

The

# FOOD MAGAZINE

***Campaigning for safer, healthier food***

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## ***Supermarkets will flood shelves with genetically modified soya***

**The supermarket chains have told the *Food Magazine* that they cannot prevent a flood of products containing genetically modified soya reaching their shelves by early next year. The companies say they are unable to label the products as genetically engineered.**

**O**ver 7,000 common food products are expected to contain genetically altered soybean derivatives, and none will be labelled as such. The move follows the decision by agrochemical company Monsanto, producers of a genetically-engineered soybean resistant to the herbicide Roundup (also manufactured by

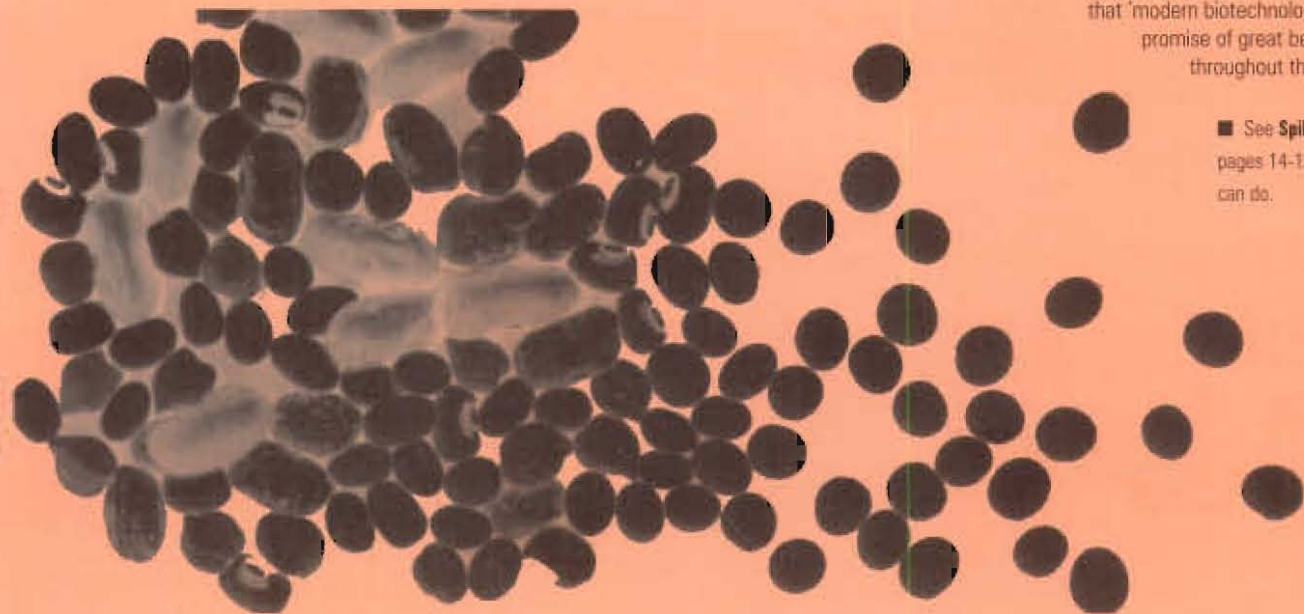
Monsanto), to blend the modified soybeans with regular supplies before exporting the beans to Europe. 'Within two years all soybean shipments from the US or anywhere else, can be assumed to include the Roundup modified soybeans,' a US agriculture department spokesperson said.

The supermarkets have been taking a principled

stand in the last two years in favour of labelling. The Co-op was the first to label cheese made from genetically engineered bacteria, followed by Sainsbury's and Safeway's labelling of genetically modified tomato paste. Now all the major multiples are stating they cannot track the sources of soya in their products and hence cannot provide differential labelling.

The food manufacturers are taking an even more robust stand against labelling. The Food and Drink Federation has said that 'consumers will be offered the choice through the final sanction of avoiding products containing soya as an ingredient' and that keeping the crop of modified soybeans separate from other soybeans 'is neither scientifically necessary nor practicable.' Unilever, the world's second largest food company, said it would wait to see what legislation might emerge and added that 'modern biotechnology holds the promise of great benefits to people throughout the world'.

