Not much, otherwise they wouldn't qualify for the sugar-free tag. But as natural juice contains sugars, you shouldn't expect much juice for your money.

Sugar-free Ribena was launched this year with a high profile poster advertising campaign. Its manufacturers, SmithKline Beecham add flavourings, grape skin colouring and vitamin C, presumably to boost the blackcurrant taste and appearance. When made up, Sugar-free Ribena contains only about 6% blackcurrant juice.

We also found a range of sugar-free Wells juice drinks. While these describe themselves as a 'healthy alternative' don't be fooled into thinking these are a good source of vitamin C. The amount of juice these drinks contain is likely to be very low.

Dentists are divided over whether very low levels of sugar, such as are found in 'sugar-free' juice drinks are less harmful to teeth. Studies on

## ▲ Sugar-free Ribena

Sugar-free Ribena actually contains small amounts of sugar from the blackcurrant juice. Proposed law says sugar-free drinks can contain up to 0.5% sugar.

rats show that low levels can still be harmful though it is not clear how applicable these results are to humans.

## Meaningless claims

We found products claiming to be 'virtually sugar free' or 'less 20% added sugar' which we consider to be unhelpful and meaningless.

Sainsbury's Supreme Dessert says it is 'virtually sugar free' but when made up with milk, as the packet instructs, the dessert contains 6.4% sugars, more than the 5% allowed for a 'low-sugar' claim, and much higher than the 0.5% the EC is proposing that a no-sugar product can contain.

We also found Plamil Carob raw

sugar confectionery claiming 'less 20% added sugar'. It is impossible to know how much sugar actually is in this product as Plamil does not declare it but it is likely to be interpreted as a 'reduced sugar' claim. Government guidelines say that a 'reduced sugar' product should contain at least 25% less than a comparable product.

■ **Researched by Sue Dibb and Rachel Harris.**

## Artificial sweeteners and young children

Sugar-free drinks like Ribena use artificial sweeteners. These are banned from foods for babies and young children, yet an anomaly in the law allows manufacturers like Ribena to use them in products intended to be consumed by this age group – because they are also consumed by older children.

Sugar-free Ribena says it is suitable for 1-3 year olds and the label recommends no more than 2 tablespoons a day – presumably to limit their consumption of artificial sweeteners.

## ▼ Sainsbury's Supreme Dessert

This product says it is 'virtually sugar free' even though it contains 6.4% sugars when made up with milk as directed on the packet.



# Loopy labels

Once again, the Food Commission's eagle-eyed correspondents have been mingling with high street shoppers, hunting down those cheeky labels.

## Ginger flavour

Our first example concerns the McVitie's small cakes known as Jamaica Ginger cake bars. If there is one ingredient you might feel sure of getting in this product it is a bit of real Jamaican ginger. Yes? Actually, no. Not Jamaican, and not even ginger!

The smaller print says the cake has a 'delicious ginger flavour filling' and the even smaller print – the list of ingredient – says only 'flavourings' as the 23rd ingredient out of 24. The law says that 'ginger flavoured' means that real ginger has been used, while 'ginger flavour' means that it hasn't.

We wanted to ask McVitie's if they didn't feel that the name

Jamaica Ginger was a bit rich for a product with no real ginger in it, but their technical manager was 'unavailable'. (Our thanks to Plymouth Consumer)



## Old English style

It must be a marketing mistake for a manufacturer to put the word 'old' on a bread roll such as Marks and Spencer's Old English Rolls. The word 'fresh' is fine, the word 'crusty' acceptable, but 'old'...?

Obviously they didn't mean that the product was beyond its sell-by

date. Did they mean the recipe, perhaps? This happens to include Flour Improver (ascorbic acid), Dried Wheat Protein, and Emulsifiers (glyceryl monostearate, esters of glycerides of fatty acids). They also use Granary on the label – don't think that the word Granary is a name anyone can use. It happens to be a registered trade mark for Rank Hovis Ltd, signifying their 'Original and Authentic Malted Brown Bread'.

Mrs Beeton doesn't mention these ingredients – although she might have recognised the emulsifiers as being a form of soap.

The only clue on the label was the claim 'made by a traditional method' so we asked Marks and Sparks what this meant. Unfortunately their Head of Bakery was showing visitors around and couldn't talk to us.

## Chicken for kids

Not strictly a label, but a promotion pack from the frozen chicken product company Padley's. They are desperately keen to be seen as the healthy option and are trying to persuade school caterers that chicken products can be popular as well as healthy.

Their literature extols the virtues of chicken: 'High in protein, low in fat, with useful amounts of the B vitamins thiamine, riboflavin and nicotinic acid'. But a closer look at the products they offer shows that 'chicken' isn't exactly the main ingredient. From chicken burgers and drumlets to chicken nuggets and chicken fingers, the products are about two-parts coating to one-part chicken – none of the products boasts more than 38 per cent chicken meat.

As a result, a typical serving of chicken drumlets gives a child 1-2oz of chicken, and a chicken burger less than 1oz. The fat content ranges from 12 to 19 per cent (more if it has been fried) whereas regular chicken breast comes in under 5 per cent fat, and chicken leg under 10 per cent. And the protein content of Padley's products ranges from 10 to 12 per cent while that of chicken meat is typically over 25 per cent.

We therefore take issue with

## Ask the experts!

**What is the difference between mild, medium and mature cheddar cheese?**

A good question as no one can quite agree. We asked the Dairy Trade Federation, the Cheese Centre in Dorset and the National Dairy Council and got different answers. Roughly, mild cheese is ripened, or matured, for 3-4 months, medium for 3-7 months and mature from 7 months onwards, the best flavour being 8-12 months.

The Institute of Food Research in Reading have tried out ways of speeding up the process using an enzyme (Accelase) which appears to reduce ripening times by 50 per cent.

their arrogant claim to 'provide a product which is universally recognised as a major contribution towards a healthy and well-balanced diet'.

Incidentally their serving suggestion for chicken drumlets shows two drumlets (which include bread-crumbs, wheat flour and rusk) sharing a plate with spaghetti hoops and finished with some coloured spiral pasta shapes. Not for the wheat-allergic!





# Slimming ads under fire

**T**he Food Commission has complained that the Advertising Standards Authority is not taking effective action over adverts for slimming products. The Commission has asked the ASA to investigate two recent adverts for 'miracle diet pills' that appeared in the *News of the World* colour magazine in September.

The Food Commission says that adverts for 'FB 900 Fat Breaker' and 'Sleep and Slim' capsules sold by Vitahealth, both blatantly disregard the advertisers' Code of Practice. This states that any slimming product must emphasise the role of a calorie-controlled diet as the effective way

to slim. Neither advert mentions this – in fact both make a selling point of claiming 'no starvation or exercise'. The Code also requires that claims can be substantiated with medical and scientific evidence, not just personal testimonies. The Food Commission has asked the ASA what evidence, if any, the company has provided for its weight loss claims. The Commission is unaware of any such evidence that could support the claims made for the products.

The ASA has admitted that the advertising of slimming products is a problem area. As the ASA operates a 'self-regulatory' code of practice it is up to publishers to check in the first place whether adverts are accept-

able. However, the ASA admits that it is 'highly unlikely' that newspapers check with the ASA before taking these kind of adverts. The ASA claims it is 'always asking publishers not to take ads', but in the case of these kind of slimming adverts, it seems with limited effect.

Sue Dibb of the Food Commission said, 'It is time for the ASA to stop asking and start using its backup legal powers to fine advertisers and publishers who persistently flout the code. Magazines and newspapers should also be forced to give equal space to apologies so that readers are made aware if products are bogus.'

**FB 900 FAT BREAKER**  
MIRACLE DIET CAPSULES  
NEW WEIGHT LOSS CAPSULES  
NO STARVATION or EXERCISE  
7 DAY COURSE £17.95  
15 DAY COURSE £29.95  
30 DAY COURSE £49.95

## EC ducks out on health claims

**T**he European Commission has dropped its plans to legislate on the use of health claims. Claims such as 'good for your bones' or 'helps maintain a healthy heart' are increasingly found on food packets and advertisements, not just for health foods but everyday products ranging from breakfast cereals to tinned mackerel. Health and consumer organisations are concerned that such claims are often misleading and unhelpful and should be more tightly controlled.

