

LIVING EARTH

&

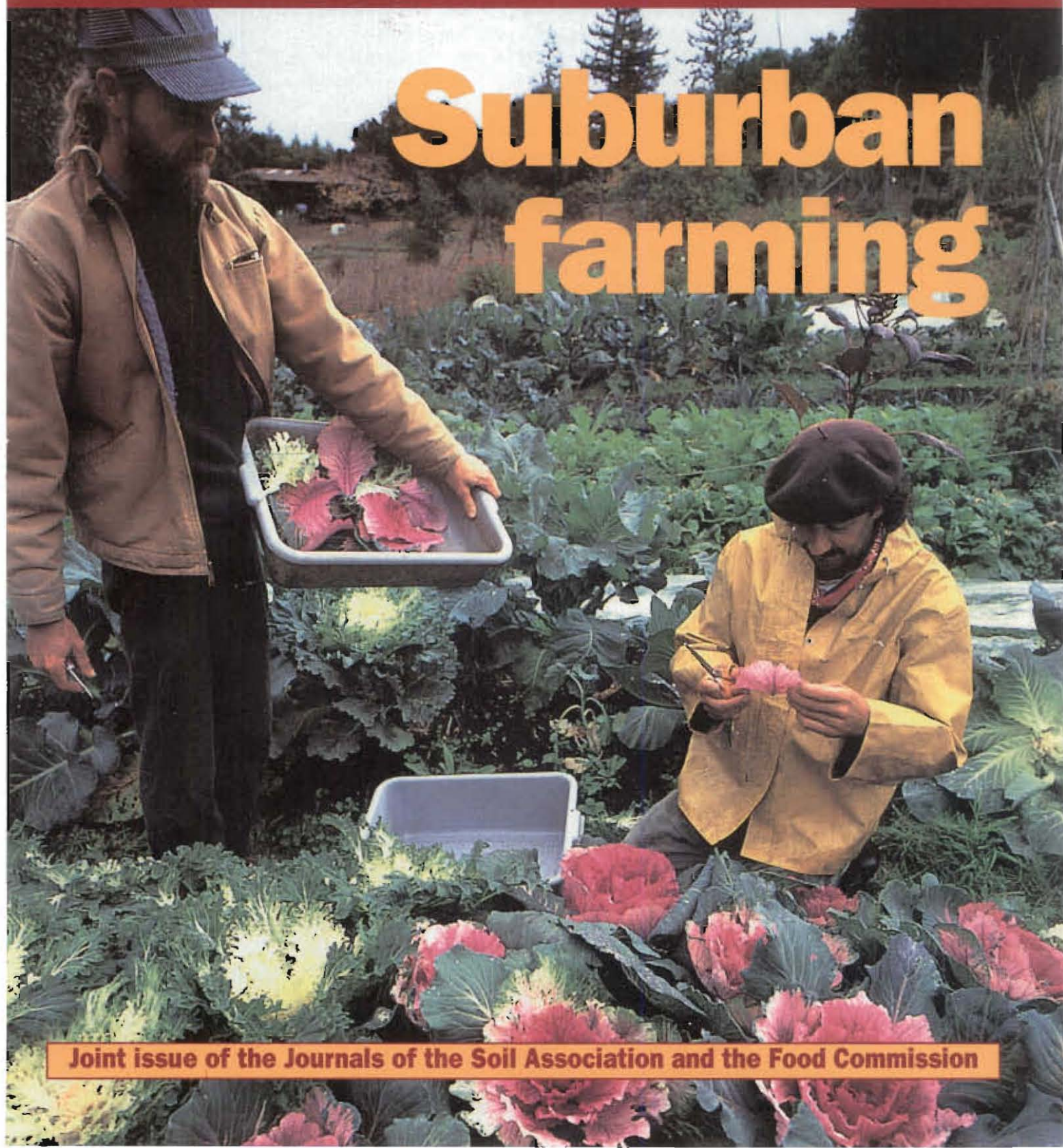
THE
FOOD
MAGAZINE

No: 185 ♦ Jan-March 1995

£3.50

Issue 28 Volume 3 ♦ Jan-March 1995

Suburban farming



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



The Soil Association exists 'to research, develop and promote sustainable relationships between the soil, plants, animals, people and the biosphere, in order to produce healthy food and other products while protecting and enhancing the environment'.

The Soil Association's Symbol Scheme is run by SAOMCo Ltd and licenses commercial food production to the highest organic standards and acts as a consumer guarantee of organic quality.

Soil Association Officers

President George McBride
Secretary Francis Blake
Chairman Charlotte Mitchell*
Treasurer Craig Sams*

Soil Association Council

Helen Browning* David Marlow
David Burton John Montague
Dougall Campbell Hugh Raven*
Tracey Clunies-Ross* Lizzie Vann
Alan Debenham Nic Lampin
Leslie Harrison Sir Julian Rose**
Roy Haycock Marchioness of
Henrietta Green Worcester**

* Management Committee

** Co-opted council member

Staff

General Manager & Accountant Alison Ollis
Policy Director Patrick Holden
Membership Administrator Stephanie Jones
Project Organiser Eric Booth
Bookmarketing and Information Manager Carol Dale
Receptionist & Administration Support Linda Honeyfield
Press & Public Relations Officer Tony Muir
Administration Assistant Sarah Perret
Research/Development Consultant Dr Mark Redman
Campaigns/Projects Director Robin Maynard
PA to Policy Director Christina Mey

SAOMCo Ltd

Chairman Roger Cadbury
Symbol Director Francis Blake
Non-executive Director Helen Browning
Non-executive Director Dougall Campbell
Technical Director John Dalby
Symbol Dept. Administrator Caroline Fitzgibbons
Symbol Dept. Administrator Cathy Wilson
Administration Assistant Lena Hadden
Certification Officer Philip Pridoux

Responsible Forestry Programme

Coordinator Dr Dorothy Jackson
Forest Officer Ian Rowland
Certification Administrator Gene Lowson
Research & Information Officer Rod Nelson

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.

Co-directors Sue Dibb and Tim Lobstein
Information and Admin Officer: Mary Whiting
Subscriptions Manager: Ian Tokelove
Food Irradiation Campaign officer and EECC network co-ordinator: Martine Drake

editorial

This month sees the start of the late 1990s. And it is a good time to celebrate. The first Organic Harvest in this country was a great success (see page 6), and caps a period of remarkable change. Who five years ago would have expected John Gummer, Conservative Secretary of State for the Environment, to launch such an event? And with Friends of the Earth now moving into the organic camp (page 23), and birdlife organisations becoming more concerned (page 6), it is increasingly plausible that we may yet reach the target of 20 per cent organic by the year 2000.

Even more success was celebrated when the UK Government conceded defeat at the Council of Ministers meeting in December, and accepted a European ban on the milk-boosting hormone Bovine Somatotropin (BST) until the year 2000 (see opposite). The national launch of the campaign against BST began exactly seven years ago in this magazine — *The Food Magazine's* very first issue featured the scandal of secret BST trials and the unprecedented mixing of BST-produced milk into the nation's regular milk supply.

Meanwhile the plight of low income families is no longer dismissed by the Government, and this winter sees a Department of Health-funded pack on tackling poverty and diet, published by the National Food Alliance (page 20). Supermarkets are falling over themselves to attract the cost-conscious shopper — though a Food Commission survey finds they are promoting a diet full of fatty, sweet products but short of fresh fruit and veg (see page 11).

There is further confirmation that fruit and vegetables play an important role in preventing cancer (page 8), and the Government's COMA report (page 4) urges us to eat more. Yet an incredible 21 per cent of English families bought no fruit at all during 1992. It is time supermarkets, advertisers and the Government worked together to increase our consumption of these vital foods.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The promotion of commercial products in this magazine is done only by the Soil Association, not the Food Commission. For details on how to advertise, or comments on the advertisements, please contact Tony Muir on 0272-290661.

Living Earth (formerly Mother Earth, the Journal of the Soil Association, and the Soil Association Quarterly Review) is published every three months by the Soil Association Ltd, 86-88 Colston Street, Bristol, Avon BS1 5BB. Tel: 0272-290661, fax: 0272-252504. This edition Jan-March 1995, the 50th year of publication, issue no. 185.

The Food Magazine is published quarterly by The Food Commission (UK) Ltd, Third Floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH, tel: 071-628 7774, fax: 071-628 0817. This edition Jan-March 1995, the 6th year of publication, issue no. 28, ISSN 0953-5047

■ This edition has been edited by Tim Lobstein and Sue Dibb. ■ Editorial advice from Tony

Muir, Mark Redman and Patrick Holden. ■ Typesetting and design by Ian Tokelove of the Food Commission and Sarah Dobinson of Artworkers, 1a Berry Place, Sebastian Street, London EC1V 0JD. ■ Printed by Spider Web, 14-20 Sussex Way, London N7 6RS. ■ Inside pages printed on recycled paper, cover printed on conservation grade paper. ■ Retail distribution by Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN. ■ Unless otherwise indicated all items are the joint copyright © the Soil Association Ltd and the Food Commission (UK) Ltd 1995 and are not to be reproduced without written permission from both bodies.

■ The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of either the Food Commission or the Soil Association.

contents

News

Soya milk oestrogens	3
BST banned to 2000	3
New advertising rules	4
COMA heart report	4
Sweets off the checkout	4
EC weaning directive	5
Hypo-allergenic milks	5
Organics good for birds	6
Organic Harvest	6
Farm conservation awards	6
Organic food awards 1994	7
Woodmark seeks FSC credit	10
Food irradiation criticised	10

Diet and health

Professor Potter explains how vegetables fight cancer	8-9
---	-----

Checkout

Cut-price food promotes poor health	11-13
Loopy labels	14-15
Fast food: When the chips are down	16
Fats: spreading confusion	17

Global letter

California: suburban farming	19
------------------------------	----

Food and society

Tackling poverty and diet	20-21
---------------------------	-------

National Food Alliance News

22

Agriculture

FOE's Charles Secrett talks to the SA	23
Countryside conservation: green or mean?	23

Feedback

24

Book reviews

24-25

Soil Association News

New staff, obituary, local group news	27
---------------------------------------	----

Backbites

28

■ Cover picture from Michael Abelman's book *From The Good Earth*, Thames and Hudson 1993.

New Zealand research questions safety of hormones in soya baby milks

The Food Commission has received evidence from New Zealand that soya formula milks for babies contain levels of chemicals, known as phytoestrogens, which, the researchers say, give young babies the equivalent of several contraceptive hormone pills a day*. The research has been widely reported in the New Zealand press with calls for soya formulae to be withdrawn from sale. In 1992 the UK government's expert Committee on Toxicity recommended that levels of phytoestrogens in soya baby milks and other soya foods for children should be analysed as part of its review of natural toxicants in foods. Yet two years later that research has not started. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food told the Food Commission: 'It is on our priority list and we hope the work will start in 1995. We are keeping an open mind and a close watch on this, though we are not aware of any reports of adverse effects.'

Phytoestrogens are found in many plants including soya and can act like weak human oestrogens in the human body. They are generally thought to have a protective role against breast cancer but their potential effects on babies is largely unknown. Recent research has shown that phytoestrogens from soya foods can affect the menstrual cycles of women and could decrease fertility. There is also much long standing evidence that phytoestrogens are toxic to animals and can cause reproductive disorders and infertility in many species including sheep, rats, tigers and birds. Oestrogen-like pollutants in drinking water and the environment are also raising concerns that they could be linked to the increasing incidence of cancers, abnormal sexual development and increasing infertility in men. One researcher in this field, Dr Richard Sharpe of the MRC

Reproductive Biology Unit in Edinburgh recommends caution. 'We just don't know enough about the effects of oestrogen-type chemicals on the developing foetus and new born babies. Therefore I would recommend that exposure to oestrogens from whatever source should be kept to a minimum especially during childhood.'

The New Zealand researchers measured phytoestrogens in Infasoy, Isomil and Prosobee soya infant formulas available in New Zealand and calculated that the biological effect of the levels of phytoestrogens typically consumed by a baby would be 100 times greater than the amount of natural oestrogen the child would receive from breast milk. They further estimate that this is equivalent, on a weight for weight basis, to giving a new born baby several oral contraceptive pills a day.

The Food Commission has asked companies supplying soya baby milks in the UK to provide information on levels of phytoestrogens. As we went to press only one company, Wyeth, which makes SMA Wysoy formula was able to provide the Food Commission with figures. SMA told the Food Commission: 'Our soy formula contains no more than 20-28 µg/ml (of phytoestrogens) in the reconstituted product'. This appears to be approximately two-thirds of the levels found in New Zealand formulas.

The baby milk companies' trade association, the Infant and Dietetics Food Association, was unable to supply us with any other figures for UK products. But a spokeswoman did suggest that all products would contain broadly similar amounts as she thought that companies 'all bought soya from the same supplier.' She added that levels could fluctuate according to seasonal and other environmental factors.

Soya-based infant formulas were

BST banned until next century

The genetically engineered milk-boosting hormone Bovine Somatotropin (BST) is to be banned in the European Union until January 1, 2000. The Agriculture Ministers met in December and with one exception agreed to extend the moratorium.

The only Minister voting for an immediate lifting of the ban was the UK's William Waldegrave, who had previously informed consumer groups that he would vote for legalising BST on the grounds that there was no scientific justification for a ban. He is caught between the companies — Monsanto and Eli Lilly — who argue they have a right to market animal pharmaceuticals that are safe and effective, and consumer and animal rights groups who are unhappy with evidence that the drug leads to distressed animals and a raised incidence of mastitis.

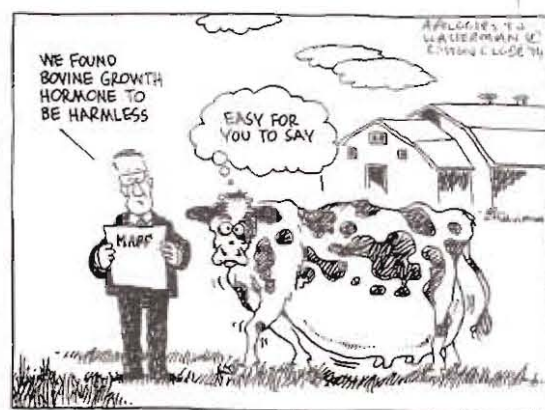
Dairy trade organisations are also deeply unhappy with the damage that BST could do to the image of milk as a clean, fresh product that has not been processed or tampered with. A *Farmers Weekly* survey of 500 dairy farmers found 79 per cent against the

licensing of BST. Only 16 per cent were actually in favour of licensing, and of these only two in five said they might use the product if it was available.

The EU ban has allowed a small loophole in the form of continued scientific trials. Previous trials have been held at secret locations, and the milk from BST-treated cows has been allowed into the national supply. MAFF have not indicated whether the same conditions will apply.

The EU decision will not prevent the importation of dairy products from BST-treated cows from outside the EU. BST has been licensed for use, subject to monitoring of mastitis levels, in the USA.