■ See **Spilling the Genes** pages 14-15 for what you can do.



Genefeast – cheap and nutritious beans, but now soya genes get spliced

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We aim to provide independently researched information on the food we eat to ensure good quality food for all.

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

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## editorial

# Food and democracy – for one!

Just one person bears responsibility for the introduction of genetically modified food into two-thirds of the processed foods on sale in Britain.

That person is the director of the multinational agrochemical company Monsanto. Having failed to get widespread acceptance of the company's genetically engineered milk-boosting hormone Bovine Somatotropin — which the European Union banned until the end of the century — Monsanto is determined to recoup its losses with their engineered soybean.

Monsanto is taking the lead where others fear to tread. If they can fill supermarket shelves with a product that may, or may not, contain genetically engineered material, and if consumers get used to the idea that the food does not have to be labelled as genetically engineered, they will effectively break the back of any further consumer resistance.

The supermarkets claim they will be unable to guarantee their products are genetically modified (GM) soya-free. They also say that, as they cannot know what the source of soya is, they cannot label products one way or the other — and the law doesn't require them to label genetically engineered products anyway.

Soya gets into a wide variety of foods, from chocolate (soya lecithin) to petfood (vegetable protein). Health food manufacturers are trying to ensure they can get hold of alternative, non-modified beans to be able to guarantee their products are GM soya-free. Organic livestock farmers, who occasionally resort to bought in food from reputable feedstock companies, must also check to see if the soya meal is guaranteed GM soya-free.

So much for consumer choice. Consumers don't have a block vote at Monsanto's AGM, and unless the European Union can find a legitimate reason for blocking imports, we can't stop GM soya arriving in the UK. Our last defence — clear labelling — is being denied us. In decision after decision, the government's Food Advisory Committee have acceded to industry requests that labelling is unnecessary and unreliable.

On pages 14-15 Julie Sheppard of the campaigning group Genetics Forum warns of the risks that the gene technology may pose. As she advises, there is little left to do but make a stink. We urge readers to write letters to supermarkets, government and European Commission saying you don't want GM soya in your food, and asking how, in practice, they expect you to avoid it.

It only takes one person to trample on our rights. But it takes dedicated organisations using hours of voluntary labour and an unceasing publicity campaign to defend them.

Join with us in supporting Genetics Forum and their work to raise public awareness.

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## Support The Food Commission's campaign for safer, healthier food

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**Turn to page 18 for subscription details.**

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# DoH issues warning on soya baby milk

The Department of Health has warned that phytoestrogens found in soya baby milks could affect the health of infants. The government's Food Advisory Committee has asked manufacturers to reduce the levels of phytoestrogens in soya-based formulae. The warning, made in mid-July, came after a review of scientific literature by the expert Committee on Toxicity and vindicates eighteen months of campaigning by the Food Commission to have the risk acknowledged.

Phytoestrogens are naturally occurring chemicals found in high levels in soya which can cause oestrogenic effects. While some research suggests that phytoestrogens may have a positive health benefits in adults, for infants there is concern that they may have adverse effects. Although research in infants is limited, phytoestrogens have been found to cause infertility and affect sexual development and behaviour in animals. Babies fed on soya milk have been shown to consume several times the amount of phytoestrogens which have been demonstrated to cause changes in the monthly cycles of women.

The Department of Health estimates that about 10,000 babies a year are fed soya formula. Issuing advice to health professionals Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, said soya formula should only be given to babies on the advice of a health

professional. He stressed that breast-feeding is the best way to protect babies from allergies and advised that alternatives to soya are available on prescription for those babies with allergies who cannot be breastfed.

The Food Commission is urging manufacturers to reduce levels of phytoestrogen in soya formula as a matter of urgency, for there to be warning labels on products and for vital research to be given the highest priority.