The latest EC draft Directive on

food claims only covers ingredient claims such as 'high in bran' or nutrition claims such as 'low in fat'. While it proposes to set limits, for example, on how much cholesterol and fat must be in a food when a 'low cholesterol' claim is made, it fails to specify conditions for similar sounding health claims such as 'lowers cholesterol'.

What has led to this absurd state of affairs? The European Commission suggests for no apparent reason that 'in the case of health claims... the best policy would seem to be to stay with the different approaches developed in the Member States'. In the

UK, food manufacturers can claim virtually what they want about the health benefits of their products short of actually stating that the food prevents or cures a disease (a medicinal claim).

The Commission's own expert advisory committee – the Scientific Committee for Food – has 'grave reservations about the wisdom of allowing (health) claims'. The committee argues that it is difficult to draw a line between health claims and medicinal claims. Moreover, fresh food, 'which provides the great majority of nutrients in the EC' is unlabelled so claims on packaged foods would 'have adverse effects on nutritional education systems'.

The sensible response to that advice would have been for the Commission to draw up regulations explicitly banning health claims or at least to devise tough new rules to control their use. Instead, no doubt under pressure from food companies, they've simply ducked the issue.

## Chewing the fat

One organisation that is campaigning against dubious slimming products is Diet Breakers. Their own investigation into one product claiming to 'burn up fat' found it contained the following:

- Mate:** a Brazilian tea-type leaf, high in caffeine and probably a diuretic;
- Bunchu:** a herbal product with diuretic and antiseptic properties, also used as an insecticide;
- Pectin:** probably grapefruit fibre, supposed to slow sugar absorption and reduce hunger;
- Spearmint:** probably there to mask the filthy taste;
- Damiana:** a genito-urinal irritant and diuretic;
- Cellulose:** Swells up to make you feel full.

A Diet Breakers spokesperson commented: 'All this "slimming miracle" will do is make you pee your weight away and then replace it with lots of water.'

Diet Breakers are running a national anti-diet campaign which aims to unite people of all sizes, backgrounds and professions to fight the tyranny of thinness. For details of membership and their magazine contact Diet Breakers, Church Cottage, Barford St Michael, Banbury, Oxon OX15 2UA. Tel: 0869 37070



# The true cost of eating fruit and vegetables

**W**e should be eating more fruit and vegetables – five portions a day is the recommendation of the World Health Organisation. And as the table on the right shows we've got a long way to go to catch up with our European neighbours.

Figures collected for the World Health Organisation show that the UK and Ireland have the lowest per capita consumption of fruit and vegetables in the whole of the EC. UK average consumption at 167 kg/year per person is less than half that of Greece's 377 kg/year.

## Trans fats come under attack

Comparisons of the diets of over 85,000 nurses in the USA have identified trans-fatty acids as a significant contributory factor increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Trans-fatty acids are created when vegetable oils are artificially hardened (hydrogenated) to make them into spreadable margarines and for use in baked goods such as cakes and biscuits. They are not found in natural fats, either animal, dairy or vegetable.

Not all margarines contain hydrogenated fat. The Food Commission is currently surveying shop shelves to check the contents of margarine and will report the findings in the next issue.

Those living on low incomes are often accused of 'wasting' their money on food like pies, chips, biscuits, cakes or sweets, instead of eating foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables – which, it is claimed, can be cheaper as well as healthier.

This may be a misunderstanding. Although the cost per pound weight of potatoes, apples, cabbage etc. may be fairly low, food does not ease hunger pangs on the basis of weight but on calories. The cost of the calories in junk food is often quite cheap – especially those loaded with fats and sugars – and may be lower than the cost of calories in 'cheap' healthier food.

Thus a bag of chips for 50p would give over 500 Calories, while a pound of apples costing the same amount would give barely 200 Calories. Put differently, the cost of 100 Calories from chips, apples and from other foods is shown in the table below.

The government has suggested an

### Cost of 100 Calories

Celery	£1.03p
Tomatoes	80p
Lettuce	76p
Broccoli	74p
Oranges	30p
Cabbage	27p
Carrots	20p
Apples	19p
Bananas	14p
Chips	10p
Meat pie	11p
Sausage roll	10p
Baked beans	9p
Chocolate bar	8p
Custard cream biscuits	2p
Sugar (e.g. in tea)	2p

■ Source: Food Commission Data.

### Fruit and Vegetable consumption

	Kg/person/year
Greece	377
Italy	291
Spain	277
Austria	229
Belgium	210
Germany	209
Netherlands	202
France	201
Portugal	191
Denmark	166
UK	167
Ireland	141

■ Source: Food and Health Indicators in Europe, WHO, 1990.

adult needs less than £11 per week for food. This is to buy around 2000

Calories a day, giving an average of less than 8p for each 100 Calories.

## Organic food sales soar

Sales of organic foods in the UK have increased nearly fivefold in the last five years from £21.5 million in 1988 to an estimated £105.1 million in 1993. Vegetarian products have also shown healthy growth according to a survey by market research company, Mintel.

Health and ethical factors have encouraged people to look more carefully at the way food is produced and Mintel predicts that sales of organic food will increase by another 50 per cent in the next five years.

According to the survey, two per cent of housewives say they always buy organic foods, but more than half would buy them, at least occasionally, if they were cheaper.

Mintel also notes that a large proportion of organic food is imported so UK producers may not be the major beneficiaries of continued market growth.

■ Vegetarian and Organic Food, Mintel, 18-19 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HE. Price £295.



# Eastern promise

Jan Deane is a pioneer of direct marketing methods, cutting out the middleman when selling organic produce. Earlier this year she found herself flying to Prague...

**A**s the coach hurtled from Reading to Heathrow all I could think was: 'What on earth am I doing here?' I had reason to think the same again a few hours later as I sat in Prague airport at midnight watching it rapidly empty of passengers and staff.

But here at last was my host – there had been a misunderstanding about arrival times – and we set off for Brno 250 kilometres to the south east, where Michal lived and I had a bed for the night.

I had been invited to the Czech Republic by the Foundation for Organic Agriculture to give a seminar on direct marketing for organic farmers and advisors, on behalf of the Soil Association. To deliver a six hour seminar on my own was a challenge, but to do so in a country which I had never visited, didn't speak the language and of whose culture and agriculture I knew next to nothing was truly daunting.

However, as Michal Burian filled me in on the growth of the Czech organic movement, I realised that the ethos of organic agriculture transcends borders and politics and that issues central to British organic producers had equal relevance to the farmers of Moravia and Bohemia.

Next morning, after a brief tour of Brno and a view of its famous 'dragon', we set off for Kromeriz to visit the vegetable holding and farm shop of the Vymetal family. This part of Moravia is very flat and fertile, a giant's patchwork of vast unfenced acreages farmed in strips. Since the Velvet Revolution land restitution has become a big issue and the gargantuan co-operative farms are slowly being diminished as land claims are recognised and settled. The Vymetal's relatively small one-hectare strip was formerly part of such a co-operative and grows a familiar variety of market garden crops destined for their shop and a local hospital. They were buoyant about the future of organic production in their country but said that the shop, which sold all manner of groceries as well as their own vegetables, was essential to their profitability and that the vegetables alone would not support them.

We travelled on to Olomouc and another farm shop and holding. Here the situation was much the same (even the aphids!) although Mr Ludik seemed less certain about the long term prospects and advantages of organic growing. At present organic farmers receive subsidies over a seven year period and this is

obviously a big incentive. As we retraced our route to Brno and headed north west through rolling countryside toward another organic farm where I was to spend that night, Michal described his plans to promote sustainable tourism – farmhouse bed and breakfast on organic farms – and rather sheepishly confessed that some film-maker friends of his were waiting for us at Jan Sterba's farm, so that I could be the 'tourist' in a film they were making on the subject. So we spent that evening filming and viewing the most superb-looking crop of organic potatoes that I think I have ever seen.

We made an early start the next morning for Policka to the hotel where we were to hold the seminar. Despite a few minor hitches, like the hotel having forgotten that we were coming and the inexplicable disappearance of a small but necessary bit of the slide projector, the day went well. The seminar was fully subscribed by a mixture of government advisors, representatives of the certifying organisations and (possibly thanks to the showery weather) a fair number of farmers and growers. Discussions were lively despite having to be translated and by the end of the day we had on paper a rough draft of a booklet describing the different types of direct marketing that were appropriate to the Czech Republic and outlining how to go about developing these types of market.