■ Details: BST Concern, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH (tel 0171-638 0606)



developed twenty years ago for bottle fed infants who are intolerant to cows' milk protein and for infants who are lactose intolerant. They are also used by vegans and some ethnic groups wishing to avoid animal products. Sales are worth nearly £9 million a year from the three percent of babies in the UK who are fed soya-formula, with about 85% of sales on prescription. Although they are used for babies with allergy to cow's milk products, soya formulas themselves are known to cause allergies. The new government COMA weaning report recommends that soya infant formulas 'should not be a first choice unless there is a specific reason for excluding cow's milk from the diet'.

The report also warns of dangers to dental health as lactose (milk sugar) is replaced in all brands by other sugars such as glucose, sucrose and maltose which are cariogenic. Phytates in soya may also inhibit the absorption of iron, zinc and calcium though products are fortified.

The Food Commission will be urging MAFF and the Department of Health to consider the New Zealand report and to ensure that the recommended research is given urgent priority.

■ *The Toxicity of Soybeans and Related Products*. James RF, James VA, Woodhams, DJ, Fitzpatrick, MG, Auckland, New Zealand, 1994.

New advertising rules get critical welcome

The National Food Alliance and the Food Commission have given a critical welcome to Independent Television Commission (ITC) proposals for new rules for food and slimming advertisements. The National Food Alliance, which has been campaigning for advertising to support healthier eating rather than undermining it, says the proposals are a step in the right direction but fall short of consumer and public health expectations.

The new rules will ban advertisements that encourage or condone excessive consumption of a food or disparage good nutritional practice. Adverts for products sold as an aid to slimming will be banned when children are likely to be watching. The ITC has acknowledged the health implications for food advertising and is proposing a new section of the code specifically on food advertising.

The proposals tighten existing rules on dental health – advertisements must not encourage children to eat frequently throughout the day or to consume food or drink near bedtime except where there are no implications for dental hygiene (eg mineral water). A strengthening of the code

on generalised health claims is also proposed.

The new rules include several that accord with NFA recommendations put to the ITC earlier this year and follow the Nutrition Task Force's recommendation that advertising regulatory bodies should review their codes of practice in the light of the Health of the Nation', said Sue Dibb, Food Commission co-director and NFA project officer. The NFA is disappointed by the limited scope of the ITC review – its failure to address concerns about the misleading use of images of sport and fitness and the refusal by the ITC to look at the cumulative pattern of advertising to children.

The dominance of fatty and sugary foods in advertisements to children (see issue 27) has caused concerns for children's diets. The NFA has proposed that 'fatty and sugary' foods should not be advertised when large numbers of children are watching and that ways should be found to encourage advertising with more positive nutrition messages. The new rules are likely to be published in early 1995.

■ For more information: The NFA Advertising Project: 071-628 2442.

No sweets at checkout, say parents

A GALLUP survey has found that 87 per cent of mums and 74 per cent of dads don't want sweets and chocolates at supermarket checkouts. Over 60 per cent of parents said the displays encourage their children to pressurise them into making unplanned purchases. Nearly half of these parents say they usually give in and buy sweets or chocolate from the checkout. The figure is higher for parents from social groups D and E, which reflects the pattern of dental disease in the UK.

The Chuck Sweets Off the

Checkout Campaign, which commissioned the survey, is monitoring local stores and pharmacies and will be publishing a league table of good and bad practice early in the new year. February 2 will see a national 'Action Day' when stores with no confectionery at the checkout will be presented with an 'Award of Good Practice' and those continuing to display sweets will be lobbied to provide 'sweet-free' routes through the checkout.

■ For further information: Iona Smeaton 081-770 8311.

COMA resists industry lobby

The government's new COMA report on diet and heart disease has been welcomed as the most important report on diet and health in the last ten years by the National Food Alliance. The report – *Nutritional Aspects of Cardiovascular Disease*, by the Department of Health's Committee on the Medical Aspects on Food Policy (COMA) – translates scientific terminology into plain English and provides practical advice on a healthy diet.

The report caused clashes between government and the food industry when it was leaked to the press last summer (see issue 27). Manufacturers of fatty and sugary foods including Cadbury Schweppes,

Mars, Tate & Lyle and United Biscuits, demanded a private meeting with the junior health minister in a bid to have the report's recommendations watered down. But on this occasion the government stood firm.

United Biscuits – traditionally one of the Conservative party's most loyal corporate donors – are expected to cease their political donations. In 1992 United Biscuits were the largest single donor (£130,000) to Tory funds. The company was one of several that successfully lobbied the government to scrap the London lorry ban.

■ Department of Health, *Nutritional Aspects of Cardiovascular Disease*, HMSO, £10.00.

Nutrition awards

The Caroline Walker Trust held its 6th annual awards ceremony last November, followed by the seminal lecture from Professor Potter (see pages 8 and 9). The overall award winner was June Scarborough of the National Association of Teachers of Home Economics & Technology for her campaign to keep home economics and cooking on the school curriculum.

Additional awards went to:

- ◆ Iona Smeaton (consumer award) for the 'Chuck Sweets off the Checkout' campaign
- ◆ Josephine Fairley (industry award) for Green and Black's environmen-

tally friendly organic chocolate (all shortlisted products were organic)

- ◆ Professor David Barker (science award) for his work on the early determinants of ill-health
- ◆ Sophie Grigson (media award) for the 'Eat Your Greens' series
- ◆ Dr Susan Martin (special award) for service on the Department of Health Nutrition Task Force
- ◆ Jody Stookey wins this year's Caroline Walker student bursary
- ◆ Bhavesh Kataria wins this year's Caroline Walker essay prize

■ For more details of the work of the Caroline Walker Trust contact them at 6 Aldridge Road Villas, London W11 1BP.

Supermarket power

The food retail giants dominate the food system. Now a new report asks what needs to be done about the supermarkets' power. *Off our trolleys?* by Tim Lang and Hugh Raven outlines many areas of concern from competition policy to packaging and town planning.

The subject will also be explored at a one-day seminar for NGO's and public

interest groups to be held on February 15 in London which is being jointly organised by the SAFE Alliance and the Centre for Food Policy at Thames Valley University. For further details contact Vicky Hird on 071-823 5660.

■ *Off our trolleys?* by Hugh Raven and Tim Lang is published by IPPR, 30-32 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7RA, price £4.95 (inc p&p).

New attack on EC weaning food directive

A European Commission Directive on baby foods, specifying the content and nature of foods for babies across the European Union, has been criticised by consumer organisations for enshrining bad commercial practices and undermining tougher national laws in countries such as Denmark.

The Directive, due to be ratified in February, appears to go beyond the recommendations of the expert Scientific Committee on Food by allowing the enrichment of baby foods with vitamins and minerals, whereas this is not so broadly recommended by the SCF. Only limited enrichment of baby food is allowed in some EU states, but a Danish delegation's request that the EC obtain a statement from the SCF to clarify this point was refused by the EC.

The European consumers' organisation BEUC is also concerned at the license given to add nutrients such as amino acids which 'would only be needed if the composition of the products was very poor', and calls for a

comprehensive policy on food fortification before allowing it in baby foods. 'The main problems in Western diets are related to macro-nutrients and lack of hygiene. Fortified foodstuffs do not

address these problems. Moreover, it should be realised that the benefits of surplus vitamin intake by healthy individuals are not clear.'

The Food Commission and BEUC have also criticised the Directive for including children aged one to three years as needing specially prepared weaning foods, and want the Directive to make clear that 'the nutritional requirements for very young children can be matched by every day food.'

■ More details: The Food Commission

EC sneaks in hypo-allergenic milks

British and Danish campaigners are also concerned at a proposed amendment to the EC Directive on Infant Formula, which would allow the labelling of formula containing protein hydrolysates as being 'hypoallergenic' or 'hypoantigenic', and allow claims of a 'reduced allergen content' or 'reduced antigen content'.

There are considerable doubts about the value of these products. Unlike the high-hydrolysate content products used in paediatric wards, these commercial products have a low- or partly-hydrolysed protein content. The SCF has called for detailed

clinical trials and the supplying of all relevant data obtained by manufacturers. Other specialists, such as Bengt Bjorksten, head of the Scandinavian Federation of Paediatrics, are doubtful of the value of the commercial hypo formulae.

Baby Milk Action is co-ordinating attempts to distinguish commercial hypo formulae from hospital supplies, to ensure that the former will not be allowed to make hypoallergenic claims.

■ Contact BMA, 23 St Andrews St, Cambridge CB2 3AX, tel 01223-464420.

Bad aid goes to Bosnia?

Sending baby milk powder as food aid can undermine the health of babies, according to a joint UN agency statement last autumn. The statement refers particularly to the war-stricken areas of former Yugoslavia, and warns against the distribution of commercial substitutes for breast milk which would discourage breast feeding and lead to dependence on supplies of formula which may be irregular, and to the use of tap water for young babies which may be contaminated. Similarly, commercial weaning foods are not recommended.

But the message has yet to get through. 'Baby foods of all types and descriptions required' runs an appeal co-ordinated by the London Ambulance Service. We asked the director of the appeal, Peter Kingsley-Ducane. 'We'll accept anything,' he said. 'Including baby milk powder?' 'Yes,' he said.

'This is not the only agency acting in good faith but without sufficient understanding of the problems that milk powder can cause,' said Tim Lobstein of The Food Commission. Even in the rare cases where orphaned babies must be fed formula milk there is no reason to use commercial brands, but to use non-branded versions and ensure there are instructions in local language.

■ For more details on recommended aid for babies, contact The Food Commission.

COMA weaning report plays safe

The Department of Health's report on weaning foods* published last October makes no attempt to lay down recommended quality or compositional specifications, although it gently chides the industry for the excessive use of sugars by recommending that the range of low-sugar or sugar-free products should be increased.

It also calls for baby food labelling to give 'consistent information understandable to parents' but fails to say what might be wrong at present, apart from the need to identify the amounts of sugar.

The report appears to endorse the use of commercial 'follow-on' milks, but only after the age of six months,

and then either formula or 'follow-on' milks may be offered. Indeed it suggests 'Breast milk and/or infant formula are advised as main drinks in the diet throughout the first year of life and may be continued for longer.' Cow's milk is not recommended before one year.

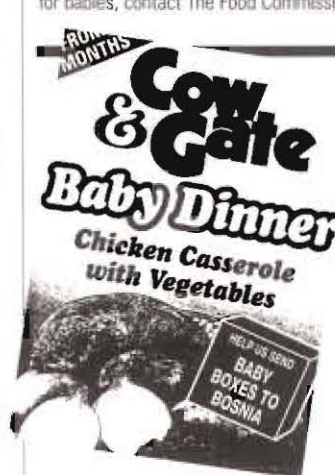
The report was produced by the first COMA group to include an industry representative, although it was by no means the first to have several medical experts with financial links to food companies.

■ *Weaning and the Weaning Diet*, Department of Health Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy report 45, HMSO, 1994, ISBN 0-11-321838-9, £6.50.

Bottlefeeding mums to sue

Mothers who were pressured into bottle feeding their babies are working with campaigning solicitor Graham Ross to consider legal action against health authorities and baby milk companies. Mothers who feel they were unduly persuaded should write to Graham Ross, Alabama House, 6 Rumford Place, Liverpool L3 9BY.

■ Restrictions on the advertising of commercial baby milks were due to be enacted by the UK Government last June. They were then delayed until the autumn, then again to December and have now been put off until January, after we go to press.



Baby food companies are linking themselves to Bosnian aid.

Organic farming is good for birds

Research by the British Trust for Ornithology has found more birdlife on organically managed farmland compared to conventional farmland writes Julianne Evans. Preliminary results from a three year study recorded skylarks more often on organically managed fields than conventional ones, for both cereal and grass fields. Additionally, seven out of the nine most commonly recorded bird species were significantly more frequent, per unit length of hedgerow, on organic rather than conventionally managed farms.

The 1994 breeding season was the last in a three-year project run by the British Trust for Ornithology. Funded by MAFF and The Worldwide Fund for Nature, birds were studied throughout the year, using matched plots on organic and conventional farmland.

In 1993 and 1994 Skylark breeding success was studied on two farms in Suffolk, one organic and one conventional. The Skylarks did better on the organic farm and in particular, organic cereals held much higher territory densities than those under a conventional regime. The number of

chicks fledged per nesting attempt was also much higher on organic cereals.

The researchers have concluded that Skylarks which nest on the organic cereals are able to produce enough chicks to maintain a stable population, whereas those on all conventional cereals except spring barley are not. The explanation for the difference in breeding success may lie in the greater crop diversity under an organic regime which provides suitable nesting habitat throughout the season. Another reason may be that the food supply for chicks is better on organic farms. Greater crop diversity also contributes to a greater diversity and abundance of invertebrates which will also be encouraged by the withdrawal of pesticides and the rotational practices such as under-sowing. An adequate food supply is crucial to the survival of the chicks, both while they are in the nest and when they are learning to fend for themselves after they have fledged.

The results of the three years' work are still being analysed.

■ Further information is available from Julianne Evans, BTO, 0842 750050.

Bringing in the Harvest

The UK's first Organic Harvest Month, held last October has been a great success writes Eric Booth.

Organic Harvest which featured the largest ever programme of activities and promotions of organic food, was promoted by the Soil Association, Organic Marketing Group, Henry Doubleday Research Association, Organic Farmers & Growers and Biodynamic Agricultural Association and others. Over one hundred events were held and the Soil Association's Organic Harvest Hotline was kept busy sending out information packs.

The success of Organic Harvest was reflected in the extensive press coverage which included a leader article in *The Times*, a major feature in *The Independent* and numerous articles in the national and regional press.

Organic Harvest Month brought together a broad range of supporters. Retailers participated in a window display competition with prizes of £1,500 and a Soil Association membership for every entry. Manufacturers gave price promotions, in many cases offering their products at the same prices as conventional 'equivalents'. Local groups held harvest suppers and challenged people to try the 'Organic Taste Test'.

And farmers and growers organised open days and farm walks.

Participants are now looking forward to the 1995 Organic Harvest Month.

A brief summary newsletter about the month is being prepared and we'd welcome hearing any comments or suggestions for next year. We have proved that the Organic Harvest Month idea is the most potent tool available to us for the promotion of the benefits of organic food, farming and gardening. Everyone with an interest in seeing organic ideas spread more widely should begin thinking about how to make the most of the 1995 Organic Harvest Month now!

■ Send comments and suggestions to Eric Booth at the Soil Association. Include a SAE if you'd like the Newsletter.

New award for farm conservation

A farm in Wales has won an important new farm conservation award aimed specifically at organic farms of 400 acres or less. John and Peter Morris of Brown Slate Farm, Hundleton, Pembroke received the Loraine Awards first prize of £2000, presented at the Soil Association AGM on 19 November.

Of the 24 entries, Brown Slate Farm was judged to be the best example of profitable husbandry, healthy food production and conservation of native wildlife. The farm features hay meadows which have not

been ploughed in living memory, and acre of rare Southern Marsh Orchids and well maintained hedgerows among its varied wildlife habitats. The Morrises have been fully organic since 1990 but had been practising low-input farming for years.

'We have been increasing stock numbers and been improving the farm,' says Peter Morris, 'But we wanted to keep conservation as part of it as well. We do it because we like what we see around us'.

The award is sponsored by Joan Loraine and stems from over thirty

years involvement with conservation and organics. Joan is very concerned with the steady erosion of our countryside's wildlife riches since World War 2, the trend towards larger farms and the drift of people away from the land.