■ Copies of the Department of Health's information leaflet on soya-based infant formula feeds are available from the Food Commission — please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The story of eight year-old children in Puerto Rico growing breasts a decade ago was put down to hormone residues in meat. But one research paper at the time found a strong link to the consumption of soya formula (*Am.J.Dis.C.* 140, 1986, p1263-1267). Additional evidence of the potency of phytoestrogens comes from the USA where they are being used by men undergoing sex-change operations: 'I look in the mirror and can't believe it - I'm now into a full B and still feel my breasts changing...' 'My skin is smoother and my nipples more tender' say users' testimonials.

## Irradiated food being sold illegally

In an acknowledgement that food irradiation laws are being regularly flouted, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has admitted that irradiated food is being imported and labelled 'incorrectly or not at all'.

'We don't believe that irradiated food is being produced illegally in Britain,' the MAFF spokesman added. MAFF has announced a £90,000 food sampling programme in conjunction with Suffolk trading standards department.

The admission justifies the Food Commission's eight-year campaign to ensure consumers have the choice to avoid irradiated food if they wish. 'Good food doesn't need irradiation,' said campaign co-ordinator Martine Drake. 'But we are worried that it has taken until this year for MAFF to acknowledge the need for stricter testing procedures even though not all the tests are validated. We are keen, though, to see the results showing how extensive the problem really is.'

■ The Food Commission survey of supermarkets in 1995 found none were currently testing for irradiated foods, and none had plans to start (see *Food Magazine* issue 31).

## Clouds gather on Sunett's horizon

The artificial sweetener acesulfame K (trade name Sunett) is facing demands for safety reassessment. The Washington group Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) has called on the US Food and Drug Administration to undertake testing of acesulfame on the grounds that it may cause cancer.

'The safety testing submitted to the FDA is of incredibly poor quality,' said CSPI director Dr Michael Jacobson. 'The only tests done were sponsored by the manufacturer and conducted in the mid-1970s. The tests were not good then, and they certainly do not meet today's standards.' Cancer experts are backing CSPI's call for reassessment.

'Despite the low quality of the studies, I find that there is evidence of carcinogenicity,' commented Dr Martin Schneiderman, a former Associate Director at the National Cancer Institute.

■ CSPI, Washington, tel 00-1-202-332-9110.

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Give your best friend a subscription to the *Food Magazine* and we will send them — or you, if you wish — a copy of any one of the books displayed on page 18 (except 'More than rice 'n' peas').

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Or use your credit card! Just dial 0171-628 7774



# Tide turns against functional foods

**T**here is increasing evidence that the great shopping public is unimpressed by the new generation of so-called functional foods. Several highly-publicised launches over the last year appear to be struggling and the Advertising Standards Authority has come down against yet another misleading claim. At the same time the government's Food Advisory Committee has put off deciding whether they should go back on their previous recommendations for tougher legislation on health claims.

A spot-check by *Food Magazine* researchers visiting branches of Safeway, Tesco, Sainsbury and Waitrose in London during September found several leading 'functional food' products were either not on sale, being sold at a discount or discontinued — see table below — indicating that sales may not be as healthy as the producers would like.

Meanwhile the Advertising Standards Authority has ruled that MD Foods, the makers of Pact, a yellow-fat spread with fish oil, had not provided evidence that the product would be good for the heart and that M D Foods, should 'avoid

giving the impression that Pact could impart a coronary care benefit.'

This warning follows the ASA's findings against the same company's Gaio soya-yogurt for exaggerated claims, Kellogg's All-Bran, for unacceptable 'detoxify' claims, and Ribena Juice and Fibre, whose claims to reduce blood cholesterol were exaggerated. The ASA has issued a general warning that food companies must be able to substantiate scientifically the health benefits they are claiming (see *Food Magazine* issue 34).

In the meantime, the government's Food Advisory Committee has been asked by MAFF officials to reconsider their 1992 recommendations to strengthen the legislation on health claims. The FAC

had originally recommended banning claims that could not be properly substantiated and that did not meet with approval from the Chief Medical Officer for Health — i.e. did not fall within the Department of Health's recommendations for healthier diets.