The next morning I made a final visit to a Czech organic farmer in the beautiful small village of Kratka, a Czech 'wooden' village, the buildings of which actually reminded me very much of Devon – the same dumpy cob construction but with wooden shingles replacing thatch. Here I saw for the first time cows grazing outside. As is common in much of Eastern Europe, most animals are permanently housed and zero grazed, which gives the countryside a strangely deserted look.

Then on through the highlands to Prague, as beautiful and fascinating a city as everyone says. We spent a wonderful afternoon walking through the old city – Stare Mesto, Josefov, Mala Strana, Hradcany – each small area distinct in its character and all worth much more time than my cramped schedule would allow. Later that night in my hotel room as I leafed through a guide book trying to sort out where I'd been and what I'd seen, I started to think about the previous few days. It struck me that despite some severe environmental and economic problems and the need to make massive political and social adjustments, everyone I had met was filled with optimism for the future, and felt they had a small part to play in shaping their destiny. I was almost reluctant to go home.

**■ Jan and Tim Deane were featured on Channel 4's *Our Backyard* where their 'vegetable pack' scheme attracted considerable attention. Jan is organising a series of seminars on direct marketing across the UK - see page 9.**



## Will the Force be with you?

**The work of the Nutrition Task Force looms large in the NFA's life. The Task Force's consultation exercise this summer provided an opportunity for NFA members and observers to put on record their views about the future of this important policy initiative.**

The NFA's response to the Nutrition Task Force (NTF) consultation document is the result of its own extensive consultations with members, observers and other public interest organisations. Many groups said they were worried that the NTF's policy priorities – admirable though many of them are – would simply not be put into practice. Although it is clear that government, industry and consumers all share responsibility for reaching the Health of the Nation dietary targets, no agency has yet been given the job of implementing specific policies.

It's a familiar problem. The responsibility is everyone's and no-one's. Thus the NFA's first recommendation is that at its meeting in October the NTF should set up a sub-group to develop proposals for an

### The Nutrition Task Force

The NTF is a government-appointed body charged with drawing up a plan to implement government health strategy. Nutritional targets in *The Health of the Nation* include:

- cut saturated fat intake by 35% by the year 2005
- cut total fat intake by 12% by the year 2005
- cut the numbers of men and women who are obese by 25% and 33% respectively, by the year 2005.

The NTF members include leading industry figures, academics, private consultants, consumer and voluntary body representatives and officials from nine government ministries.

independent body to implement the NTF programme. Its proposals should include ideas for funding such a body, particularly as there are no plans, as yet, for what will happen to the NTF at the end of 1994 when its two year remit expires.

The second major thrust of the NFA response is to highlight four issues which do not easily fit the structure of the NTF working groups and which, therefore, do not feature in the NTF's dozen priorities. First, the NFA recommends that, since the needs of low income consumers should be a priority for all four working groups, the development of policies to address this issue should be the responsibility of the NTF itself.

Second is the issue of food pricing. Norway's experience has shown that a food pricing policy is a vital part of any plan to change a nation's diet, and the NFA recommends that this issue should also be developed by the NTF.

The third issue is the lack of quantified dietary goals. Although most people are now aware of general advice to eat 'less' fat and 'more' fibre, this advice is clearly not precise enough. The problem is how much more or less, and of what kinds of foods? A 1990 WHO report showed what could be done when it recommended people eat at least 400g (around a pound) of fruit and vegetables every day. The NFA suggests the development of quantified dietary goals such as these should be undertaken by the NTF.

Fourth, the NFA recommends that the 1991 COMA report on Dietary Reference Values should be the basis on which the NTF can pursue a range of dietary targets – not just fat. Reducing fat and saturated fat consumption should not allow sugar and salt consumption to remain static or, worse still, rise.

A final omission, and one which can be incorporated into the NTF's education working groups, is nutrition and safety labelling. This issue somehow failed to make the NTF's top twelve priorities. Too many years

have already slipped by with only small improvements to the information consumers can glean from their food labels. We should not have to wait any longer.

### New members

The NFA is delighted to welcome three new members:

- The British Dental Association – the national professional association for dentists
- The Community Nutrition Group – an official sub-group of the British Dietetic Association
- Green Network – a federation of individuals and groups concerned with health and the environment.

### Thank you

Having completed a very successful twelve month work placement with the NFA, Peta Cottey has now returned to the final year of her degree in Consumer Product Management at South Bank University. Luckily for the NFA Peta has chosen to focus on the one aspect of the Nutrition Task Force's work for her final year thesis.

The NFA's new Assistant Co-ordinator is Rachel Townsend, who is also at South Bank University but on the degree course in Home Economics and Resource Management. She is looking forward to meeting members at the next NFA meeting on 7 December.

■ 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 (Secretary & Co-ordinator)  
Rachel Townsend (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 Dental Association  
British Medical Association  
British Organic Farmers  
Campaign for Real Ale  
Caroline Walker Trust  
Children's Society  
Christian Aid  
Committee on Biotechnology and Food  
Common Ground  
Community Nutrition Group  
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)  
Green Network  
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



## CAP reform madness

**Set-aside will do nothing to reduce food surpluses, but it has cost the taxpayer dearly. Patrick Holden, policy director of the Soil Association, calls for a rethink on the CAP.**

On 18 September 1993, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that after the first year of the reformed Common Agriculture Policy, UK farmers had received £1.2 billion in various forms of support schemes. One of these required the setting aside of 15 per cent of their land, yet despite this they had managed to maintain production of cereals within 3 per cent of the level of the 1992 harvest.

There could be no more dramatic illustration of the total failure of the CAP reform package to reduce the food mountains, let alone protect the environment. Farmers had 'milked the system' by intensifying production on the land in use while claiming payments for the land left derelict.

The stark truth is that the farmers who have been most heavily rewarded by the CAP reforms are those farming most intensively when they were introduced. The more cereals you grew in 1991/2, the more set aside and compensatory payments you now receive. And the more livestock you had, the greater your allocation of livestock quota, which has a capital value and upon which income now depends.

I recently read about a children's book called *Obvious Absurdities* which is full of images such as carts with square wheels and other examples of things which cannot work or are carried out for no good reason. On the face of it, nothing could be more absurd than a CAP reform package which is supposed to reduce surplus production and encourage environmental protection but which maintains incentives to farm intensively and penalises extensive and organic producers.

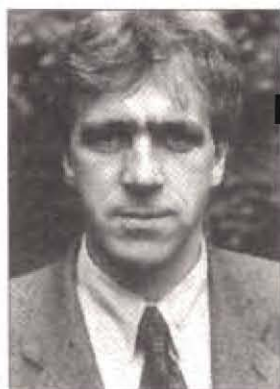
CAP reform did nothing for the significant minority of UK farmers who either got off the intensification treadmill early, or who never intensified in the first place. Now these same farmers must face the refusal by Gillian Shephard to include existing organic producers in the recently-announced scheme to assist organic production – a bitter blow even for a community that has become used to

being a disadvantaged minority. Despite all the fine words and encouraging rhetoric, the effect of the CAP reforms is to discourage organic farming. Without some improvement to the present proposals we may even witness a reduction of the present organic acreage.

Arguably, the organic movement should take some of the blame (but not too much!). The fact is that after ten years of lobbying for the sane and sustainable reform of CAP we still have some way to go. Yet there may be room for optimism. There is little doubt that the first round of CAP reforms will eventually have to be scrapped and replaced entirely with a new form of support, which rewards farmers who introduce extensive, output reducing, environmentally friendly practices. The best means of implementing such a policy is through the management agreement. In essence, the ingredients of the successful management scheme are a widely agreed production system definition (standards), a means of ensuring their adherence (inspection) and, ideally, additional support from the market place.

Organic farming is just such a system of production. It has now been defined in law, it can be policed without cost to the taxpayer, and it has the characteristics of output reduction and environment protection. And provision for this type of management agreement already exists in the CAP reform package. All that is necessary is to transfer funding from the moribund set-aside scheme into the so-called agri-environment programme.

So what are our chances of achieving this? The final outcome will depend on a great deal more lobbying and on the prevailing of common sense. We can manage the former, but the latter may be more in the hands of planetary movements than we care to admit and recent world events give us no cause for comfort! Nonetheless, we may yet reach our target of 20 per cent organic by the year 2000.