Also specially commended were the Wolstenholmes' farm at Triorwg, Llandeilo, the Eggletons of Little Mill Farm, Llanfaenor, Monmouth and Graham and Vivian Maitravers' 75 acre council holding in Yorkshire. Joan Loraine hopes that another category, for horticultural holdings can



The Southern Marsh Orchid, one of the Treasures of Brown Slate Farm

be added to the awards in the near future.

■ Brown Slate Farm is holding an open day on Saturday 10 June. For further information contact Peter Morris 0646 682356

Organic Food Awards draw the crowds



Lizzie Vann of Organix Brands makes the most of a 'photo opportunity' with Loyd Grossman.

Champion of Champions: The overall winner, Little Marcle Organic Partnership's box of vegetables.



Famous names from the world of food turned out in force to applaud the finest efforts of organic food producers at the 1994 Soil Association Organic Food Awards on 24 November. The Awards, now in their seventh year, aim to identify the best organic foods available in the UK and highlight the enormous range of excellent organic products now available.

This year the Awards were held in the Organic Pavilion of the BBC Good Food, Cooking and Kitchen Show at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, the first time they have been staged at a major consumer event. One hundred and sixteen different products entered this year's competition which covered 11 different food categories, neatly illustrating that nowadays you can buy an organic version of almost anything you might care to put in your shopping basket. At the first round of judging in London, food experts from the four sponsors of the Awards – BBC Good Food magazine, Sainsbury, the Meat and Livestock Commission and Unigate Dairies – selected 44 shortlisted products over three days amid much cooking, chomping, slurping and mountains of washing up.

The final judging took place live in front of a considerable crowd at the NEC, some of whom thought the tempting samples laid out on the Soil Association stand were for them to taste rather than for the assembled celebrity judges. Selecting the final eleven winners from the short list of 44 products were: Mitzie Wilson, Editor of *BBC Good Food*; Joanna Blythman, food writer for *The Independent*; Henrietta Green, well

known author of *Food Lover's Guide to Britain*; Mary Gwynn, Editor of *BBC Vegetarian Good Food*; Juliet Harbutt, food writer and Master of Cheese; Peter Bazalgette, Producer of the BBC Food and

Drink Programme; Thane Prince of the *Daily Telegraph* and Derek Cooper, presenter of The Food Programme on BBC Radio 4 and food columnist for *Scotland on Sunday*.

Cameras clicked at 3.30pm when television personality, Loyd Grossman presented each of the winners with their certificates. 'The judges had a difficult task reaching their decision' he said. 'The quality of the entries was particularly high and it is pleasing to see how many organic products are now available. These annual Awards have played a valuable part in bringing organic food and drink to the attention of the British public.'

The winner of the overall award, The Soil Association Organic Food Challenge Trophy and winner of the fresh produce category was a home delivery box of vegetables from Little Marcle Organic Partnership in Herefordshire. One of the judges, Mary Gwynn praised the Little Marcle vegetables as 'inspirational. It includes a the best carrots I have ever tasted'.

This was the second major recognition for Little Marcle in less than a month. Earlier in November the company was featured on The Food Programme on BBC Radio Four. They deliver boxes of vegetables containing enough for two people to households in the Ledbury area for £6.50 a week and also supply the Birmingham area through the Organic Marketing Company. Tyn Crug Cheese from Welsh Organic Foods of Lampeter also scored a double success, winning the Dairy Produce category and the £500 Elm Farm Research Centre Award for Food Quality.

For the remaining three days of the show the focus of interest on the Soil Association stand shifted to the cookery area. Here, top names such as Henrietta Green, Valentina Harris, Juliet Harbutt and Thane Prince captured the imagination of capacity audiences by showing how and why they prefer to use organic ingredients and some of the best organic producers, such as Doves Farm and Eastbrook Farm Organic Meats, gave talks and demonstrations.

The other winners were:

- Baked Goods, Flours and Cereals:** Original Gingered Biscuits, Shipton Mill
- Beverages:** Worcester and Laxton Apple Juice, Crones Cider, Norfolk Beers and Ciders: Golden Pale, Caledonian Brewing Company
- Ready Meals:** Squab Pie, Swaddles Green Farm, Somerset
- Baby Food:** Oat Cereal with Apples and Strawberry, Organix Brands plc
- Preserves and Condiments:** Shady Maple Farm Syrup, Community Foods Ltd.
- Snacks and Confectionery:** Apache Blue Tortilla Chips, Silbury Marketing Ltd.
- Meat:** Traditional Spiced Leg of Mutton, Graig Farm, Powys.
- Poultry:** Oven Ready Chicken, P.J. Onions (Farms), Nottinghamshire.

How vegetables fight cancer

The link between eating plant foods and preventing cancer is gaining increasing support, says Professor John Potter.

Vegetables and fruit contain an anti-carcinogenic chemical cocktail which we abandon at our peril. The phytochemicals — chemicals of plant origin which play a crucial role in our metabolism — act in a variety of ways, and confirm the need for humans to ensure they have a high intake of plant foods.

The Dietary and Nutritional Study of British Adults found the average daily intake of raw and salad vegetables to be about one ounce, and daily intake of fresh fruit about two ounces. Over a one week period two thirds of the adults ate no leafy green vegetables, nearly half ate no apples or pears and nearly three quarters ate no citrus fruit. If, in fact, the consumption of vegetables and fruit reduces cancer risk, then public health and economic interventions to increase the current consumption levels would be well justified and, given the currently low intake, relatively effective.

Surveys since the early 1980s have shown that

higher consumption of fruits and vegetables reduce the risk of certain cancers.

■ **Lung cancer:** The most studied cancer of all, lung cancer shows the most evidence of the benefits of eating fruit and vegetables, but this may not indicate the strongest link. Consumption of carrots and green leafy vegetables is particularly associated with a lower risk of lung cancer.

■ **Colon cancer:** Cruciferous vegetables (the cabbage family) and carrots appear to be beneficial. They are more closely linked to a lower risk of colon cancer than other vegetables which have similar amounts of fibre, which suggests that the lower risk associated with vegetables is not explained by fibre alone.

■ **Rectal cancer:** An association between vegetable and fruit consumption and a lower risk has been consistently reported, but no associations with specific foods emerge.

■ **Upper respiratory/digestive tract cancer:** Consumption of fruit appears to be associated with a lower risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and oesophagus. This may be related to the common causes of cancers of the head and neck, for which the strongest and most consistent risk factors are tobacco and alcohol. Consumption of vegetables appears to be especially associated with lower risk of cancer of the larynx.

■ **Stomach cancer:** Fruit in general, and lettuce, onions, tomatoes, celery and squash have been quite consistently associated with lower risk of stomach cancer. The protective effect of eating vegetables and fruit raw, rather than cooked or preserved, also appears to be a consistent pattern. Canned fruit and potatoes have been associated with an increased risk in some studies.

■ **Pancreas cancer:** Almost every case-control study of pancreas cancer has reported lower risk associated with the consumption of vegetables and fruit but, as with rectal cancer, no specific foods emerge.

■ **Bladder cancer:** Consumption of fruit and vegetables in general, and of carrots in particular, appears to be associated with a lower risk.

■ **Hormone-dependent cancers:** There is some evidence of an inverse link between fruit and vegetable consumption and cancers of the breast and uterus, but the evidence is not as consistent as it is for those listed above. For ovarian and prostate cancers virtually no evidence exists for an association.

A site-specific review may be useful for understanding the mechanisms of cancer, but what is most important for dietary recommendations is an overall assessment of which vegetables and fruits are associated with cancer at all sites. The table shows a summary of the studies showing increased risk, decreased risk and no association between cancers and specific types of vegetables and fruits.

For all categories except potatoes and legumes, more than 80 per cent of the associations were either in the direction of reduced cancer risk or null. This shows there is very little likelihood of harm arising

Research linking vegetables, fruit and cancer

	No. of Studies	No. showing reduced risk	No. showing no link	No. showing increased risk
Citrus fruit	29	17	9	3
Raw or fresh fruit	43	22	17	4
Legumes	24	7	6	11
Potatoes	30	9	11	10
Lettuce	23	19	1	3
Cabbage	22	13	5	4
Broccoli	10	7	3	0
Carrots	44	33	8	3
Allium vegetables	18	11	4	3
Cruciferous vegetables	42	28	10	4
Leafy green vegetables	62	49	6	7
Raw or fresh vegetables	30	25	4	1

from the consumption of these foods. Even the null results, showing no associations, should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence against a lower risk, as a variety of factors tend to ensure that the associations seen in epidemiological studies — whether with increased or decreased risk — are conservative.

Most of the studies show no more than a halving of the risk of cancer with high consumption of vegetables and fruit. This may be an underestimate of much stronger underlying relationships, but even if the risk of cancer were only halved by increasing vegetable and fruit consumption this would still represent a major modifiable influence on the overall burden of cancer in the community.

Evolution

We cannot be certain to what kinds of diets humans are best adapted, but it is reasonable to attempt some tentative speculation on early common features:

- a high intake of a wide variety of plant foods — roots, leaves, nuts, seeds and fruit. Grains can only have become a staple in the last 10 to 15 thousand years and before that were probably gathered in season.
- sporadic intake of lean meat low in saturated fat, along with fish and seafood for coastal dwellers.
- An intake of insects, grubs, bone marrow and meats.
- Very low intake of alcohol — largely by finding

over-ripe fruit before the birds did.

- Little refining or fractionation of food.
- Seasonal variations, both in total intake and in the kinds of foods and nutrients season by season.

The normal long-term functioning of human cells depends on the presence of a variety of dietary constituents including, but not confined to, the nutrients such as vitamins and essential fatty acids and amino acids that are essential for growth and development. In addition to these well-recognised essential nutrients other nutrients, the phytochemicals discussed here, may also be necessary for the maintenance of the organism.

In the absence of the necessary nutrients, human cells start to malfunction. The cells may become more susceptible to carcinogens, they may lose their protective mechanisms, or they may start to replicate rapidly to adapt to their new (unprotected) state.

Conversely, a high intake of substances which are normally only met with occasionally may have detrimental consequences. This includes fats with their effects on cholesterol and insulin metabolism, and alcohol which acts as a solvent for carrying smoking-related carcinogens into cells, as well as being an irritant which encourages rapid cell turnover.

It is possible to object to the suggestion that there was an evolutionary need for dietary adaptation to ensure that the species was protected from chronic diseases. Natural selection influences reproductive success, whereas chronic diseases strike after the

reproductive years and, some suggest, cannot therefore influence the survival of the species.

In response I would argue that, firstly, humans have a long period of juvenile dependence and the survival of the parents in a healthy state is likely to favour the survival of the offspring to reproductive years. Secondly, the survival of tribes and bands would be influenced by having sufficient elders who knew how to respond to infrequently met hazards — food or water shortage, epidemic disease etc. The tribal wisdom maintained by the old would have meant survival of the tribe.

Further, a diet that reduces risk of cancer may also be a diet that improves reproductive success. There are a wide variety of substances that increase — and some that reduce — both teratogenicity (occurrence of birth defects) and carcinogenicity. Selection for a diet that improved reproductive success could directly select for reduced risk of cancer.

Professor John D Potter, MBBS, PhD, is co-chairman of the World Cancer Research Fund's expert panel on Diet and Cancer, and is head of the Cancer Prevention Research Program, Seattle and Professor at Washington University, Seattle.

The article here has been taken from Professor Potter's Caroline Walker Lecture 1994. The full lecture, *Content with a vegetable love: plant foods and cancer risk*, may be obtained from Ian Tokelove, Caroline Walker Trust, 3rd floor 5/11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH, price £7.50.

Phytochemicals — how they work

Carotenoids: More than 500 carotenoids occur in nature, present in green leafy vegetables and yellow/orange vegetables and fruits. Converted to vitamin A they have a role in cell differentiation (non-differentiation is a feature of cancer cells). Carotenoids also quench singlet oxygen molecules and trap free radicals.

Vitamin C: This is an anti-oxidant and can enhance the immune response. It can also prevent nitrites becoming nitrosamines, linked to stomach cancer. And it plays a role in the creation of collagen, a connective tissue which can encapsulate and limit tumorous growths.

Vitamin E: Cell-membrane fatty acids are protected from oxidation by vitamin E, which also maintains selenium in its reduced state, and inhibits nitrosamine formation at low pH.

Limonene: Found in citrus fruit oils, limonene induces detoxifying enzyme activity.

Folic acid: A deficiency of folates causes chromosomal damage and the formation of micronuclei.

Selenium: This is a co-factor for glutathione peroxidase, an enzyme that protects from oxidative damage. It can also suppress cell proliferation.

Dietary fibre: Fibre can encourage greater fermentation activity in the gut, inhibiting the conversion of primary to secondary bile acids which are potential co-carcinogens. Fermentation can encourage the formation of butyrate, an acid with tumour-inhibiting properties.

Dithiols: These appear to increase the levels of glutathione enzymes, and reduce chromosome breaks and lipid peroxidation.

Phenols: These probably act by inducing solubilizing enzyme activity and inhibit nitrosamine production.

Glucosinolates and indoles: These appear to increase the activity of several enzymes, and can increase the capacity of the liver to inactivate oestrogens.

Isothiocyanates and Thiocyanates: These inhibit DNA methylation during carcinogenesis. They may also block carcinogens from specific sites and may induce solubilizing enzyme activity.

Coumarins: These inhibit tumour formation, either by blocking sites or by inducing solubilizing enzyme activity.

Flavonoids: These include quercetin, kaempferol, myricetin and chrysin, nobiletin and tangeretin. They act as anti-oxidants and have mixed effects on oxidase activity.

Isoflavones: Some of these have weak oestrogenic activity, blocking free oestrogen and stimulating the production of globulin

which binds free oestrogen. May also inhibit cell growth signalling chemicals (tyrosine kinases).

Saponins: Found mostly in soya, these can bind bile acids and cholesterol, and can inhibit growth rate, and DNA synthesis rate, of some tumour cells.

Protease inhibitors: these inhibit the action of enzymes which destroy the extra-cellular matrix, and which cause cellular detachment and permit local invasion.

Plant sterols: Similar to cholesterol, but these pass through the gut virtually unabsorbed. They may decrease colon tumour formation, possibly by affecting cell membranes.

Allium compounds: These have anti-bacterial properties and may also stimulate production of detoxifying enzymes.

Woodmark applies for Forest Stewardship Council accreditation

The Responsible Forestry Programme was pleased to welcome Dr Tim Synnott, executive director of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) on his recent visit to start the process of accrediting the Soil Association's Woodmark timber certification and labelling scheme.

The FSC is the international umbrella organisation for timber certifiers equivalent to the International

Federation of Organic Agricultural Movement's (IFOAM) role for organic certifiers. During his visit, Dr Synnott visited Woodmark certified forests at Pengelli, Wales and Dartington, Devon and met with forest managers and Woodmark inspectors. The accreditation process will take several months and the Soil Association is expected to be one of the first certifiers to be approved.