Those recommendations were never implemented, and now, in the name of 'de-regulation', MAFF has asked the FAC to relax their recommendations, despite support for the FAC's position from the Food Commission, the National Food Alliance and other consumer bodies. In a meeting held in June the FAC agreed it was prepared to issue a new position paper for consultation, to be ready in September. But at the meeting in September, the FAC delayed making a decision on the matter, and it is unlikely they will

now issue a document until the new year. Whether these delays reflect differences of opinion on the committee, or just a hope by the committee that MAFF will soon abandon its de-regulating fervour, remains to be seen.



Pact — slammed by the ASA



Prices slashed on pioneer fibre drink

■ The Food Commission's report *Functional Foods Examined* (£125 or £20 concessions) and conference document *Functional Foods meet Commercial, not Consumer Needs* (£10) are available from the Food Commission publications department.

## Trouble at till — functional foods failing to gain mass sales?

	Safeway	Tesco	Sainsbury	Waitrose
Ribena Juice and Fibre	not on sale	not on sale	not on sale	price slashed — to be discontinued
Omega bread and cakes	not on sale	not on sale	not on sale	not on sale
Deimonte juice and vitamins	not on sale	not on sale	price cut promotion	price slashed — to be discontinued
Gaio soya-yogurt	price cut promotion	not on sale	available	available
Pact fish oil spread	price cut promotion	not on sale	available	available
Yakult bio drink	available	available	not on sale	not on sale
Nestlé LC1 yogurt	not on sale	not on sale	available	not on sale

Source: Food Commission 1996





## Yakult is not a functional food?

In a surprising admission to the Food Commission, the makers of Yakult have acknowledged that their 'beneficial bacteria' drink, which claims to help maintain 'a healthy digestive system and general well-being' is not registered with the Japanese Functional Food Association, and enquiries by the *Food Magazine* reveal that the product appears not to have been granted a functional food licence in Japan.

Under Japanese legislation, functional foods are considered to be foods for specified health uses

(FOSHU products). They must be registered with the Ministry of Health and must produce extensive clinical evidence to support any health claims being made.

In a report published earlier this year,\* trials of Yakult by company researchers failed to show any beneficial effects on the immune system. 'There were no significant changes in the immune parameters such as NK cell activity and cytokine production,' the authors admitted.

\* *Gut Flora and Health — Past, Present and Future*, Royal Society of Medicine Forum on Food and Health, March 1996.

**Two researchers at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund**, Drs Harpreet Wasan and Robert Goodlad, have argued in *The Lancet* (3.8.96) for consuming dietary fibre as part of a diet rich in fruit and vegetables and not as an added supplement.

'Specific dietary fibre supplements, embraced as nutraceuticals of functional foods, are an unknown and potentially damaging way to influence modern dietary habits of the general population,' they write.

**Garlic pills fail:** just as dietary fibre supplements may not substitute for a diet rich in natural dietary fibre (see left) so garlic pills may not substitute for a diet rich in real garlic. A study published in the *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians* found little difference in the effects on blood cholesterol measures or apolipoproteins between subjects given 900mg dried garlic powder and those given a placebo. (*JRCPL*, 30, pp 329-334 July/August 1996).

The **Stella Bella Corp** is now selling a vitamin C-fortified coffee in the USA.

Just two cups provide your recommended daily needs.

## Olestra update: UK

As we have reported in previous issues of the *Food Magazine*, the decision on whether the UK permits olestra — the fat-free fat accused of removing nutrients from the diet — will rest with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, as advised by the ministry's Food Advisory Committee (FAC). The FAC has been showered by letters from, among others, many *Food Magazine* readers, urging the committee not to recommend approval for olestra. Meanwhile the FAC has asked the Department of Health's advisory body, the COMA Panel on Novel Foods for its advice.

The COMA panel has yet to report its views. It is widely understood that the panel wants to recommend against permitting olestra on the market — but it appears that they may be under pressure to modify their views. Firstly, panel members are apparently being told they cannot reach any conclusion about olestra until olestra's

manufacturer's, Procter & Gamble, submit further evidence, which was promised several months ago.