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1 egg

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2. Add water to form a dough.
3. Roll out on floured surface.
4. Cut out pastry circles.
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7. Place a spoonful in each tart.
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# Organophosphates: the pyramid of exposure

**Organophosphate pesticides are widely used around the world, yet their impact on human health is only just being recognised. Mark Redman investigates.**

**T**he dangers of pesticides have long been known about. Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, first published in 1962, provoked widespread public protest about the long term environmental damage caused by some pesticides and eventually led to many countries withdrawing chemicals like DDT from use.

Nevertheless, thirty years later the World Health Organisation International Programme on Chemical Safety reports that globally there are now over one thousand chemicals used as pesticides, sold in over 100,000 trade name products. Approximately 100 of these chemicals are organophosphorus (OP) compounds. These rate amongst some of the most toxic chemicals known and have dominated the UK pesticide market over the last 10-15 years as the most widely used type of insecticide.

OP pesticides were first developed by German scientists in the 1930s, but were rapidly seized upon by the Nazi government as chemical warfare agents – the so-called 'nerve gases' that remain some of the most lethal and feared weapons in the armoury of the modern world. Indeed it took over 50 years and another brutal dictatorship, that of Saddam Hussein, to first unleash them; initially in combat with the Iranian army, and then with devastating effect against the Kurdish population of northern Iraq.

Ironically, although appalled to see the nerve gas genie finally released, the world was already and continues to be familiar with the symptoms of acute OP

exposure. Since the 1960s there have been thousands of accidental and occupational OP pesticide poisonings recorded, including many deaths. The most recent spate of poisonings to hit the headlines in the UK concern the use of modern OP sheep dips.

From 1976 to 1992, farmers were compelled by government to dip their sheep against the parasitic disease known as sheep scab. Only sheep dips licensed by MAFF were permitted for use and since the mid 1980s all except two of these were based upon OPs. In 1985 there were eight reported cases of suspected adverse reaction to OP dips amongst farmers and farmworkers; by 1992, this had risen to 134. Many involved the same story of suffering: fatigue, depression (often suicidal), muscle pains, stomach cramps and memory loss.

Environmental campaigners suspect that the incidence of OP sheep dip poisoning is actually very much higher, a suspicion confirmed by a random survey of sheep farmers in south-west England undertaken by the National Farmers Union in 1991 which found that over a third had suffered adverse reactions to sheep dip.

According to Graham Game of Green Network: 'Many cases of ill health due to OP sheep dips go unreported. Doctors are relatively unaware of the problem and may confuse symptoms with other illnesses, whilst many farmers are reluctant to report problems to the appropriate government agency through fear that they will be liable to prosecution for not having taken proper precautions to protect themselves or their workers.'

During October, MAFF's Veterinary Pesticide Committee (VPC) will be reviewing the evidence against OP sheep dips and deciding upon their future use in the UK. The environment movement is demanding a total ban.

As Duncan McLaren, Friends of the Earth Agricultural Campaigner says 'These dips are a serious threat to the health of farmers and farmworkers. Moreover they leave toxic sheep and toxic residues which are a threat to the environment and water quality. We are in no doubt that their continued use will result in more illness and pollution. MAFF should grasp the nettle and ban OP sheep dips now.'

Inevitably there is intense industry opposition to this. A recent editorial in *Farmer's Weekly* concluded

that '...a ban would have far reaching implications for animal and human welfare, and put British agriculture at a trading disadvantage.' What the editorial neglected to say, of course, was that a ban would also whittle down the profits of some of the magazine's biggest advertisers, namely Bayer, Pitman-Moore, Ciba-Geigy and Deosan!

Whether OP sheep dips are here to stay for the foreseeable future or not, there is a profoundly more disturbing public health issue waiting in the wings. 'The problem is that occupational exposure to OP sheep dip is only the tip of the iceberg, or to paraphrase the British Medical Association – the apex of a pyramid of pesticide exposure that embraces the whole population.'

Considered commercially indispensable by virtue of their potency and rapid breakdown in the environment, OPs now lay a chill hand upon all our lives. Unbeknown to many people, we are all exposed to OPs and OP residues in our diet, drinking water, homes and workplaces. Sources of this exposure include:

- pesticides sprayed and dusted onto cereals, fruit and vegetables.
- wormers and systemic 'pour-ons' applied to farm animals.
- fly sprays and vaporising strips used in industrial, commercial and domestic premises.
- flea collars and treatments for pests.
- anti-lice shampoo for school children.

The possible consequences of such blanket exposure to OPs are very worrying. According to a report published in 1992 by the British Medical Association, '...given today's extensive use of pesticides, both for agriculture and non-agricultural use, it is almost impossible for any member of the population to avoid daily exposure to very low levels of several different pesticides in food and water. Consequently, there is concern about possible adverse effects on human health arising from continual long-term, low level exposure, that is the potential for chronic toxicity.' Other observers fear that OPs play a role in the long term development of disorders such as multiple sclerosis, schizophrenia, muscular dystrophy and motor neurone disease.

This remains a controversial issue. Chronic toxicity can take several decades to manifest itself, leading



to difficulties in identifying the specific cause of the problem. During this period victims can be exposed to many other possible causative factors producing a background of 'natural' disease which clouds investigation. Consequently, available evidence on the risks of long-term, low level pesticide exposure is inconclusive with no specific links between pesticides and public health yet proven.

However, there remains an increasing feeling of unease that our on-going exposure to pesticides does represent a serious social problem, and that scientists are failing society by not tackling the issue head-on.

## The organic alternative

Organophosphate use is strictly prohibited in the production and processing of organic food. Instead, Soil Association standards encourage various methods for dealing with insect infestation:

- rotating and mixing crops
- creating surrounding ecosystems which encourage pest predators
- ensuring a balanced supply of crop nutrients
- using biological controls and naturally-derived chemicals such as derris and pyrethrum
- ensuring good hygiene standards in crop storage areas
- using alternatives to OPs for livestock, such as synthetic pyrethroids for sheep dips, flies and lice
- improving livestock resistance with homeopathic remedies.

Writing in *The Times* recently, author Richard North said that government research into pesticides '...seems to be devoted to supporting the official diagnosis. Any which might produce data that weaken the perceived wisdom is simply not done. This is not a cover up, but a reflection of the official thinking. Government regards the accuracy of its original hypothesis as a sign of its political virility. It cannot tolerate anything which might prove it wrong.'

One of the most controversial examples of this is the case of Mark Purdey, an organic farmer from Somerset. Since the early 1980s, Mark Purdey has researched and vociferously articulated the case against the use of OPs, culminating in the development of a hypothesis linking OP exposure in dairy cows to the incidence of BSE or 'mad cow disease'. Between 1984 and 1992, however, he struggled against a wall of political indifference, whilst enduring a sinister and quite extraordinary catalogue of bureaucratic harassment from central and local government. With OPs now well and truly in the public gaze, Mark Purdey is finally making progress. He has recently been invited to submit his work for publication to an academic journal, the *Journal of Nutrition Medicine*, and will shortly be meeting Gillian Shephard, the Minister of Agriculture, to discuss his theory.

For 50 years the Soil Association has campaigned for a sustainable agricultural future, promoting a holistic vision of the inter-relationships that exist between food, farming and human health. In view of the mounting case against OP pesticides, it is now urging the government to:

- Fully apply the 'precautionary principle' and

impose an immediate moratorium on all OP pesticide use:

- Embark upon a systematic programme of research to develop our understanding of long-term OP toxicity:

- Support the development of viable agricultural alternatives, most especially to give full credence and financial backing to the environmental and public health benefits of organic farming methods.

If government chooses not to heed these demands, so help us. Rachel Carson provided a fitting epitaph for our 'OP generation' over thirty years ago: 'confusion, delusion, loss of memory and mania - a heavy price to pay for the temporary destruction of a few insects'.

■ **Mark Redman is editor of New Farmer and Grower and research and development consultant to the Soil Association.**

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# Permaculture comes of age

Some 300 people gathered in Copenhagen at the end of August for the fifth international conference on permaculture. Our correspondent Robin Jenkins was there.

**P**ermaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of local ecosystems so that they have the diversity, stability and resilience to provide sustainable food production, housing and domestic energy.

Another name for it is agro-ecology.

It is what self-sufficient peasants have done for many generations. Their traditions are the distillation of trial and error over the centuries, and are thus a source of great wisdom even when they cannot explain why they do what they do.

In Europe we have all but lost our peasantry and much of their wisdom so we must re-create this knowledge from first principles. In other parts of the world it is possible to learn sustainable practices from people who still provide most of what they need from local ecosystems.