Watch out for winter lettuce

Last autumn a warning letter was sent to more than 500 lettuce growers after MAFF figures revealed that a quarter of British-grown lettuces are contaminated with fungicides at levels that breach the 'maximum residue level' set by government. The fungicides include Mancozeb and Zineb which have both been classified by the US Environment Protection Agency as 'probable human carcinogens'. The contamination has been traced back to winter lettuces produced under glass by British growers. Residues were not found on lettuces imported from the EU.

But it is not just excessive levels of fungicides in lettuce which have been causing problems. Levels of nitrates, which come from fertilisers, are also too high says the European Commission. But instead of supporting moves to protect consumers, MAFF is arguing that it will be 'impossible' for British glasshouse growers to meet proposed limits. The answer it seems is to buy organic vegetables in season — a finding backed up by studies at the Elm Farm Research Centre.

First English Woodmark timber on sale

Soil Association-certified softwoods and hardwoods are now on sale from Dartington Home Woods. The timber currently being offered for tender to commercial buyers includes douglas fir, norway spruce, larch, western red cedar, coast redwood, oak, ash and small quantities of unusual woods such as tulip wood. 'We are delighted by the positive interest shown by potential buyers,' said James Lonsdale, Dartington's forest manager, 'and are very pleased to be on the map as the first producer of commercial quantities of certified timber in Europe.'

■ For further information contact Ian Rowland, Forest Officer at the Woodmark scheme. Tel: 0272 290661.



WOODMARK

THE SOIL ASSOCIATION'S
CERTIFICATE OF
RESPONSIBLE FORESTRY

Brazil beef hormone fears

The Brazilian Institute for Consumer Defence (IDEC) has warned other consumer organisations around the world that the Brazilian government may allow the use of anabolic steroids for fattening cattle. Government officials declare that meat containing anabolics will only be for domestic use but IDEC says, from experience, that controls are normally lax and the Brazilian authorities have no means of carrying them out effectively.

Organic food processing

The Leatherhead Food Research Association is hosting a seminar on organic food processing on 23 February 1995 which will highlight developments and opportunities in organic food processing, legislative developments and case studies. For further information contact Conference Administration, Leatherhead Food RA (01372) 376761.

IOCU attacks irradiation

The promotion of food irradiation by the World Health Organisation — whose long-deferred report in favour of the process was finally published in October — has been attacked by the leading international consumer body, the International Organisation of Consumer Unions (IOCU).

'The FAO and WHO promote irradiation as a means of dealing with world hunger and reducing food-borne disease, by killing pests and micro-organisms and so increasing the year-round supply of wholesome food,' says IOCU policy and campaigns director Maria Elena Hurtado. 'The evidence for this claim is weak and it can equally be argued that far more can be achieved by improving manufacturing processes and providing secure storage plants.'

Irradiating grain will, she says, leave it 'full of dead insects and mice.' Little is known about the effects of irradiation on pesticide residues, she adds.



In developing countries a common cause of diarrhoea in infants was the mixing of milk powder with unclean water. 'In the third world, spending scarce resources in providing clean water would do much more for people's health than investing in expensive food irradiation plants.'

■ *Food Irradiation: Solution or Threat?* IOCU Briefing Paper No 3, 1994, from IOCU, 24 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RX.

CHECKOUT

The Food Commission takes a closer look at supermarket ultra-low cost products — and finds the price wars leave a lot to be desired.

Cut-price food at the cost of our health?

Despite claiming to be on the side of consumers and their health, supermarkets are putting profits first in their latest battle for our purses.

Supermarkets spend thousands of pounds producing lovely glossy leaflets advising their shoppers how to eat a healthy diet. They spend thousands more pounds putting the nutritional details of their products on the label, so that customers can choose the healthier products if they wish.

And although both leaflets and labelling schemes have been criticised, both measures are claimed by the supermarkets to represent their intention to encourage better public health. But, when it comes to influencing choice through their prices, it appears the supermarkets are putting their principles behind them.

In their attempt to win back customers from the low-cost discounting chains such as Kwik-Save, Aldi and Netto, the supermarkets have launched their own ranges of extra-low priced products. Tesco led with their 'Value' lines, Safeways followed with their 'Savers' and Sainsbury with their 'Essentials'. Kwik-Save have fought back with their 'No Frills' range.



In each case the shops have taken the view that cutting the profit margins, and in some cases even making a loss on the selected items, is worthwhile in order to regain customers. Tesco estimates their Value line brings in an extra half million customers every week.

Repeated surveys have shown the importance of price when determining choice, especially among lower income families (just those families most at risk of eating unhealthy diets). A recent survey by Retail Analyst found 27% of customers used price alone in determining where they went shopping.

It would appear the perfect opportunity to use pricing policies to encourage healthier food choices.

But in the Food Commission's exclusive survey we found the opportunity had been thrown away.

Continues on next page

Researched by Diane Brockbank and Tim Lobstein

Essential, no-frills, value savers – or just junk?

Despite their rhetoric, the supermarkets have lost an opportunity to put their prices where their mouths are.

In order to attract their customers back from their competitors, the supermarkets needed to cut the price of a range of goods and promote these heavily. To attract customers it may not have mattered too much which products the supermarkets promoted with price cuts as long as the products were likely to get bought — and so, in principle, a wide range of healthier foods could have been discounted and strongly promoted.

But the lists of products obtained by the Food Commission from the supermarkets shows a tendency to promote anything they think will sell, with a sorry disregard for the nutritional effects on their customers.

Of the four supermarkets surveyed, only two saw fit to discount their potatoes, carrots and onions. But most included discounts on burgers, chips, crisps, jams, biscuits, cakes, ice cream and soft drinks.

Sainsbury, for example, happily included sausage rolls, cola drink and granulated sugar as 'Essentials'.

All supermarkets discounted white sliced bread (KwikSave to an amazing 21p for a large loaf) but only two discounted wholemeal bread, and both of them (Safeway and Tesco) charged 40-50 per cent more for the wholemeal.

At the same time, the quality of the goods being offered at discount was often substantially inferior.

Fish fingers were minced fish, not whole pieces. Burgers were likely to include poor quality meat or mechanically recovered meat. Pies and pasties were inclined to have more pastry and less filling, and ham to have extra water.

Poor labels

But comparing products was not made easy by the supermarkets' reluctance to give useful nutritional labelling. Again, the companies usually pride themselves in leading the way in giving consumers a detailed listing of nutrients, encouraging us to shop healthily by comparing the values for saturated fat, sugar, salt and fibre. But not when it comes to the special promotions. The cut-price promotions showed a notable absence of comprehensive nutritional labelling, with some products giving

the bare minimum details, and many giving none at all. For example, we could find no Safeway Saver with saturated fat or sugar levels shown.

This is not in the consumer interest. If we are being offered a choice we need the details to make an informed choice. Price alone can be badly misleading, and the sorts of products being offered at a cut price are likely to encourage a poor diet.

The Food Commission would like to see supermarkets putting full nutritional labelling on all their products, and for them to use price cutting to encourage healthier diets. The product managers and staff nutritionists employed by the supermarkets should be embarrassed by the products currently being offered as an inducement to shop in the companies' stores.



Chocolates, sweets, puddings and chocolate biscuits offered as inducements to buy.



More added water than added fruit in this 'fruit' yogurt.



Strawberry jam tarts — but no strawberries or jam in the ingredients list. Their apple pies had more fat (including hydrogenated) than fruit.

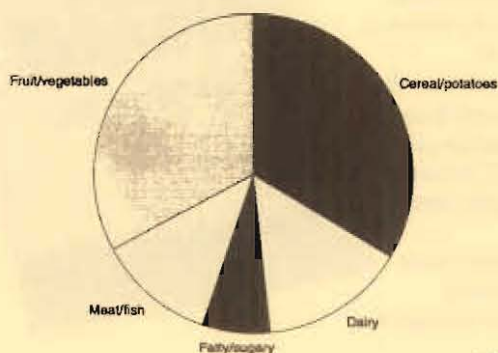
The cut-price promotions that promote poor diets

We took each of the supermarkets and compared the product ranges they were promoting at discount with the recommended purchasing patterns given by the Department of Health in their *National Food Guide* — see last issue of this magazine. The *Guide*, launched last summer, recommends that a third of our diet should consist of fruit and vegetables and a third of bread, other cereal foods and potatoes. The remaining third covers milk and dairy foods, meat, fish and alternatives, and lastly, the smallest category of all, fatty and sugary foods.

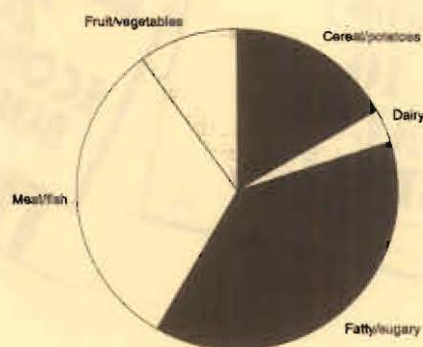
In contrast, fatty and sugary foods constituted the largest single category of foods being promoted by all the supermarkets except Sainsbury. All supermarkets fall short of promoting a range of products in line with recommended balance of foods.

♦ Products were analysed according to the Department of Health's categories, which exclude composite foods. We also excluded identical foods in different pack sizes. The composite foods being promoted were mostly pies and pastries — in our view also fatty foods.

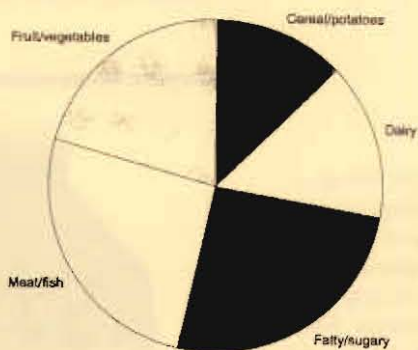
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



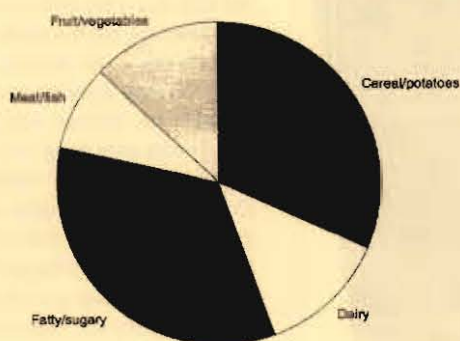
KWIK SAVE



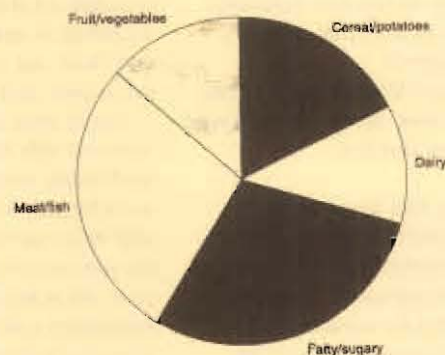
SAINSBURY



SAFEWAY



TESCO



Loopy labels

Once again our sharp-eyed shoppers have scoured the shelves for suspicious statements and misleading messages.



Mechanical meat

Top prize to Tesco, and a close second to Kwik Save, for their honest labelling efforts on their ultra-cheap meat products.

What are the first three ingredients listed in the small print of Tesco's Value Burgers?

Ingredients: Mechanically recovered chicken meat, mechanically recovered pork meat, pork rind...

Similarly, Kwik Save's No Frills Burgers and Grills admit to mechanically recovered meat in the ingredient lists. Mechanically recovered meat means that the carcass has already had the best meat removed; the

remaining bits are put through a rather vicious washing machine to strip the last shreds of soft tissue off the bones. This makes a watery, greasy paste or slurry, grey-white and potentially full of bacteria. 'Ensure the product is cooked throughout,' says Tesco, and 'Ensure no trace of red remains,' says Kwik Save.

Legally these sorts of products must have 60% 'meat' (which can be mechanically recovered). If the meat is mechanically recovered then the label should say so — although this has been tested only in a magistrates court. But at less than 50p per lb, the products make an interesting alternative to tinned cat food.

No-name bangers

And while we are on the subject of low cost 'meat' we notice Sainsbury has been promoting as a Sainsbury Essential a bag of frozen sausages. Nothing odd, except that it doesn't say whether these are beef or pork or anything else. The first ingredient is simply 'Meat'. In fact, when we asked Sainsbury's what 'meat' meant they admitted the products were actually made of 'poultry (chicken or turkey), beef and pork'.

We were interested to see that when the sausages went through the checkout the message came up 'PORK SAUSAGES' and indeed the same message gets printed on the till slip.

However, Sainsbury's would be breaking the law if they labelled these as pork sausages as

pork sausages must have a minimum of 65% meat in them. These unnamed sausages only declared 50% meat.



Superwhat?

Tut tut. No ingredients list on this bottle of Supermalt 'drink with vitamin B'. You can get away with such bad behaviour if the drink is an alcoholic beverage, but this product very explicitly says 'a non-alcoholic malt drink'. So there really is no excuse. We asked the company what they thought they were doing, and they very kindly said it wasn't anything to do with them, but was down to the Danish manufacturers (Danish Interbrew Ltd of Copenhagen). However, yes, it was a problem and ingredient listing was expected very soon...

Naturally Scots

It is a few years ago, but many of us remember the government's expert Food Advisory Committee expressing their annoyance with companies who used words like 'natural', 'wholesome' and other meaningless phrases. 'Natural' in particular got them annoyed, and they specifically recommended limits to the use of the word only when the product or ingredient had not been tampered with except

to render it edible.

Well it now appears that in Scotland, at least, they must be growing mono-glycerides of fatty acids in crofter's gardens, along with guar gum trees on the highlands and sodium alginate in the lochs. And, presumably, they have been making ice cream with it for centuries.

How else could all these ingredients, plus glycerine, be described by the Mackie company, as being 'The finest natural ingredients and a traditional Scottish recipe ... Fresh from the Scottish farm'?



Vintage pills

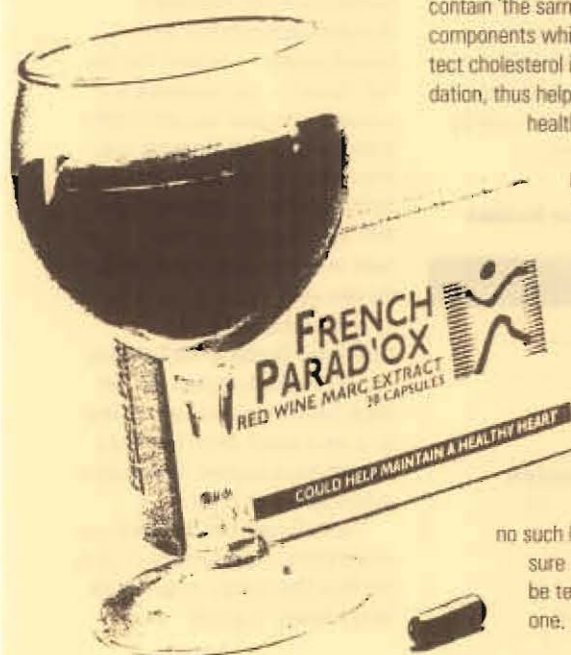
Cashing in on popular misconceptions about French heart disease rates, you can now buy the essence of a glass of wine in the form 250mg red wine extract. Each capsule is apparently equal to two glasses of the real

thing, so the selling price of £7 gets you ten bottles' worth.