The three building blocks of permaculture are

- natural ecosystems
- traditional farming and building methods
- modern science and technology

The first rule is observe. Ideally, a site should not be developed until it has been observed through the four seasons. It requires protracted and thoughtful observation rather than quick and thoughtless action.

The existing climate and micro-climates are all important but they can be modified by the patterns in which trees and bushes are planted (there are at least ten different ways in which vegetation can affect local climate).

Different ecosystems generally overlap where they meet, often more than doubling the number of species and massively increasing the biological productivity of these areas. Tidal estuaries are the best known example but forest edges and hedges are similarly rich in species and activity. Permaculture

designs try to maximise such edges.

With industrialised agriculture, the soil is treated as an immutable fact that determines the type of farming possible, but permaculture uses well-tried methods for making fertile top soil out of the most unpromising materials.

Each component of a permaculture design is anal-

ysed in terms of systems and cycles. Each component has many functions and a good design builds them into the whole system. It does not matter whether the component is a chicken, a fruit tree, a pond or a potato plant – the same principle applies.

Above all else, permaculture emphasises the fact that almost every component of a landscape can be adapted to produce good food in abundance. The productivity of permaculture designs is way above that of industrial agriculture, yet it requires no external inputs and relatively little work once the system gets going.

■ Further information: Permaculture Association, PO Box 1, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0LH.

## Farmers down under face up to environmental challenge

Hardpressed Australian farmers are developing cooperative means of tackling environmental problems.

**H**it hard by a depressed rural economy, record low world market prices and no government support for their produce, Australian farmers are used to struggle. But to add to their problems, serious land degradation, such as soil erosion and salinity, is affecting over half of the nation's farmland at an estimated cost of over Aus\$2.5 billion each year.

The farmers' survival depends on finding economically and environmentally viable production systems, a need which gave rise to the first Landcare groups in the early 1980s and which now boast the involvement of more than a quarter of Australia's farming population.

Under Landcare, groups of farmers work together

with government and the wider community to solve rural land use problems. These range from rabbit and ragwort control to total river catchment management. Other groups have tackled coastal dune erosion and nutrient runoff where toxic algal blooms have become a problem in waterways. There are aboriginal Landcare groups and groups tackling land use planning issues in urban fringe areas.

Landcare sees its success as being able to motivate and communicate with large numbers of isolated, often fiercely independent farmers in a sympathetic and efficient way, reports Helen Alexander, the National Facilitator of the Landcare Programme in Australia. She has now published a report showing how European agriculture, which also faces economic and environmental pressures, could harness the dynamism of Landcare in the process of change facing European farmers.

■ *Lessons in Landscape. Australia's model for a better future*, by Helen Alexander is available from the SAFE Alliance, 38 Ebury Street, London SW1W 0LU. Tel: 071-823 5660. Price £3.50 including p&p.



## Saving the Seed

Renee Vellve, Earthscan, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, 1992, £11.95, ISBN 185383 1506.

This latest book from GRAIN (Genetic Resources Action International) is about genetic diversity in European agriculture.

MAFF and the EC are incredibly complacent about the genetic basis of our agriculture and our food. They plan to save all the varieties that presently exist in gene banks so that they can be used by genetic engineers to make the plants that we will need in the future. The fact that the technology for this strategy is still a dream and the gene banks are so under-funded that they should be more accurately described as gene morgues seems to be of no consequence. The officials in charge are convinced that their strategy is viable. Their faith is as secure as the faith of those Americans who have their bodies frozen for the time when science can bring them back to life. The difference is that it is *their* bodies but *our* food.

Countering official complacency has proved difficult. Although the European Parliament requested DG VI – the EC agriculture ministry – to prepare a policy on the maintenance of

genetic diversity in European agriculture back in 1986, the eurocrats have refused to do it. Frustrated, the European Parliament voted nearly two million ecus for work on the maintenance of biodiversity on European farms back in 1991. The eurocrats in DG VI refused to spend it on the grounds that only the Commission can propose a budget. Rather than support the initiative and put forward, they branded it 'illegal'.

Unfortunately, this is not just the mindless insouciance of stupid functionaries but the result of diligent lobbying by the genetic engineering multinationals. They have an oligarchic dream – that one day soon, a mere handful of companies will have total control of the genes for world agriculture. Governments once played an honourable role in propagating biodiversity in agriculture, but now they have mostly sold out to multinational companies. These companies have added nothing to the common good, though they have sought to take much from it. The biodiversity in our agriculture is something that small farmers have propagated over generations without ever receiving a single payment for their efforts. They created our present seed heritage but now the law is moving against them. The multinationals want to make it illegal for farmers to re-sow seed from their own harvests. It is a move to privatise our global genetic heritage. If the GATT is signed, there will be international control of 'intellectual property rights' on seeds. If the European Commission wins its current battle with the European Parliament, multinationals will have the right to patent any living thing that has been slightly changed in their laboratories. There is some hope. There are more and more people secretly saving seeds, illegally passing them on, doing their best to guarantee a



common heritage for the future. GRAIN helps organise a growing network of such activity right across Europe.

That is what this book is about. Soon the activity will be widespread, and public. In India the situation has already gone beyond such subterfuge; farmers there recently ransacked the premises of Cargill, the biggest grain company in the world.

Robin Jenkins

## The Politics of Breastfeeding

Gabrielle Palmer, Pandora, 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8JB, £8.99, ISBN 086358 2206

Anyone who has felt frustrated by the lip service paid to the superiority of breastfeeding should find this 1993 fully revised and updated version of Gaye Palmer's book stimulating reading.

As the title suggests, this is not a manual but the author covers in detail the physiology of breastfeeding and describes the misguided and extremely damaging practises which have helped to destroy the art of

breastfeeding and bring about the totally avoidable 'insufficient milk syndrome'. When the psychological, emotional and immunological aspects are taken into consideration it becomes clear that breast 'feeding' is an inadequate term.

Ms Palmer does not attack the mother who 'fails' to breastfeed but feels that it is an insult to women to hold back information to spare their feelings. Mothers world-wide have lost the skill and confidence to do what once came as naturally as switching on the TV today.

The book gives a potted history of the 'progress' which led to a change in the working conditions of women, from a time when the workplace and the home were one, to the industrialisation which brought a new organisation of labour that no longer allowed for childbearing and breastfeeding.

Then came the substitute milks and the 'repeated testing of unproven products on unsuspecting consumers without their informed consent', with less control than for most cold remedies. The disastrous effects of the marketing of breast milk substitutes, especially in developing countries, and the love affair between health professionals and baby milk manufacturers are well documented here – and referred to as 'murder through indifference'.

My only reservation about this book is the strong feminist standpoint. Whilst not demeaning the ideas and their obvious relevance, I feel this book is a book for everyone to learn from and some who would benefit the most could be alienated by the style.

That aside, this is a hard-hitting and persuasive book which should be compulsory reading for anyone involved with women and their babies.

Sally Foister is a mother and breastfeeding counsellor.

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## The spread of sponsorship

Edited by Sir Roy Shaw, Bloodaxe Books, PO Box 1SN, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE99 1SN, 1993, ISBN 1 85224 190 X, £7.95.

Sponsorship is playing an increasingly important role in funding the arts, sport, education, the health service and broadcasting. But Sir Roy Shaw, ex Secretary-General of the Arts Council asks: is it desirable that crucial areas of our national life should become adjuncts of commercial advertising?

Sponsorship, though commonly viewed by the public as philanthropic, is a cheap and effective form of advertising. Sports and the arts are the most conspicuous areas of sponsorship but now education and health increasingly rely on sponsorship because government funding is inadequate. This book shows just how widespread and influential commercial sponsorship has become. In their chapter on Sponsorship and Health, Michael O'Connor and Michael Rayner argue that the economic and social importance of health makes this area one of the most critical.

As consumers are becoming more and more sceptical of traditional advertising, sponsorship provides opportunities for companies to be seen as 'responsible' thus creating a favourable company image. And health research is one of the major areas where drug and food companies invest. In 1990/1 the pharmaceutical industry, for example, spent £1,082 million on medical research compared with £186 million by the government and £192 million by medical research charities.

What worries the authors is the influence that many funders have, not only over the type of medical research that is undertaken, but also over its outcome. The pharmaceutical industry wants to sell drugs, and medical knowledge relating to drug treatment is much more extensive than that looking into preventive measures. Influence on the outcome of research is likely to be much more subtle than falsification of results, the authors say. The choice of experimental design, the selection of experimental results, the importance laid on 'bad' results, are all sources of potential bias which the researcher can introduce in the interest of pleasing the sponsor and perhaps gaining a further contract. As one speaker at an international conference organised by the

sugar industry is quoted as saying: 'It takes a lot to bite the hand that feeds you.'

Commercially sponsored health education material and educational materials for schools have been found to be biased or incomplete, as the Food Commission has reported. While good materials are to be welcomed, the book argues there is a lack of controls to guarantee high standards. Stringent codes of conduct and in some cases legislation to minimise the benefits and minimise the abuses are put forward as solutions.

Sue Dibb

## Spread the organic message with your Christmas greetings with Soil Association Christmas cards!



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medium  
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Please allow 14 days for delivery.



# RSPCA's advertising campaign

**The RSPCA's  
provocative  
advertising  
campaign  
has turned  
its attention to  
battery hens,  
calling on  
shoppers to  
buy 'Barn',  
'Perchery' or  
'Free Range'  
eggs. But not  
everyone is  
happy with the  
RSPCA's position**

From: **Farm and Food Society**

'Barn', 'Perchery' and 'Free Range' systems may appear welcome alternatives to battery egg production. But although it may seem that there can be nothing worse than batteries, hens may still suffer from overcrowding, deprivation, debeaking etc. Until we have accepted standards with reliable inspection we cannot be sure that any eggs are produced humanely.

From: **Alan Long, Consultant to Vegetarian Economy  
and Green Agriculture**

All the commercial alternatives to the offensive battery systems (including free range) are likely to be as bad or worse in terms of distress, morbidity, mortality, vices in the flocks and the use of beak trimming (debeaking).

Egg laying units are, in one form or another, concentration camps of thousands of frustrated hens used as egg-machines, laying infertile eggs on funny feeds and in unsavoury conditions. Much so-called free range is still no environment for birds whose progenitors were jungle fowl flocking in small harems lorded by dominant cockerels and laying a few dozen eggs seasonally each year.

Over a million hens die annually on British roads. They are crushed, suffocated and otherwise stressed in crates on lorries on the way to slaughterhouses.

The RSPCA, having raised some of the issues, should champion the honest course: insist on full production details being given on the boxes, and encourage shoppers to give up eggs and their use in manufactured food. There is life without eggs – eggs are for the birds!

From: **The British Egg Information Service**

Recent consumer research by the British Egg Industry Council has shown that when asked what information they would like displayed on egg boxes, egg buy-



anted more information about freshness and as the RSPCA claims, which farming method used to produce the eggs. Only 5 per cent had to see battery eggs labelled. Currently, egg boxes reflect the consumer's need to have date, size and price information clearly marked on egg boxes and people wishing not to buy battery eggs are easily able to recognise and choose free range or perchery/barn eggs.

Battery production units are just as much farms as free range or barn/perchery units. Therefore, the word 'Country Fresh' or 'Farm Fresh' are not misleading.

The battery system is not 'inhumane' and there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that, in terms of overall welfare of hens, free range or barn/perchery systems are better than intensive production.

## From: British Free Range Egg Producers Association

In recent years the nutritional value of the egg has been overlooked. It is now the cheapest and most versatile form of protein available. In real purchasing terms its costs have decreased. Negative advertising is potentially divisive and harmful.

Free Range producers are required by law to state clearly on the packaging how their eggs are produced. We consider in the interests of informed choice all other systems of production should be obliged to conform to the same rules and standards.

## From: The RSPCA

There are three points to be made:

- First, there is irrefutable scientific evidence that keeping hens in battery cages causes suffering.
- Secondly, independent research shows clearly that the labelling on many battery cage produced eggs is confusing to the consumer. All eggs—battery and non-battery alike—should be clearly labelled with the method of production.
- Thirdly, for the sake of both animal welfare and consumer confidence, there is an urgent need for realistic but dynamic standards for the production of non-battery eggs. The RSPCA is producing just such a set of standards that are scientifically based (with a large dose of common sense), achievable by good farmers and identifiable by the consumer.

# Recognise the packaging? Of course you don't.



In the egg business, honesty isn't always the best policy.

Scour the supermarket shelves all you like, you won't see the words 'Battery Produced' on a single egg box.

Yet that's precisely what 85% of the eggs are.

The industry knows the British public is sensitive to animal suffering.

So, instead of identifying their eggs' true origins their boxes bear phrases like 'Farm Fresh', 'Country Fresh' and even 'Dairy Fresh'.

You will also see illustrations of farmhouses, country kitchens and plump mother hens.

Words and pictures that have been carefully chosen to add rustic charm to a process that is neither rustic nor charming.

The eggs have been laid by hens who are forced to live four or five to a cage, in conditions so cramped they can barely sit and turn around.

Unable to follow even their most basic nesting instincts, they can suffer mental stress as well as physical harm.

Please, think carefully before buying them.

Look for eggs that are clearly labelled 'Barn', 'Perchery' or 'Free Range'.

These have been laid by chickens that have the freedom to move around, or access to an outside run.

Beware of eggs of any other description. They are no more than battery eggs in disguise.

We have an information leaflet on this whole subject. To obtain a copy, please write to the address shown below.

It not only provides more detailed information, it also outlines some action you can take.

It's time the chicken came before the egg.



FOR MORE INFORMATION WRITE TO: JERRY LEVY, DEPT. SM, RSPCA, THE CAUSEWAY, HINDHAM, WEST SUSSEX BN1 1MG.

## Henny Penny

If you open this magazine and lay it on the table you will see an area of nearly 1250 sq cm. This is the EC definition of what a battery hen must be allowed...Right?

No. Battery hens, according to Directive 86/113/EEC to come into force in January 1995, are allowed 450 sq cm each. The area of your magazine is enough for nearly three hens, for virtually all their laying life.

The UK produces some 12 billion eggs each year, 10 billion of them from some 30 million battery hens.





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79-80 Northbrook Street, Newbury, Berkshire  
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## Responsible forestry

The interesting article on Responsible Forestry (*Living Earth*, October 1992) says that Britain is fortunately not suffering massive forest loss, compared to that occurring in Canada, Siberia and Tasmania. This is because we have already cut it down. By 1086 the UK had only 15 per cent of its original forest, by c1350 this was about 10 per cent and now it is only 2 per cent. This cannot even claim to be old growth, all we can claim to have is semi-natural ancient woodland. It has all been managed in some way. In fact our total area of woodland, including plantations, is 10 per cent while the average European figure is 30-35 per cent.

This of course makes it absolutely imperative that we protect all remaining ancient woodland and do not drive roads, build houses, or even graze stock in it. Although not the subject of the article, it is equally important that we protect our other natural habitats, such as heathland and especially peat bogs. If we wish, rightly, to encourage others to save their natural vegetation, we also need to acknowledge our own shortcomings in this respect. It is hypocritical not to do so.

**Janet Edmunds and  
Charlotte Russell  
Goosnargh, Preston**

## Health advice or advertising?

I was shocked reading a magazine in my doctors' surgery. The magazine was called *Healthcare* and printed on the corner was 'Surgery Copy - do not remove'. I removed the pages on weaning which suggested introducing solid food at three months both in the text and on a chart and had a picture of a bottle.

The magazine also had awful adverts - for Slimfast diet foods, for oven chips and for Kellogg's with a message that Kellogg's products were good for protection against heart disease, cancer and stroke!! There was also a full-page ad for Red-Mill Snack Foods which seemed to be packets of crisps 'The 10p snack with added vitamins and iron'.

It seems to be the usual awful trick of producing a magazine which appears to be produced by some sort of health body, is specifically put in doctors' surgeries and has ads for junk food in the guise of healthy foods endorsed by doctors.

**Lisa Woodburn  
Cambridge**

### Editors comment:

We agree with you! We checked with the publishers of *Healthcare* who told us that Kellogg's were a sponsor of their publication. More and more magazines now carry adverts masquerading as editorial

features or as our reader noticed, the whole magazine may be a commercial wolf in health authority clothing.

We would like to see 'advertorials' clearly differentiated and suggest that quality magazines don't need them anyway.

## Symbol Style

I have recently noticed that the Soil Association symbol is being used on products such as Sainsbury's potatoes, but it doesn't include the Soil Association's name. Is this allowed?