It might all be a clever joke if it wasn't for the claim that the pills may do you good. 'Could help maintain a healthy heart,' says the packet, and the company says the capsules contain 'the same active antioxidant components which may help to protect cholesterol in the blood from oxidation, thus helping to maintain a healthy heart.'

A claim like this is on the face of it quite meaningless, but the implication that the pills can positively affect your health would normally be restricted to products with a medical license.

These products presumably have no such license as you can be sure the company would be telling us if they had one.



The Milky Way

A reader says she has been battling to persuade Nestlé that their Milkybar white chocolate buttons are described in a grossly misleading way on the packet.

The pack boasts Milkybar White Chocolate Buttons are 'nutritious and wholesome and contain the goodness of full cream milk'. They fail to give an ingredients list, although there is a statement which looks like one but isn't: White chocolate contains vegetable fat, emulsifier (lecithin) and flavouring.

Just how nutritious and wholesome are these sweets? These descriptions are not usually associated with confectionery products, but they are used to describe milk — or at least they were in the days before dairy fat got a bad name. Milk is recommended by dietitians particularly for its calcium and vitamin B2 (thiamin) content.

Our table below compares the nutrition of Milkybar Buttons with a glass of milk. The manufacturers might argue that we are unfairly comparing a single ounce of chocolate with a whole glass of milk, and that a proper equivalent — 200g of white chocolate — would give much better calcium and thiamin figures. But unfortunately 200g of chocolate

would also give many adults their entire recommended maximum fat intake for a day, to say nothing of the twenty-two heaped teaspoons of sugar!

■ We note that a new pack of Milkybar Buttons is now on sale which gives the full ingredients list and drops the claim that the product is nutritious and wholesome. The pack still says it contains the goodness of full cream milk.



How Milkybar compares with whole milk

	1 pack buttons	200ml glass milk
Fat	10.7g	7.8g
Sugar	18.3g	9.6g
Protein	2.4g	6.4g
Calcium	82mg*	230mg
Thiamin	24µg*	600µg

(*estimated from general white chocolate analyses)

Spreading confusion

Do you know how much fat there is in margarine, or butter or a low fat spread? What is the difference between an extra light and an ultra light spread? Confused? So are we — but now the EC is laying down new labelling rules for butters, margarines and spreads. Checkout investigates.

When margarine was first manufactured as a cheap substitute for butter, legislation was introduced to prevent unscrupulous manufacturers short-changing consumers by watering down their product. Margarine, said the law, must contain at least 80% fat — the same amount of fat as butter.

Now everything has changed. Manufacturers quite legally sell us water instead of full-fat marges in the name of healthy eating. They can't call them margarines but they can call them a 'spread'. We've seen an explosion of different products, claiming to be lower in fat, to taste as good as butter, made from olive oil, sunflower oil or a mixture of dairy and vegetable fats. The choice has never been so great or so confusing.

Now the European Commission (EC) has decided it's time to lay down

some rules about the labelling of butters, margarines, spreads and blends which will come into effect in January 1996. The good news is that all products will have to display the exact amount of fat prominently on the pack — so no more magnifying glasses trying to read the small print of the nutrition labelling to find out how much fat it contains — making it much easier for shoppers to choose a lower fat spread with confidence.

There will also be strict rules on how the product can be described depending on its fat contents and ingredients (see table).

There will also be some tightening up of claims. Currently a product can call itself 'light' even if it contains 60% fat (for example Kraft Golden Crown Light). In future it will have to contain less than 41% which is half the fat of regular margarines and but-

ter. The EC rules will also allow a much wider use of the terms 'butter' and 'margarine'. Currently these names can only be used for full fat products — a lower fat butter or margarine has to call itself a spread.

There are also a whole host of terms that manufacturers currently use to describe their products which won't be permitted by the new rules. These include the 'ultra light', 'very low' or 'extra light' fat spreads such as St Ivel Gold Lowest Very Low Fat Spread (25% fat), Flora Extra Light Low Fat Sunflower Spread (39%) and Tesco Extra Light Sunflower Spread (40%) which will probably have to rename themselves as simply 'low fat' or 'light'. Products will also be required to have at least 10% fat or to call themselves something completely different. So it's likely that Tesco's Lowest Ever Fat Sunflower Spread (5%) will need a name change.

One question remains unanswered. What are MAFF and the EC going to do with rules for nutrition claims for other kinds of foods? The most recent proposals being put forward by MAFF would only permit a 'low fat' claim if a product had less than 5% fat. The new EC ruling for fats and spreads cuts across this by allowing spreads with up to 40% fat to be labelled 'low fat'. It's quite likely that manufacturers of other foods will not be happy to accept 'low fat' as less than 5% fat if 'low fat' margarine and spreads can contain up to 40% fat. And the longer the wrangling continues the harder it will be for confused consumers.

■ **Written by Sue Dill.**
Additional research: Diane Brockbank



Margarine

THE LOW FACT SPREAD.

For the past century, margarine has been a staple of the manufacturing process, creating chemically produced products. Recent research has revealed these products can increase the risk of heart disease.

But there's a better way to spread your butter. We've taken the guesswork out of your diet. We've created a spread that's low in fat, low in calories, and low in cholesterol. It's the only spread that's truly healthy.

Now you can have all the benefits of your favorite margarine, without the bad fats. It's the only spread that's truly healthy.

For more information on fats, visit our website. Or contact a nutritionist. Or call 1-800-800-8000. Visit our website. Or call 1-800-800-8000.

THE BUTTER COUNCIL

The EC's categories for fats & spreads

Type of fat:			
Butters	Margarines/spreads	Blends	
milk fat only	vegetable and/or animal fats with no more than 3% milk-fat	vegetable and/or animal fats with 10-80% milk fat	
Name:			fat content
Butter	Margarine	Blend	80 - 90%
Three-quarters fat butter	Three quarters fat margarine	Three quarters fat blend	60 - 62%
Reduced fat butter	Reduced fat margarine	Reduced fat blend	41 - 62%
Half-fat butter	Half fat margarine	Half-fat blend	39 - 41%
Low fat or light butter	Low fat or light margarine	Low fat or light blend	<41%
Dairy spread x%	Fat spreads x%	Blended spread x%	x%

Ad confusion

It's not just claims on products which can confuse. At the end of last year butter and margarine manufacturers were engaged in a high profile slanging match though national newspaper advertisement. But how truthful were these ads?

The National Food Alliance has complained to the Advertising Standards Authority that Butter Council adverts — entitled The Low Fact Spread — are misleading and undermine progress towards healthy eating by confusing the public even more about the relative health benefits of butter and margarine. The ASA is investigating the NFA's complaint and are expected to report in the new year.

In a separate ruling the Advertising Standards Authority has upheld complaints against Van Den Bergh Foods, manufacturers of Flora for a press advert which featured a boy with the inscription 'Body Builder' written across his chest.

The ASA ruled that the claim was inappropriate and misleading to imply that Flora had specific properties for 'body building' or growth.

When the chips are down

Potatoes are an excellent source of cheap healthy nutrition but when it comes to chips, the humble potato can get a bad name. The culprit is fat. Here is our Checkout guide to the good and the bad of the fast food fries

First the good news. The fast food chains in our survey now use vegetable oils rather than animal fats in their fryers. But the bad news is that two of the four McDonalds and Burger King use partially hydrogenated vegetable oils which contain trans fatty acids.

Last year the Food Commission reported that trans fatty acids (transfats) are produced when healthier vegetable oils are hydrogenated to make them harder and more stable (see issue 24). Transfats have been found to act in a similar way to saturated fats in the human body by raising blood cholesterol levels. We also reported how hard it is to tell exactly how much transfats you are eating.

Our table shows you how much fat you getting with your portion of fries and how much of that fat is saturated and how much are transfats.

The fattiest fries in our survey are Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds with 50% and 48% of the calories coming from fat, respectively. Burger King follow close behind with 44%. Wimpy weigh in the lowest with 37% of calories from fat. The amounts of saturated and transfats in

McDonalds and Burger King are much higher than KFC or Wimpy because of the types of oil that the companies use to cook their fries.

In 1991 MAFF estimated that on average we eat about 5g of transfats a day. Our table shows that one medium portion of McDonalds french fries contains 5.5g of transfats and a large portion nearly 8g. And that's on top of the saturated fat. Levels of transfats in Burger King fries were roughly the same with their regular and large fries also exceeding the average daily intake for transfats.

If you add in transfats from other sources such as margarines, biscuits, cakes and other snacks, just one medium bag of fries from McDonalds or Burger King could boost the transfats to double the daily average.

We think all fast food companies should look at ways of reducing the amount of fat, particularly saturated & transfats, in their products. McDonalds say that next year they will be changing to an oil with less saturated fat and transfats but could not tell us how much those reductions will be. Currently McDonalds oils contain 30% transfats.

The Golden Rule for healthier chips is to choose big ones – the larger the chip the less oil you get compared to potato. It's the smaller, thinner french fries which soak up the fat. Cooking your own at home may also be a healthier and cheaper option. A typical 110g portion of McCain's Oven Chips contains just 5.6g of fat – that's nearly 15g less fat than the same weight of McDonald's french fries. And if you

think low fat fries don't rate tastewise then you could be in for a surprise. McCain's Oven Chips were recently rated 2nd out of 8 for taste in a BBC Vegetarian Magazine taste test of oven chips.

A typical 110g portion of Sainsbury's oven chips has only a third of the fat of the same portion size of McDonalds fries, though if you go for Safeway's American French Fries you'll be getting as much fat as an average McDonalds portion (20g per 110g portion).



The fatter the chip the healthier!

French fries fat facts

	Weight of portion (g)	Calories/portion (Kcals)	Fat/portion (g)	% calories from fat	Saturated fat/portion (g)	Transfats/portion (g)
McDonalds:						
Regular french fries	77	267	14.3	48%	3.1	3.9
Medium french fries	110	379	20.3	48%	4.4	5.5
Large french fries	154	533	28.6	48%	6.2	7.7
Burger King:						
Small french fries	75	228	11.3	44%	3.5	3.4
Regular french fries	116	354	17.4	44%	5.3	5.2
Large french fries	142	433	21.3	44%	6.5	6.4
KFC:						
Regular fries	105	272	15.7	50%	1.3	0.6
Large fries	150	415	22.6	50%	1.8	1.0
Wimpy:						
Regular chips	100	265	11.0	37%	1.7	negligible
Children's portion	75	199	8.25	37%	1.3	negligible

Data supplied by manufacturers

The Nursery Food Book

A lively and practical book exploring all issues relating to food, nutrition, hygiene and multicultural needs, with tips, recipes and sample menus along with cooking, gardening and educational activities involving food. Excellent handbook for nursery nurses and anyone caring for young children. £9.99 including p&p.

Food Adulteration

A penetrating expose of the shocking state of food quality in Britain, revealing the facts on additives, pesticides, food poisoning and irradiation. £5.95 inc p&p.

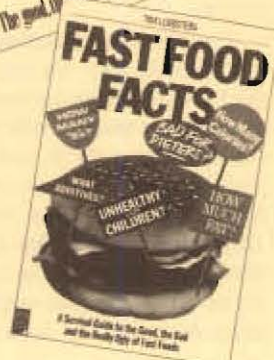
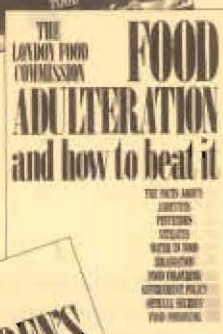
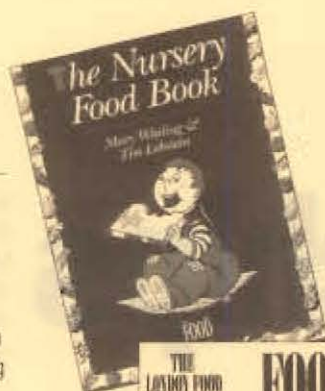
Children's Food

Teething rusks sweeter than a doughnut? Fish fingers less than half fish? Beef burgers made with pork? A book packed with trade secrets and sound advice. £4.75 inc p&p.

Fast Food Facts

Full of useful tables of nutrients and additives, along with a unique look into the secretive world of fast foods. £5.95 inc p&p.

BACK ISSUES OF THE FOOD MAGAZINE now at reduced price only £2 inc p&p. Send for comprehensive index of the news and features for all back issues. Cheques payable to 'The Food Commission'. Send your order to Publications, The Food Commission, 3rd Floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH.



Additives - Your Complete Survival Guide

Still the best reference book with comprehensive tables and summaries of the evidence on the safety of each additive. Special price only £3.50 inc p&p.

Food Irradiation

Good food doesn't need irradiating yet the UK has now legalised the process. £6.50 inc p&p.

Food for Health or Wealth

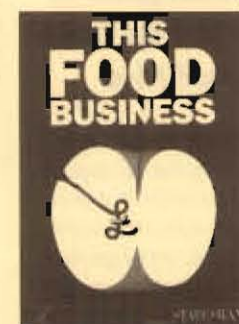
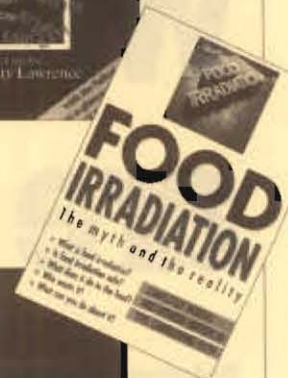
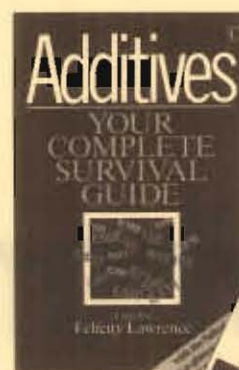
The acclaimed report from the Socialist Health Association. £4.50 inc p&p.

Additives chart

published by Channel 4 £2 inc p&p.

This Food Business

usually £2 but yours **free** with every order.



SUBSCRIBE to the Food Magazine and support the work of the Food Commission. Full details from the Publications dept, address below.

order form

TO: The Food Commission, 3rd Floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH.

PLEASE SEND ME

I enclose £

Cheques payable to 'The Food Commission'. Overseas purchasers should send payment in £ sterling, and add £1.00 per book for airmail delivery.

Name

Address:

☐ please also send me my free copy of This Food Business

☐ please send me subscription details for The Food Magazine

☐ please send me details for donating to the registered charity The Food Commission Research Charity

California: suburban farming

Michael Abelman runs Fairview Gardens Farm in Goleta, California, which produces over 100 varieties of organic fruits and vegetables and serves as an educational and community centre. Here he reports on how encroaching Californian suburbia has brought new life to the farm.

In the heart of an unmistakably suburban neighbourhood in southern California where shopping malls and fast food restaurants abound, our small farm has endured, moving through the seasons as it has for the last hundred years. It is a living remnant of an old ranch that once extended for miles around, a tiny horticultural paradise growing one hundred different fruits and vegetables in a year-round succession. 'Just exit the freeway at Fairview Avenue,' I tell our visitors, 'past four gas stations and through the three traffic lights.' A right turn into the library parking lot and up our drive and they're in another world where peach trees give way to stately avocados, and rows of strawberries spill into the willowy forest of the asparagus field.