**K Adams London N4**

### Francis Blake of the Soil Association, replies:

Sainsbury's felt that the wording incorporated in the symbol would be too small to be worth putting on and decided (with our agreement) to use just the logo without the words. It isn't satisfactory, but we thought it better to have the symbol alone, together with text that refers to the Soil Association, rather than nothing at all.

EC Regulations require all food labelled and sold as organic to be inspected and certified throughout the whole production, processing and packaging stages, and Sainsbury's complies with this, as do all the other supermarkets.

**ORGANIC HOLIDAYS** for paying or working guests. Also information on land re-mineralisation, organic land resettlement and joint ventures, organic correspondence course. Send large SAE for details: Countryside Resources (LV), Ashcroft, Scrivelsby, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JB.

**ACCOMMODATION WANTED** for professional couple and baby. Self-contained, must have central heating and washing machine (or plumbing). Within 45 minutes drive Bristol. References available. Ian on 0272-290661 (day) or 0272-260386 (evenings/weekends).

**88 ACRE SYMBOL FARM**, Llandeilo, Dyfed. Stone barn with D.P.P. Very large shed. Ponds, woodland, farmland, stewardship scheme, good access. Beautiful. Offers around £100,000. Tel 0558-685743.

**FRUIT CROPS**, nut crops, tree crops, Forest Gardening, Ground covers: read *Agroforestry News*, £16 (£12 unwaged) for 4 issues, from the Agroforestry Research Trust, 17 Arden Drive, Chelston, Torquay, Devon TQ2 6DZ.

**HARDWORKING AND POSITIVE STUDENT** required on well-established mixed organic dairy farm in west Wales. Modest wage and well-equipped caravan available. Good training opportunity. Minimum commitment one year. Please apply to Nick Rebbek, Bwlchwern Fawr, Llangybi, Lampeter, Dyfed SA48 8PS.

**LAND IN PORTUGAL** We (a Dutch family) run a farm in South West Portugal. We also sell land in the area of Portalegre, from 1500m<sup>2</sup> to 77,250m<sup>2</sup>, priced from £4500 to £30,000. All quietly located, with olive trees and/or fruit trees. Information from Family Decoz, Herdadinha, Cabeco de Vida, 7460 Fronteira, Portugal.

## Elizabeth Murray 1901-1993

**E**lizabeth Murray was one of that remarkable group of founder members of the Soil Association, whose vision and commitment will always remain an inspiration to future generations, writes *Angus Marland*.

Elizabeth was born into the Grant family of Inverness-shire, and married Charlie Murray in 1924. His father bought the Loch Carron Estate in Wester Ross after the final wave of highland clearances, and together they worked to reverse the trend of time by establishing viable crofting communities.

During this time they heard of Lady Eve Balfour's work at Haughley and joined with her in founding the Soil Association. In 1958 she became Scottish representative to the Soil Association, and joined the Council in 1959. One of her key achievements was her commitment to having a Soil Association stand at the Royal Highland Show each year, and in the 1950s she arranged a joint stand with the Edinburgh Corporation on the benefits of municipal composting.

Her interest in Biodynamic agriculture and the Camphill movement was shared by her daughter Helen, and together they established the Murray Charitable Trust to further this breadth of agricultural, ecological and humanitarian work.

Elizabeth was a woman of deep faith which carried her through many hardships. She was held in great affection by the Edinburgh and Lothian branch of the Soil Association, which she herself had established, and this was always reciprocated by her warm hospitality and kindness. She will be remembered by her many friends and relatives as a beacon of light, of gracious caring and enthusiastic support for all things whole and organic.



## High hopes

Advocates of legalising cannabis in California are also stressing the health benefits of hempseed oil, high in essential fatty acids and at only 8 per cent saturated fat, lower than other vegetable oils. Hempseed butter, once a Russian peasant staple, is more delicious and nutritious than peanut butter they claim. And in California there's a thriving market for hempseed health foods – could this be a new market opportunity for UK food producers?

Before anyone gets too excited, hempseed won't get you high. However it's advocates claim that the feeling of good health it leaves you with 'is an exalted state that few people in society experience anymore'. Can that be said for fish and chips?

## Rubbish!

Want to know what happens to your binbag after the dustcart has passed? Not all of them go off to an incinerator or a landfill tip. Some are opened and inspected, so be careful what you put there!

Who does this wonderful job? Not MI6, who wouldn't dream of such dirty tricks, but the National Household Waste Analysis laboratories run by the Department of the Environment.

And this is what they found: Well-to-do homes produce twice as much waste as poorer homes. Affluent suburbs produce 70 per cent more paper and cardboard, 25 per cent more glass and 80 per cent more plastic waste than council estates. It is, they suggest, the heavier newspapers, wine bottles and packaged meals.



## Not fit for a pig

What happens to the food we don't buy at Sainsbury's? It goes to the pig farm, where tradition has it that everything from old cabbages to stale pork pies went into the trough, to be turned into best pork pies again.

That was then, when traditional values and moral principles meant something. Now we have the modern Britain of thrusting entrepreneurs and tradition has gone out the window. Not because pigfarmers have found something better to feed their pigs with, mind you. It is because pigfarmers have found something better to do with the Sainsbury cast-offs.

The supermarket is no longer supplying its waste to farmers because they were finding the food was being re-sold on local market stalls. Presumably as 'Farm Fresh' produce!

## No sex please, we're fish

'Faster growing, more feed-efficient fish' is the fish farmer's fantasy. The answer has traditionally been to bombard freshly fertilised fish eggs with temperature or pressure shock to produce sterile fish. These grow faster because their growth is not interrupted by puberty.

Now genetic engineering is providing the answers. By inserting human growth hormone genes, trout, salmon, carp, loach, catfish and goldfish can grow up to thirteen times larger than non-manipulated fish. It's still all at the experimental stage but how long will it be before your fishmonger offers you man-sized salmon steaks?

## Wishful thinking

From the government's consultation document: *UK Strategy for Sustainable Development* page 30

*'The Government wishes to encourage the development of environmentally beneficial biotechnology products.'*

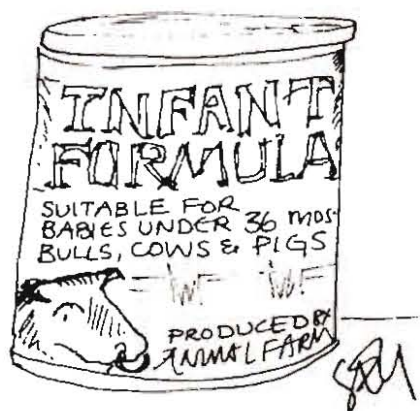
What sort of products do they have in mind? It appears not to matter: according to page 49 (glossary of terms)

*'BIOTECHNOLOGY – the application of biological and technical solutions to problems, which can result in the provision of long term, sustainable solutions.'*

So there you have it. The key to sustainable development is biotechnology – BST, herbicide resistant seeds, transgenic cows and the oncomouse!

## Herman's girls

Herman, the transgenic bull with human milk-producing genes, has sired his first female calves who are expected to be producing human-style milk in due course. Enormous interest has been shown by the infant formula industry, with American giant Bristol Myers taking the lead in developing this farm-produced 'mother's milk' for babies.



## More wishful thinking

Has someone nobbled the authors of a report from the government-backed Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (CJD, the human form of BSE) unit in Edinburgh? The evidence they give appears to conflict with the white-washing statements they then make.

For example, they report they could find no evidence of a relationship between food eaten and possible CJD incidence, but then suggest that eating black pudding gives a three-fold increase in the risk of CJD. They say they found no link between CJD and animal-related occupations, yet their figures show over 50 per cent more cases among people working with animals, in abattoirs, in butchers or with animal products than among people with other occupations.

And lastly, a sharp rise in CJD cases in 1992 'is not significant and is likely to be related to an increased ascertainment of cases' implying that many cases were missed in previous years. Yet they also predict that cases will fall off sharply in the next year. Muddled thinking, or mixed motives?



# market place

## THE NURSERY FOOD BOOK

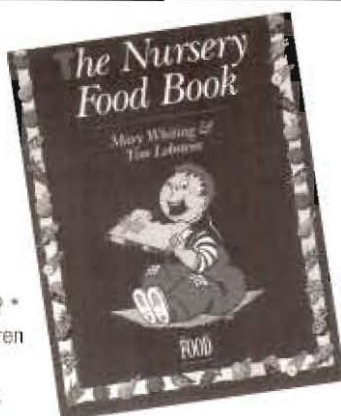
by Mary Whiting and Tim Lobstein

Published by Edward Arnold

\* What is a healthy main meal for 3-year olds? \* What if you have a group of children from mixed cultures? \* What food activities can young children do? \* What if one of the nursery children has a birthday?