As the lemon and walnut groves of the past were replaced with tract homes our small farm has become an island. Almost overnight a whole community of people in box houses were plopped down around us. And although the smell of my compost and the crow of my roosters offended the urban sensibilities of our new neighbours, we focused on the opportunity to educate and to provide fresh food to this new population.

It took time for our new neighbours to discover the farm. The children were the early explorers, investigating our chickens or the potential for hide and go seek in our orchards. Their parents followed, buying an occasional orange or a head of lettuce from our produce stand which is filled daily with fruits, vegetables, eggs, honey and fresh baked bread. We had lost the battle to preserve the farmland around us, and the deep topsoil of this valley. But the community that had come in its place were, in their own way making a connection.

The standard cash for food exchange wasn't enough. We wanted to go further. If this farm was to be spared then we needed to establish a deeper and more responsible relationship between those who were eating our food and the land that was producing it. We needed a way for people to begin to identify with this place, to see it as their own, to want to protect and preserve it.

I never really liked the term 'Community Supported Agriculture' as it seems to imply that the community is supporting the farm like some sort of welfare program for small farms, when in fact the

support is mutual. But it was a model that seemed to address our concerns for the future. I have always described it as a return to a form of social agriculture. When our members buy their shares at the beginning of the season they throw in their lot with the farm: good year or bad they are nourished by our labours but also share in our risks.

Community Supported Agriculture can work on many different levels. For us, it is more than just a box of food each week or an advance payment scheme. We struggle to expand our minds and those of our members by trying to put the word community back into Community Supported Agriculture. Growing the food, having it picked fresh and ready each week, providing recipes and even a weekly newsletter are important steps. Our cooking classes, potluck dinners, summer concerts, farm tours, and meetings go a little further. We hear from our members that the food is fantastic, that their children are eating vegetables that they never would have before, and that their health is better.

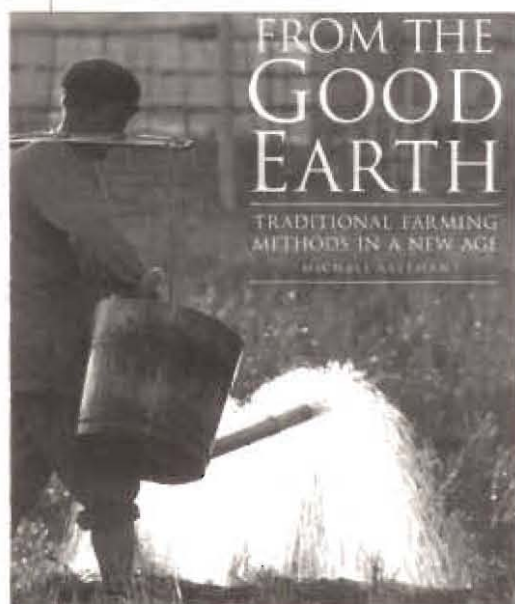
They have certainly come to an important awareness about their food and the nourishment of their families. But Community Supported Agriculture can do more to live up to its name. Those who eat the food must become equally responsible for how and where that food comes from. They need to make the connection between food and the soil – to honour the whole process from the field to the plate.

I still face the daily struggle to pay the bills, the constant concern over whether the farm can continue under the urban pressures around us. Will I see real stability for small agricultural enterprises like ours? Will we be acknowledged for the important role we play, not just as purveyors of fresh food, but as anchors in a society that has become refugees from the natural world?

There are those small reminders that we've made some progress. I see it in the complete and total happiness of a child that has just toured the farm with a carrot or strawberry in their hand, or in the comments of our members:

The strawberries are perfection. You should have a taste test with yours and the supermarkets. There is no comparison. The lettuce is fluffy, crisp and plentiful. The loose spinach is just enough to add to the week's salads.

This program is the best! Everyone is smiling and in high spirits when food is picked up and crates returned. I feel like part of the farm somehow. You and yours - all the workers are greatly appreciated.



Michael Abelman's book *From the Good Earth, Traditional farming methods in a new age* is published in the UK by Thames and Hudson. Price £14.95. Available from the Soil Association bookshop and other bookshops.

Tackling poverty and diet

A new information pack from the National Food Alliance aims to help advice workers improve the nutrition of low income families. Tim Lobstein takes a look inside.

Health cannot be guaranteed by the health services alone. Much ill-health can be prevented and one important step is to eat a good diet. This is hardly news, yet still there are enormous barriers to ensuring that every one who wants to do so can actually eat such an optimum diet.

Advice workers, community workers even community health workers who are working with people on low incomes will be aware that it is often such people who, despite their best efforts, find it most difficult to eat healthily. The reasons for this are diverse but include a lack of access to good quality affordable produce, as well as lack of skill, facilities and perhaps as a result lack of motivation.

How can these barriers to change be overcome? In order to promote better health you don't, of course, have to be a health worker. Improving access to healthy food does not require specialist training. Indeed, in certain respects it cannot be imposed by outsiders or professionals at all: people will only improve their diets if they want to make such changes themselves.

Having recognised this, the National Food

Alliance has produced a pack aimed at advice and support workers who work directly with low income families, giving ideas and information to assist clients in getting the sort of food the clients themselves want. Healthy eating advice is not prominent. The main thrust of the pack is a series of documents describing local projects and initiatives which have been tried across the United Kingdom, giving over 80 contact addresses and providing a checklist of points to be considered when setting up a project.

One of the main messages to come from the food projects is the importance of money in food choice. People can face real difficulties affording a healthy diet, and successful projects recognise that planning for health may need to be subordinated to the need to economise. Projects which give access to food at lower cost stand a good chance of success. Projects which can help to improve income levels through, for example, supporting benefit claims, are also invaluable — and to this end a section of the pack gives details of the benefits which can help improve diet. Some details on LETS (Local Economy Trading Schemes) projects are also given.

With funding for the pack assisted by the Department of Health and the Health Education Authority, the price (under £10) has been kept low enough for community projects to be able to afford a copy.

■ *Food and Low Income* by Suzi Leather and Tim Lobstein, price £9.95, from the National Food Alliance, 3rd floor, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH.



■ Ferguslie Women's Food Poverty Group, Paisley.

A survey by a drop in centre on a low-income housing estate in 1993 found the majority of families eating chips every day and half eating fruit only once a week or less. Local shop prices were very high compared with the city centre, so a group opened a crèche to take care of the children and ran a minibus service to take mothers to the cheaper shops. The crèche and the bus trips were free.

Scottish initiatives

Damian Killeen reports on moves to promote healthy diets in Scotland.

Chaired by Professor Philip James, the Scottish Diet Action Group was launched by the Secretary of State for Scotland, and aims to produce a programme of action to meet dietary targets for the Scottish population by November 1996. After originally being proposed as the Scottish Food Commission, the group has been denied sought-after powers to subsidise foods and intervene in the market, and instead the group must rely on voluntary means of encouraging healthier eating, including education, marketing and working with industry to alter the formulation of foods.

The targets for healthy diets were themselves altered by the Secretary of State following representations from the food industry: salt reductions are to be smaller than Professor James had originally recommended in *The Scottish Diet* last year, and adults will be encouraged to 'stabilise' their consumption of sugar, rather than reduce it.

There were few signs that food producers were lining up to present the Scottish public with quality food at affordable prices. As ever, we were reminded that Scotland's natural larder is filled with excellent produce, but most of this is destined to niche markets in the rest of Europe. Equally, not more than a quarter of food consumed in Scotland comes from within the Scottish food sector, and the farming and processing that does take place in Scotland

uses imported ingredients and products.

The general view of food producers was that people no longer wish to cook, and we should look to Los Angeles and other places where houses are now being built without kitchens. The teaching of cooking skills was dismissed as Neanderthal nostalgia, wishing to chain women in perpetual slavery to the domestic oven.

Discussion of the role of retailers in advertising, marketing and sale of healthier foods was limited to a presentation by 'Mr Safeway', Sir Alistair Grant, who announced that a pilot project replacing sweets at the checkout with fruit would be run in some stores next year. Yet if retailers are not willing to establish a presence in some of Scotland's most deprived areas, what support can they give to community initiatives to ensure that quality, affordable food reaches the people who most need it?

The Scottish Diet Action Group includes both industry and community representatives. We wait to see how it will tackle the thorny issue of whether people in poverty have adequate incomes to enable them to have access to, and to consume, a healthy diet. It is possible that the free market in food cannot prevent the escalating incidence of dietary disorders, especially among the poorest, and an element of government intervention may be needed in the interests of the national health.

■ Damian Killeen is Director of the Strathclyde Poverty Alliance.

■ Dalmarnock, Glasgow.

Local shopkeepers participated in a '10p OFF' coupon scheme, giving reductions on selected healthy food items. The coupons were printed in the local paper and distributed through community centres. The cost of the project (coupons were redeemed as part of a Healthy Cities project) was in direct proportion to its benefit: the more the coupons were used the greater the quantity of healthy food bought.

■ Healthy Eating Partnership, Croydon.

A group of health visitors have started regular afternoon sessions for mothers and children, involving cooking, meal planning, recipes and menus, budgeting and shopping, and also provides a supervised crèche. The mothers are referred by social workers and health visitors and are often shy and poorly supported and are mostly single parents. Healthy eating messages are kept to a minimum, and 'anything that sounds like school is a definite NO!'

■ Palace Gate, Exeter.

People sometimes feel more comfortable about giving money to a homeless young person when the end result is guaranteed. The Palace Gate Project offers a voucher scheme whereby members of the public can buy vouchers for £1 each and give these in lieu of cash. The vouchers can be spent in participating shops including a sandwich bar (and a McDonalds). 'It won't solve the problem of homelessness,' said a worker, 'but it puts food in bellies as a first step to helping people help themselves.'

NTF: Is it forceful enough?

Ten Nutrition Task Force (NTF) project teams are now developing policies which should help to reach the Health of the Nation dietary targets. Cause for celebration? Yes and no. While some are making progress, others are making heavy weather.

The NFA recently brought together public interest representatives to exchange information and ideas on how to bring all project teams up to the level of the best.

Some of the new project teams are, in fact, sub-groups of the old working parties and so – since they have been meeting for some time – are quite a long way down the road. The team on hospital catering is one such example, and it has already produced draft nutrition guidelines for hospital catering which should be published in early 1995.

Other project teams only had their first meeting in November 1994. They will need to work quite intensively to make headway before October 1995 which is when the Nutrition Task Force is scheduled to have its next – and perhaps last – meeting. This was not a prospect relished by any of the public interest representatives brought together by the NFA in early December.

All agreed that it was very unlikely that all that could be would have been achieved by that date. Mechanisms for sustaining the work of the Nutrition Task Force – if not the Task Force itself – is certain to be an issue at future meetings. Representatives covering seven of the ten teams were present and other common concerns raised included:

- Lack of co-ordination between the teams. A ping-pong game is already developing with, for example, one team believing that an issue is being dealt with by another team but, in fact, it is being covered by neither.

- Continued reluctance to promote healthy diets as a whole. Members of some teams are trying to restrict the focus to fat alone, even though the NTF has already agreed that starch, sugar, salt and other nutrients (as outlined in the COMA report on Dietary Reference

Values) are also important.

- An assumption by some teams that confidentiality is the norm rather than the exception. So far the NTF has been an excellent model of open government with the vast majority of background papers and minutes in the public domain. Public interest representatives are clear that this way of working should continue.

Customer demand – or lack of it – was another thorny issue which arose in several teams. Several public interest representatives despaired of the argument – all too often heard from some food industry representatives – that since consumers did not want healthy food, then companies could not provide it and survive in the market place. These industries seem oblivious to the argument that consumers cannot express their demand in the market place unless a healthy product is there to buy or reject.

For the record, the current list of project teams is as follows:

- guidelines for educational materials
- meal 'signposting'
- hospital catering
- school meals providers
- fast foods and restaurants
- training for caterers
- product development
- product promotion
- primary health care
- low income

Notable gaps in this list are food advertising – which remains the province of an informal group – and nutrition labelling. Although the informal group on food advertising has so far met only once – in July 1994 – the NFA's advertising working party is making sure that the issue is kept high on the agenda (see page 4). The working party is particularly critical of some aspects of the literature review on advertising

which is being funded by MAFF.

On nutrition labelling, a joint working party of Nutrition Task Force and Food Advisory Committee members has been meeting, and MAFF is funding yet more research into consumer understanding of current nutrition labelling. It is not entirely clear why more research is needed into this aspect of the problem. In the meanwhile, consumers continue to be denied a simple scheme which might help them choose a healthy diet.

New members

The Scottish Food Poverty Network

aims to raise the profile of food poverty issues in Scotland and encourage the exchange of information and skills among the food co-ops, community nutritionists and voluntary groups which are its members.

The British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry undertakes research into dental public health and promotes oral health, including dietary aspects of oral health. It is a specialist society in dental public health in relation to the Royal College of Surgeons (England) and has around 650 members working in the NHS and in universities.

National Food Alliance

3rd Floor,
5-11 Worship Street
London EC2A 2BH
Tel: 071 628 2442
Fax: 071 628 9329

Officers:

Professor Philip James (President)
Geoffrey Cannon (Chairman)
Jack Winkler (Treasurer)
Jeanette Longfield (Secretary & Co-ordinator)
Samantha Montal (Asst. Co-ordinator)
Pip Collings (Asst. Co-ordinator)

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.

This page has been contributed by the National Food Alliance

Members of the NFA:

Action and Information on Sugars
Association of School Health Education
Co-ordinators
Baby Milk Action
British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry
British Dental Association
British Heart Foundation
British Organic Farmers
Campaign for Real Ale
Caroline Walker Trust
Children's Society
Christian Aid
Common Ground
Community Nutrition Group
Coronary Prevention Group
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Diet Breakers
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 Association
Hyperactive Children's Support Group
Institute for European Environmental Policy, London
McCarrison Society
Maternity Alliance
National Association of Teachers of Home Economics and Technology
National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations
National Farmers' Union
National Federation of City Farms
National Federation of Consumer Groups
National Federation of Women's Institutes
Pesticides Trust
Rural, Agricultural and Allied Workers' Union (TGWU)
Scottish Food Poverty Network
Society of Health Education and Health Promotion Specialists
Soil Association
Vegetarian Society
Women's Farming Union
World Cancer Research Fund

Observers of the NFA:
British Dietetic Association
British Medical Association
Consumers' Association
Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians
Guild of Food Writers
Health Education Authority
Institute of Trading Standards Administration
National Consumer Council
National Forum for CHD Prevention
Royal Society of Medicine Food and Health Forum
Royal Society for the Promotion of Health
SAFE Alliance
Scottish Consumer Council
Trades Union Congress
Vega Research
Welsh Consumer Council

A new friend for organic farming

In a new report, *Working Future? Jobs and the Environment*, Friends of the Earth (FoE) has for the first time unequivocally endorsed organic farming. Robin Maynard of the Soil Association asked FoE Director, Charles Secrett 'Why the sudden conversion?'

CS: 'I'm not sure it's so sudden. We've recognised for some time that organic farming properly practised brings real environmental gains. But we're very much focusing on defining sustainable development post-Rio, and organic farming offers obvious social and eco-

nomic gains in comparison to 'conventional' agriculture, which substitutes chemicals and machinery for labour.