A book packed with tips, advice, recipes and expertise to stimulate healthy eating and multicultural activities among groups of under fives. It is also an excellent student text for nursery nurses.

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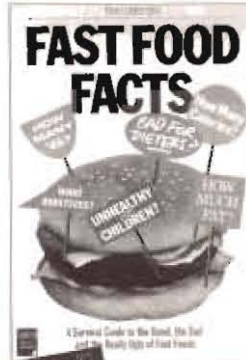
## FAST FOOD FACTS

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



## ADDITIVES - YOUR COMPLETE SURVIVAL GUIDE

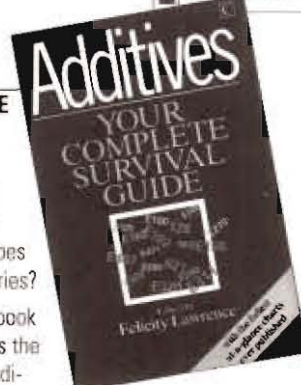
Edited by Felicity Lawrence

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

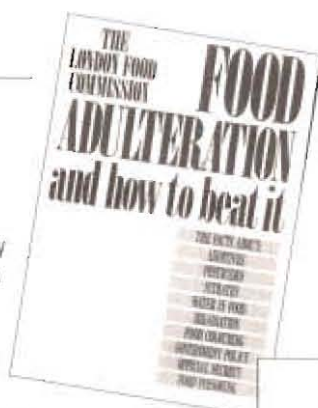


## FOOD ADULTERATION

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.

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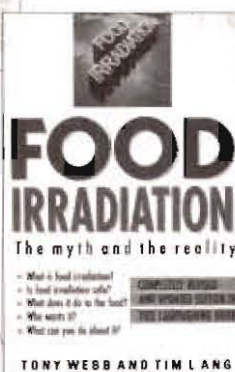
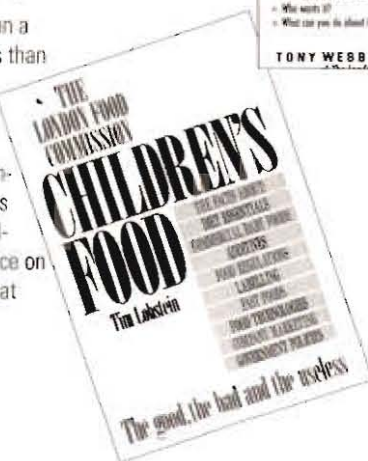
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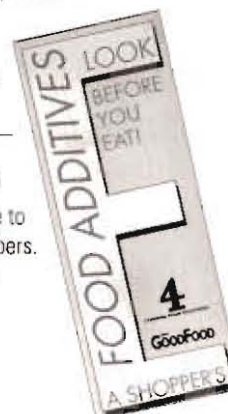
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## THESE FACTS COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

Recently published studies indicate that 'trans-fats' may be the biggest single dietary health hazard of our time. Their introduction as a major feature of Western diet in the past few decades is a root cause of ill-health and degenerative disease. Trans fats are produced by hydrogenation. They are neither saturated nor unsaturated, are not recognized by the body, and they have come under attack from medical and healthcare professionals in 1993.

**WHAT IS HYDROGENATION?** Hydrogenated fat is made by mixing oil with nickel particles, heating the mixture to 200°C and keeping it very hot for up to 6 hours. Hydrogen gas is pumped through the mixture at high pressure and the hydrogen atoms penetrate the oil molecules to form unnatural chemical bonds and the substances called trans fats. When hydrogenated fat cools it becomes very hard and is stored as plastic-like beads for subsequent use in the manufacture of common foods including:

- MARGARINE, LOW FAT SPREADS, BUTTER SPREADS
- BREAD, BAKED GOODS, CROISSANTS, PASTRIES.
- CRISPS AND SNACKS
- SWEETS AND CHOCOLATE CONFECTIONERY
- BISCUITS AND COOKIES
- MEAT SUBSTITUTES, FROZEN MEALS, FROZEN BATTER OR PUFF PASTRY, ICE CREAM, PATES AND SPREADS

The fats issue has been more clouded over than most with cholesterol panics and scientific gobbledegook serving commercial interests but the truth will always out. We report below what has been said by people with no commercial interest:

**ATTACK No.1 - MARCH 6 1993** - The Lancet published research from Harvard Medical School initiated in 1976 in which 85,096 nurses kept diet records for over a decade and subsequently were studied for coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes. The "Nurses Study" found significant correlations with dietary intake of trans fats. The authors conclude: **"Our findings must add to the concern that the practice of partially hydrogenating vegetable oils to produce solid fats may have reduced the anticipated benefits of substituting these oils for highly saturated fats and instead contributed to the occurrence of coronary heart disease."**

**ATTACK No.2 - APRIL 1993** - in the April issue of Caduceus Micheal, Odent pioneer of natural birth methods, writes that trans fats "behave like blocking agents in some important metabolic pathways and in particular the synthesis of important regulators of the birth process called prostaglandins." Odent links low hydrogenated fat consumption in Japan with the low level of Caesarian and induced deliveries there.

**ATTACK No.3. - MAY 1993** - the Community Nutrition Institute (CNI) in Washington D.C. attacked McDonald's for switching to hydrogenated fat for frying its french fries claiming that the switch would increase levels of heart disease 'obesity', and perhaps diabetes. Rodney Leonard of CNI claimed that the 'killer fries', if consumed by pregnant women would lead to lower birth weight babies. **The level of trans fats in McDonalds french fries has risen from 5% to 43%.** Leonard noted that trans fats lead to involuntary obesity: despite the same caloric intake and exercise levels, regular users of hydrogenated fats weigh at least 2Kg more than infrequent users. High consumption of trans fats is associated with junk food and low income, which helps explain why there are so many noticeably obese poor people in the U.S. Other studies cited by Leonard associate consumption of trans fats with reduced sperm count in males.

**WHY ARE TRANS FATS HARMFUL?** The trans fats in hydrogenated fat compete for absorption with essential fatty acids (EFA's). Imagine a series of queues at train station ticket windows. At the head of the queues there are people who don't know where they are going, delay ticket sales, and eventually don't even get a ticket. The disruption to the whole railway system if this happened every day would be phenomenal. The same thing happens when trans fats meet the receptors of our fat metabolism. They clog up the process, block or delay the absorption of essential fatty acids, and create deficiencies and imbalances down the line. Essential fatty acids are called 'essential' because they provide the building blocks that inhibit inflammation regulate the immune system, control blood pressure, induce insulin receptors and inhibit blood platelet aggregation. **That's why evening primrose oil is an effective cure for many EFA deficiency diseases - it 'jumps the queue' and provides the essential nutrients that the trans fats are blocking.** Eczema, rheumatoid arthritis, high blood pressure, ME, diabetes, PMT and mastalgia all respond to evening primrose oil treatment.

**HOW CAN I AVOID HYDROGENATED FAT?** With all this evidence against hydrogenated fat, the concerned consumer can't expect much help from the ingredient lists on food labels. This is because UK labelling laws allow it to come in many guises. Hydrogenated fat can legally be described as "Vegetable Fat", "Vegetable Shortening", "Mono and di-Glycerides of Vegetable Oil", "Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil", "Hardened Fat", "Vegetable Oils and Fats" (the 'fats' are hydrogenated and the 'oil' isn't). "Vegetable Margarine", and even as "Polyunsaturated Margarine". Look at a margarine labels nutrition information - ever wonder why the component fats don't add up to the total fats? Trans fats aren't counted - they're neither one or the other.

### WHATS THE ALTERNATIVE?

**Whole Earth SuperSpread™** offers smooth spreading butter-like characteristics with the lowest level of saturated fat (10%) and **no hydrogenated fat or trans fats.**

Ideally, the ratio of unsaturated to saturated fats in a healthy diet should be within a range of 3:1 to 7:1. Butter has a 1:2 ratio far too high in saturates. Even margarine made with palm oil or coconut oil has a 1:1 ratio, still far too high in saturates. **SuperSpread** has a ratio of unsaturated to saturated fats of 5:1. This is in the middle of the ideal range, and supports a natural and nutritive balance with other fats in the diet.

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