RM: 'A practical example where FoE has had an influence on the organic movement is through various Community Supported Agriculture schemes, such as vegetable boxes. But the enthusiasm for this seems to have come mainly from FoE local groups rather than head office.

CS: 'Yes, in particular groups in the South West. There's a real debate within FoE about how much we should encourage local groups to get involved in practical projects. Some of us think practical projects are the best type of campaigning - actually putting into

practice what we preach or advocate in terms of policy change. I believe if people can actually see something working, that's the most convincing way of persuading them about an alternative.

RM: 'Now that you've come out with this strong supporting statement for organic agriculture, what other work are you planning?'

CS: 'We're expecting to appoint an agriculture campaigner sometime later in the year, but I anticipate that we'll be lobbying the Ministry of Agriculture about the employment gains from organic farming. Part of our Sustainable Development agenda is about promoting local production that

benefits local communities and organic farming can very much be part of that. I'm hoping that we'll be developing a Food Campaign, both in terms of consumption issues and nutrition. As part of that we'll be supporting organic farming by pointing out the better taste and because I believe it's better for me and my family, not just because of the environmental benefits.

RM: 'Will FoE be looking to cooperate with the organic movement on this?'

CS: 'Yes, one of the things that has changed at FoE is that we're now looking much more to work in coalitions and alliances with other organisations and the Soil Association is one obvious ally. We hope that's how you see it too.'

■ *Working Future? Jobs and the Environment* is available from Friends of the Earth, price £5.95.

Countryside conservation: green or mean?

The concept of paying farmers to sustain and enhance the beauty and diversity of the countryside has not always been as widely accepted as it is today. In the late 1970s the official view expressed in the Government's White Paper, *Farming and the Nation*, was that '... a sustained increase in agricultural net production is in the national interest and can be achieved without undue impact on the environment'.

We now know that intensive agriculture does have a serious negative impact upon the natural environment and over the years there have been a number of important developments attempting to ameliorate this. Advisory codes of practice have raised farmers' awareness of the environmental impact of their activities. Government is more aware of the need for an environmental component within agricultural policy and numerous grant and payment schemes have emerged to help offset some of the worst excesses of industrial agriculture. Even the fringes of the Common

Mark Redman questions whether government green subsidies really help the environment.

Agricultural Policy have recently acquired a pale green hue.

In total there are well over 50 different sources of funding to encourage environmental action by farmers. The most important of these include Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, Nitrate Sensitive Areas (NSAs), the Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme (FCGS) and the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme.

One of the criticisms of the existing schemes is that with their segregated aims and lack of integration, they only offer a piecemeal solution to the countryside's ills - and a costly and complex one at that! Schemes tend to focus upon protecting, maintaining or re-creating only that which is rare, vulnerable or beautiful, with little regard for the wider countryside. The ordinary and commonplace wildlife species, for example, tend to be over-

looked. What is needed is an integrated approach to environmental protection and countryside conservation that is concerned with the management and health of the whole countryside.

Reflecting its increasing prominence in the field of agri-environmental policy, the Soil Association recently organised a unique day of farm visits involving senior officials from the Government's Treasury Department, MAFF and the Department of the Environment, as well as representatives from English Nature, the Countryside Commission, National Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, World Wide Fund for Nature (UK) and the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

The visits were held on two leading organic farms in North Dorset and their objective was simple - to observe first-hand the effectiveness of existing environmental payment

schemes and to begin reviewing the way ahead. For many participants this was their first opportunity to meet farmers in the 'field' and to discuss the problems and practicalities of environmental protection schemes.

Discussions were frank and occasionally heated! 'We are farmers, not park keepers', was the overwhelming message to the policy makers and pressure groups. 'If your schemes are to work they must be flexible and farmer friendly.' Particular criticism was reserved for the South Wessex Downs ESA that both farms fall within. ESAs are the environmental flagship of MAFF, but practical implementation can be highly contentious with the local scheme's lack of clear objectives, inappropriate interpretation of local landscape and wildlife issues, and inflexibility raising the hackles of the participating farmers.

Key points debate from the day will be taken forward as part of the Soil Association contribution to the Government's current review of agri-environment schemes.

Fat mark-up

I heard a report on Radio 4 on the pricing of 'Healthy Eating' products. (This was from the Food Commission report on supermarket mark-up on 'lean' items — see last issue. Eds.) The programme quoted Tesco products marked up as much as 40% but I have seen a much greater mark up than this. For example the price of their normal minced meat is £1.09 per pound, but for their lean version it is £2.09 per pound.

The message to the public may be 'Eat a healthier diet' but we are forced to spend more to maintain the amount we eat. Can they really justify such an increase in prices?

Anna Symonds
High Wycombe, Bucks

We agree entirely, as our survey last issue made clear. A report in Which? Way to Health also found excessive mark ups on 'lean' meat in supermarkets and advises buying regular cuts and trimming the fat yourself, if you want to save money. Eds.

Organic Services

Your readers should know that some churches now use organically grown bread and wine. Organic bread is widely available. Unleavened wafers are provided by FA Dumont, Folkestone, Kent. Wines are widely available including from HDRA and French Red or St Ursula's White, bottled at Bingen, from Safeways.

Some Offertory Prayers are rich in organic symbolism; 'bread which earth has given and human hands have made', wine 'fruit of the vine and work of human hands', but few preachers understand or explain the symbolism. We should demand that they do so.

Dr Edward P Echlin
Ripon, North Yorkshire

We welcome letters from readers

Please send your comments or thoughts to: The editors, Living Earth/Food Magazine, 3rd floor 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH or you can fax us on 071 628 0817

Water Miles

The article 'Food Miles' in your magazine was timely. How about one on 'Water Miles'? I think bottled water, since it is carried on lorries, causes air pollution. Then there are the bottles. And water filters have other problems.

Keep on about hydrogenated fat, which I still see as an ingredient in health food shops and vegetarian suet, also BSE, milk etc. etc.

Helen Horsler
London SW18

Organic sterilising

Mr Linley of Derbyshire asks: I make homemade wine and beer and use a commercial sterilising solution called Compro SPD. I realise equipment must be clean but I would feel more at ease if there was an organic method that caused no detrimental impact on water systems. I don't know if Compro is environmentally friendly or not. I would appreciate any advice or comments from readers on the problem.

Answers to *Living Earth & The Food Magazine*

Choco-miles

I have just read my copy of the October *Living Earth and Food Magazine*. I couldn't help asking myself how many 'Food Miles' have been clocked up by a bar of Plamil Organic Chocolate by the time I would buy one in my local health food shop in Basingstoke. The proud claim that organic ingredients from around the world have been used to produce this vegan chocolate (Page 26) did not impress me as I think it was meant to do after reading the article on Food Miles on pages 19 & 20.

Christine Horrocks
Oakley, Basingstoke

The Trap

by James Goldsmith,
Macmillan, £7.99.
ISBN 0 333 64224 4

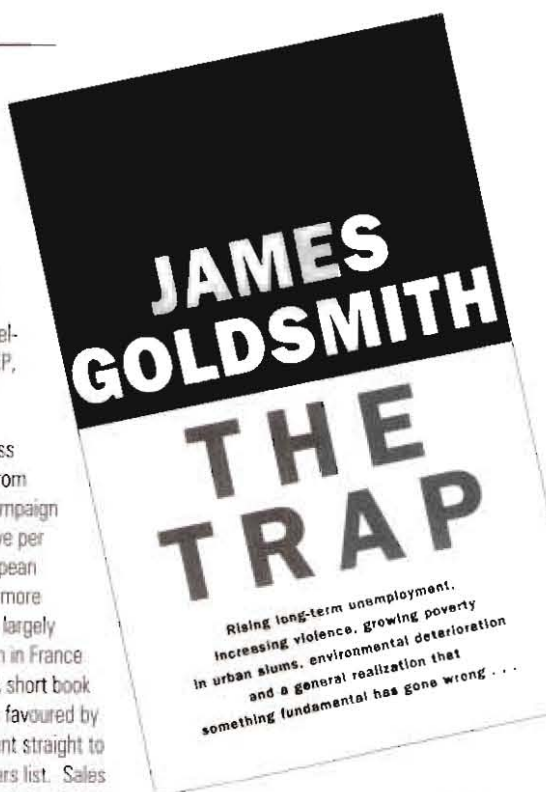
Goodbye Sir James Goldsmith, food baron, industrialist, corporate raider par excellence; hello Jimmy Goldsmith MEP, apocalyptic author and green visionary.

The electoral success which took Goldsmith from the foundation of his campaign *L'Autre Europe*, to twelve per cent of the French European Parliament vote in little more than three months was largely thanks to his publication in France last year of *Le Piège*. A short book in the catechismal form favoured by French politicians, it went straight to the top of the best-sellers list. Sales in France are in the hundreds of thousands, and a new, more anglo-centric edition has just been issued in the UK, entitled *The Trap*.

The book's four main themes are GATT and global free trade; a discussion of nationhood; rethinking the welfare state; and the twin evils of modern, intensive agriculture and nuclear energy. The tone is deeply pessimistic, an outlook more usually associated with his older brother Teddy, founder and still publisher of *The Ecologist*.

Though some passages resemble the agenda of the UK Conservative right (on competition in health-care provision, vouchers for education, and hostility to the principle of universality and the welfare state), much of the book is both radical and compelling. Goldsmith ridicules our method of national accounting which records spurts in economic growth — conventionally assumed to be a proxy for welfare — following major disasters such as earthquakes or hurricanes. He inveighs against deprivation, and a system which combines a doubling in UK gross national product with a similar increase in the numbers afflicted by poverty.

In agriculture too, conventional assumptions are repudiated, such as the obsession with productivity which cranks up levels of synthetic inputs while throwing labour off the land. The



received wisdom of industrial techniques, like the development of BST (bovine growth hormone) and the cannibalism forced onto naturally herbivorous animals is explored and exploded.

The Goldsmith hallmark, though, has become his profound opposition to GATT. In his words, 'Global free trade has become a sacred principle of modern economic theory' but one which, if followed to its logical conclusions, 'will impoverish and destabilise the industrialised world while cruelly ravaging the third world'. In a world where 'forty-seven Filipinos can be employed for the cost of one person in a developed country', the vast bulk of new job opportunities will be in the developing world — with predictable consequences for unemployment and social instability in Europe.

If these arguments are familiar to readers of the *Food Magazine/Living Earth*, the chances are it's through the work of Tim Lang, former Food Commission Director and Soil Association Council member, and Colin Hines. If Lang and Hines' *The New Protectionism* was the academic treatise, *The Trap* is the popular version: accessible, gutsy — and terrifying.

Hugh Raven.

The Organic Grassland Smallholding

by Jill Wolstenholme (Smallholder Practical Series) £5.75
Yet another high quality organic farming 'how to' book has hit the shelves with this excellent little publication by a Soil Association Symbol holder and recent runner-up in the Loraine Awards for Organic Farming and Nature Conservation. Jill and her husband Woolly farm 100 acres of marginal grassland in Wales with dedication, care and hard work, backed up by expertise and knowledge, all of which permeate the book. In 77 pages, she has managed to pack in all the background information needed by an aspiring organic farmer (including registration, in-depth review of the soil and fertility, the all important pasture management, livestock and their health, and concluding with marketing).

What more do you want? Well, one thing more – it is written with humour and humanity, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it.

Francis Blake

Sell What You Sow! The Grower's Guide To Successful Produce Marketing.

Author: Eric Gibson
Publisher: New World Publishing, available from Soil Association bookshop.

If there is a clear message for organic growers in the 1990's it is that it's not enough to produce good crops – you've got to know how and where to sell them and at a fair price.

Although general marketing texts can be found in most book shops, here is the first one I've ever seen which is targeted specifically at vegetable producers (although not exclusively concerned with the marketing of organic produce). Don't be put off by the lurid cover and very American style of the text; a wealth of useful information is contained within.

There is a large and comprehensive section on direct marketing, an area which is proving particularly attractive to many UK growers, as well as chapters dealing with retail outlets and the wholesale and

multiple markets. The text is liberally sprinkled with real life anecdotes and farmer comment which underline the concepts being explored. For any grower like me not blessed with a formal business training the section on business matters will be particularly illuminating.

Pricing strategies! Break even analysis! All set out in layman's language. Thankyou Mr Gibson. Attractive line drawings are found throughout the book illustrating, among other things, dozens of farm logos – it is both interesting and instructive to see how other producers promote themselves.

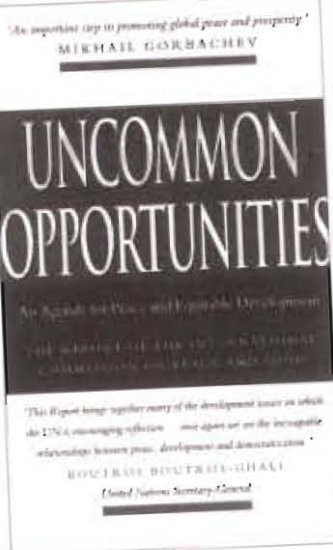
Above all this book is very readable either from cover to cover or just to dip into once in awhile. It's almost guaranteed that you will find something of interest. Try it.

Jan Deane

Uncommon Opportunities: An Agenda for Peace and Equitable Development

The Report of the International Commission on Peace and Food, Zed Press, 7 Cynthia St, London N1. ISBN 1 85649 306 7, £12.95, 1994. Based on the premise that the peace dividend (the money we can save now the cold war is over) can be put to constructive use developing the world instead of destroying it, the members of this oddly-named Commission offer us a vision of a world of well-fed, fully-employed, socially secure, democratic and co-operative people.

It's quite an achievement. There are details of the possibilities for global food production: projections for the year 2010 put cereal consumption 60% higher, meat 52% higher and milk 69% higher. Remarkably, the authors do not fall for the orthodox argument that greater food production needs more intensive inputs such as agrochemicals. Rather, they urge greater use of alternative methods, such as integrated pest management and more organic methods as a means of absorbing labour, while

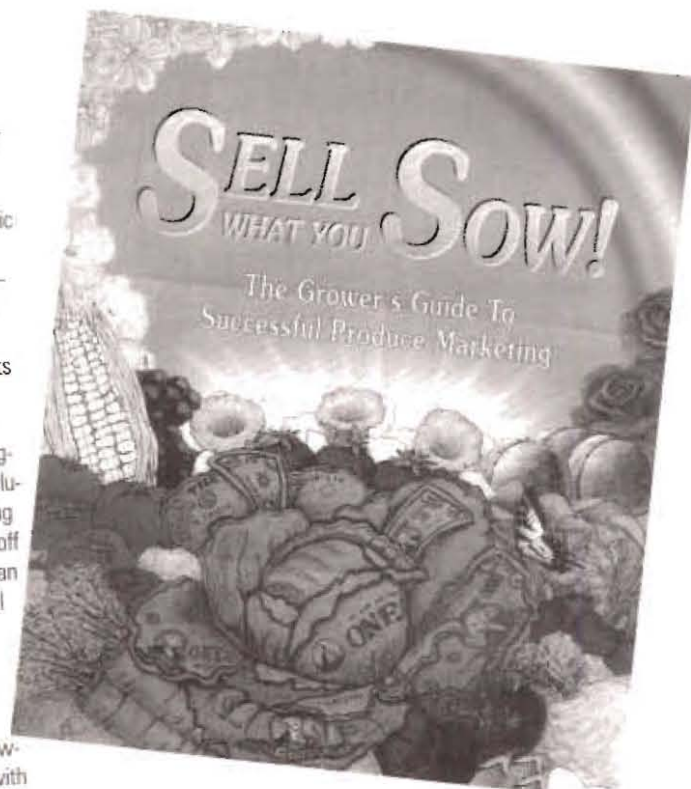


acknowledging that food-deficit countries where agrochemical use is currently low may well want to boost their local food security through more intensive methods first.

It is an odd report, supported by the Carter Presidential Centre and the Gorbachev Foundation, and heavily promoting the role of the UN as the agency for co-operation. Refreshingly, it does not see unbridled free-marketteering as helping to increase social stability and security, but it does regard the GATT as providing new opportunities for poorer countries to gain access to industrial countries' markets.

What the report does not adequately explain is how a national government with a newly-found peace dividend is going to be persuaded to spend that money on such an altruistic body as the UN and its officials, rather than keeping the money to bribe its own electorate.

Tim Lobstein



Order your books by post!

Over 250 titles, including many reviewed on these pages, can be ordered from the Soil Association's Food and Farming Bookshop.

For your free catalogue phone 01272-290661.

Advertisements



MULTI-PURPOSE POTTING COMPOST

**LARGE
70 LITRE BAGS**

FREE OFFER 1995

**ORDER 5 OR MORE AND WE WILL SEND
YOU ONE EXTRA BAG ABSOLUTELY FREE**

Offer closes 1st June 1995

2 bags (min)	£9.99 each
3 - 4 bags	£8.99 each
5 - 9 bags	£8.50 each
10+ bags	£7.99 each

Large discounts for over 25 bags
including delivery - no P&P mainland England, Wales & Scotland

FREE BOOKLET and SAMPLE

Write to: (Cheque with
Order please):

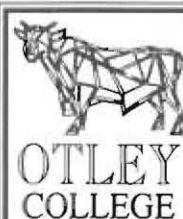
Fertile Fibre

Tenbury Wells

Worcs. WR15 8LT • Tel: 01584 781575

We Keep Your Address Confidential

**PEAT
FREE**



ONE YEAR NATIONAL TRAINING COURSES

Organic Crop Production

Including - Fertility Management
Vegetable, Fruit and Herb Production
Post Harvest Technology, Marketing

Soil Association
Symbol Status
for this course



Courses are also available in

Arboriculture Conservation
Agriculture Garden Design
Interior Landscaping
Sports Turf Technology

For further information contact STUDENT APPLICATIONS
OTLEY COLLEGE • DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALS • ACHIEVING MORE

**FREEPOST Otley College Otley Ipswich
Suffolk IP6 9BR Tel 0473 785543**

SOWING & PLANTING CALENDAR 1995

Working With The Stars 1995 (20th edition) by Maria Thun. Day to day advice for farmers/gardeners/bee-keepers. Weather prognosis. New research reports. 3.90 plus 60p p&p (UK) Soil Association or Lanthorn Press, Peredur, East Grinstead, Sussex RH19 4NF. Also *Work on the Land and the Constellations*, for applying research results (same price).

BUG

Biological Urban Gardening
Magazine



The new organic gardening magazine: a mixture of traditional experiences, new research, unusual information & original ideas
In recent issues:

- vegetables for vegetarians • circle gardening for higher yields
- mulching with a paper pudding • origins of the Soil Association

Published in 3 parts:

- ★ a Technical Gardening Magazine ★ a Community Growing Newsletter
- ★ a Sustainable Gardening Feature Supplement

includes detailed monthly gardening calendar & information on raising food & plants for charity

£17.50 (for 16 issues) with FREE booklet on 110 apple varieties, or ask for information:

Rm 8, PO Box 206, Worcester WR1 1YS.

HAMBLEDEN HERBS

300 species of dried herbs -
120 certified organically grown

- Food and drinks processing
- Animal feed and veterinary treatment
- Manufacture of natural medicines and cosmetics
- Distribution through wholesalers and retailers
- A complete range of packeted herbs, spices and herbal teas

HAMBLEDEN HERBS

Court Farm, Milverton,
Somerset TA4 1NF

Tel: 0823 401205 • Fax: 0823 400276

Organic Flour By Post

Organic Stoneground Flour milled the traditional way. Small Cumbrian Watermill offers a wide range of organic flours, all to Soil Association Symbol Standard. Also cereal products. All delivered to your door! Order by telephone, pay by credit card. Write or phone for our mail order catalogue now!

Winner: Soil Association
Food Awards 1993

The Watermill,
Little Salkeld, Penrith,
Cumbria, CA10 1NN
Tel: 0768 881 523

Soil Association news

New staff at the Soil Association

Robin Maynard has joined The Soil Association as Director of Campaigns and Projects. Robin worked as Countryside and Agriculture Campaigner at Friends of the Earth from 1989-93. More recently he worked as a producer/presenter on BBC Radio 4's early morning rural news programme, *Farming Today*.

"I am very pleased to have accepted a job that involves me directly with organic farming, a system of food production that offers real solutions to many of the environmental problems I spent so many

years campaigning against at Friends of the Earth'.

Another recent addition to the Colston Street team is **Tony Muir**, the Soil Association's Press and Information Officer. His role is to provide an information service for the media and to produce press releases, news stories and ideas for creative initiatives. He also contributes to *Living Earth* & the *Food Magazine*, assists with the promotion of major events, such as Organic Harvest Month and provides support for the press and media requirements of The Soil Association Organic Marketing Company and the Soil Association's Responsible Forestry Programme. He previously worked for four years as Public Relations Officer for a division of the American Telecommunications giant, AT&T.

James Burrows

James Burrows, farmer, committed environmentalist and member of the Soil Association Council, died suddenly of a brain tumour in November. He was in his mid forties.

After working in Australia and studying at the Royal Agricultural College, James returned to the 450 acre family farm in Leicestershire, started to convert part of it to organic, joined the Soil Association and became founder member of the Organic Farmers and Growers co-operative. Going on to become an active member of both the Soil Association Council and the British Organic Farmers Committee, as well as an organic inspector, James retained his links with OF&G and played a valuable part in building relations between these organisations.

In recent years he planted over 1,000 trees on the farm, winning a Farming and Wildlife Award. His enthusiasm to pass on his love for the environment led to him introducing 'Earthwalks', attracting over 1,000 children per year onto the farm. An educational pack written by James, *The Outdoors Indoors*, was inspirational in the preparation of the Soil Association's own schools' material. He was also keen to involve artists with the environment, and encouraged students from Leicester Polytechnic to use the farm.

Other aspects of his life included

teaching yoga and playing hockey as a fearless goalkeeper for his country and college - he was the only player without a turban in the Leicester Sikh Temple team. He also worked as a JP, until stopped by disillusion with the legal system.

His future plans included taking an MSc in Environmental Policy and Planning, and then working with his partner, Candy, in developing countries.

The whole organic movement has lost a good friend. Several people have referred to James in the past few days as a gentle man, a fine tribute. I hope the shock of his passing will encourage us to look more closely at our own lives and ensure that we actually do something about the things we care about.

James and Candy intended to marry at Christmas and had a son, Pip, 3 in January. James also had two children, Chloe and Roo, by an earlier marriage. We offer them all our deepest sympathy.

Bill Starling



Charlotte Mitchell: An apology

On February 14, 1993 *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper published an article entitled 'A Beef about Natural Labels'. The article wrongly suggested that organic meat supplied to Sainsbury's by Greenway, a company which Charlotte Mitchell, the chairman of the Soil Association, was a director of, did not comply with Soil Association standards.

In the 6 November 1994 edition *Scotland on Sunday* apologised unreservedly to Charlotte Mitchell for this error and for any embarrassment caused. They have agreed to pay Ms Mitchell damages and legal costs.

Local action

Downland Organic Gardening Group: winter meetings 2nd Tuesday of each month. February 14 is 'Talk About Seeds' by Richard Rixon of Chase Organics. Details from Mrs E Hayman, 113 Oak Tree Close, Friday Street, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 8DG.

Avon Organic Group: next meetings January 18 (AGM and talk by Ken Ellis on bee keeping), February 15 (Effie Romain on ornamental gardening). Details from Cathy Wilson, Ground Floor Flat, 100 Maple Road, Horfield, Bristol BS7 8RG.

Bath Organic Group: next meeting February 21 'The Organic Greenhouse' by Sue Strickland, ex-Head Gardener at Ryton. Starts 7.30, at Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath.

New groups

Swansea and District Organic Group: Contact David Marlow, 15 Eynon Street, Gorseinon, Swansea.

Chichester Organic Gardening Society: Contact Pat Adams, White Gates, Grange Lane, Church Norton, Selsey, West Sussex.

The Soil Association would like to thank everyone who came to the BBC Good Food show at the NEC, Birmingham, and helped distribute information to an estimated 60,000 audience.

There are currently 45 affiliated local groups with two more about to start up. Sadly, the North East Group has disbanded - many thanks for all the members' hard work over the years.

The Soil Association has reinstated the Local Group Shield to be awarded at the AGM each year. First winners this year were the Epsom Group whose achievements include an astounding amount of fundraising, as well as paying for 70 schools, colleges and associations to receive *Living Earth*. A special mention must be made for Mrs Elizabeth Moore, Secretary of the Epsom Group and lifelong supporter of everything organic, whose tireless work and enthusiasm has brought her masses of respect and affection.

The criteria for the award will be sent to all groups in February. If you have suggestions for categories please contact Stephanie Jones at the Soil Association.

Please don't forget to send in details of events by the end of February for the next *Living Earth*.

Stephanie Jones

Hot chicken

A portion of chicken breast can provide you with your entire day's needs (15mg) of the vitamin niacin (vitamin B3). It is a rich source of the nutrient and often recommended in a healthy diet.

A portion of irradiated chicken is likely to provide you with a bit less niacin (like cooking, irradiation can deplete such nutrients and of course the chicken still has to be cooked afterwards).

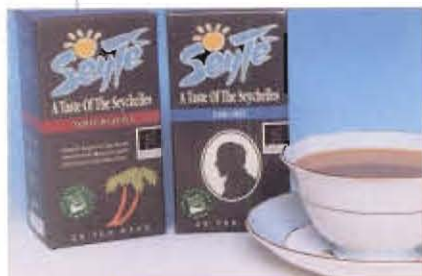
But irradiated chicken does, however, contain some new chemicals that weren't there before. According to a report published in the journal *Nutrition Toxicology* (Weiss, 1994) salmonella-bashing doses of irradiation of 10 kGy produce radiochemical products such as free radicals amounting to some 300mg per kilo. This is 60mg per portion, four times the quantity of the niacin.

Cold chicken

Reports of continued widespread infection of our poultry supply (60% of frozen chicken have salmonella and/or campylobacter contamination according to *Which?* magazine last October) may come as little surprise to critics of mass production methods.

And reports that new super-salmonella varieties are proving resistant to antibiotics and are causing ten times the levels of fatality in humans are to be expected, if you believe that antibiotic usage has been far too free and easy in recent years.

But the super-bugs are showing a peculiar oddity. Several cases appear to be linked to families with pets. According to one report 'microbiologists suspect the use of remains of chickens and their droppings as animal feedstuffs has caused the infection to spread.'



grown, 'fairtraded' tea was launched at the end of last year – Seyté – grown in the Seychelles. The 'Fairtrade' logo aims to guarantee minimum standards for the tea pickers on pay and housing, health and education provision and environmental protection.

A step in the right direction (though some say the standards are still too low) but it was something else that caught our eye. Lunn-Links, the importers of Seyté, proudly announce in their press release that the tea is 'grown without artificial pesticides and fertilizers' and that it is 'airfreighted weekly to the UK'. Very environmentally sound!

Whitney Houston pledges R1m to charity

United States pop star Whitney Houston on Friday pledged R1 million to South African children's charities.



The voice, the cash

International megastar Whitney Houston took South Africa by storm. 'It is my spiritual home,' she declared and gave Mandela's grandson Zondwa a hug (profile to camera, please) before undertaking two extra activities besides her concerts.

The first was to pledge a million Rand to local children's charities, saying that all children needed a safe place to live, good health and nutrition.

The second was to invest an undisclosed sum in a local business, New Age Beverages, whose main activity is canning and distributing Pepsi.

Federal offence

Many food companies were furious with the government over their COMA report urging us all to cut salt, sugar, fat etc and eat plenty of fruit, veg and so on. But we had hoped that their trade association, the Food and Drink Federation, would speak with a moderate and rational voice.

Well, it did and it didn't. There seemed to be two voices speaking at once, for on the day that COMA was launched the FDF issued first one press release and then, hours later, another.

The first, issued ahead of the launch, was all fury, particularly on the issue of cutting down on salt about which the FDF 'is surprised and concerned' at the recommendations which 'do not appear to be based on sound science.' The statement continued 'Whilst FDF's intention is to continue to support the Government's *Health of the Nation* initiative, this may not be possible if... this latest advice is unquestionably incorporated into *Health of the Nation* policy.'

The second, issued on the day, welcomed

A quick cuppa

Amid plaudits from MPs and media celebs, the first organically grown, 'fairtraded' tea was launched at the end of last year – Seyté – grown in the Seychelles. The 'Fairtrade' logo aims to guarantee minimum standards for the tea pickers on pay and housing, health and education provision and environmental protection.

A step in the right direction (though some say the standards are still too low) but it was something else that caught our eye. Lunn-Links, the importers of Seyté, proudly announce in their press release that the tea is 'grown without artificial pesticides and fertilizers' and that it is 'airfreighted weekly to the UK'. Very environmentally sound!

Sniff your way thin

The Food Commission is used to being sent the latest slimming scam but this one really got up our noses. Promoters of the 'Slim Pen' claim that you can lose weight by sniffing the pens, which come in three different aromas.

The 'pens' have been invented by Dr Alan Hirsch, 'a leading American Neurologist' with 'a list of qualifications and honours longer than we can list'. He says, 'When a patient loses his or her sense of smell they have a tendency to gain weight. Therefore if they have extra smell they would lose weight.' He then goes on to contradict himself: 'Most people will agree that during a bad bout of cold or 'flu, food is tasteless and they suffer a loss of appetite'. Dr Hirsch's argument may lack both logic and science but when did that stop anyone trying to make a quick buck in the slimming business?



COMA and endorsed the *Health of the Nation*, and revealed the concession they claim to have won from the Department of Health: 'FDF also notes that the Chief Medical Officer has clarified the considerable misunderstanding that has arisen about the food tables in COMA. Dr Calman made it quite clear that these tables refer to population averages and are in no way relevant to, or for, individuals. The FDF also welcomes the Chief Medical Officer's assurance that the Government has no quantified target for salt.'

This may reassure some FDF members but it does little to reassure journalists reading their press releases that the FDF speaks for all the food industry, or that all the food industry supports the healthy eating targets. Nor was any mention made of COMA's statement that up to 85% of dietary salt comes from processed foods, and that COMA recommends that 'food manufacturers, caterers and individuals (sic) explore and grasp the opportunities for reducing the sodium content of foods and meals.'