Secondly, panel members are apparently being warned that they should consider carefully their legal position if they block the marketing of a product without adequate cause. Similar threats have been used in the past, we understand, though no manufacturer has ever sued a government advisory body for damages.

Thirdly, the panel members have apparently been told that if they veto olestra in the UK, the company will simply get it approved elsewhere in Europe, and then all member states will have to accept it.

■ For an overview of the debate, see the *Olestra Briefing Paper* from The Food Commission. Free to *Food Magazine* readers, but please send a stamped (20p) self-addressed envelope.

## Olestra update: USA

The three-city trials of Frito-Lay's Max Tostitos chips, launched last April, is now being followed by trials of olestra-containing Pringles in Cleveland, Ohio. Pringles are made by olestra's own parent company, Procter and Gamble.

In the three-city trials, the citizen's group Centre for Science in the Public Interest broadcast local television advertisements giving a freephone number for anyone suffering adverse effects after eating the Max chips. In two months over 200 calls were received, complaining of diarrhoea, abdominal cramps and loose stools. Gas, nausea, bloating and faecal urgency were also reported.

CSPI director Mike Jacobson commented that in some cases symptoms lasted for days. 'One 11-year-old boy missed three days at school, others suffered severe pains and cramps. It's only a matter of time before the chips cause deaths.' Describing olestra-chips as 'the first snack food that bites back' Dr Jacobson called on the US Food and Drug Administration to

withdraw approval of olestra immediately.

■ CSPI, Washington, tel 00-1-202-332-9110.



**Olestra snacks - going down fast!**



**The World Food Summit in mid-November will prove a testing ground for the belief that free trade can achieve an adequate food supply for all people. Tim Lang and Tim Lobstein argue that experience proves otherwise.**

## Food Security and the Rome Challenge

**F**ood security means that food is available at all times, that all persons have means of access to it, that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety, and that it is acceptable within the given culture... We aim to achieve lasting self-reliance at the national and household levels. In order to succeed, our initiatives must be founded on principles of economic viability, equity, broad participation, and the sustainable use of natural resources.<sup>1</sup>

Worthy words indeed, coming as they do from FAO's Committee on World Food Security. But what exactly does 'self-reliance' mean? Is it self-sufficiency at community level, provincial level, national level or what?

Or is it, as participants at November's summit in Rome are being urged to believe, not self-sufficiency so much as wealth-sufficiency: the ability to purchase an adequate food supply. Wealth sufficiency, it will be argued, can only come about through increased world trade — and increased world trade, it will be argued, means expanded, uninhibited free trade.

The last World Food Summit was in 1974, a time of more outspoken radical politics with anger expressed about unequal global shares, with third world liberation movements holding the banner for progress, while western governments found their liberal Keynesian economics being increasingly challenged by the 'pure-market' theories of the Chicago school. And there was furious debate over the Green Revolution — the new strains of crops and the agrochemical farming methods that were to ensure the third world could feed itself — but which instead led to a loss of native crops and farming methods, and led the peasant farmers into debt to western agribusiness.

Writers like Susan George produced brilliant analyses of the power of the big corporations to explain why some people enjoyed surplus and others suffered hunger.<sup>2</sup> Frances Moore Lappé and Joe Collins mapped out the case for putting food first in any development analysis.<sup>3</sup> André Gunder Frank put food distribution into the context of capitalism and

colonialism, identifying the struggle to feed a people as part of the struggle to gain independence from profiteers.<sup>4</sup>

Today, by contrast, there is a near-consensus that the market offers a panacea for all ills. Green Revolution mark II will arise from genetic engineering, we are told. And, the logic goes, to turn genes into useful commodities will require a fully-commercialised agniculture — which in turn requires free trade. Free trade, it is argued, is the only sure way to ensure the wealth and well-being of humanity.<sup>5</sup> But is it?

The extent of unmet need in the world is considerable. Food production has kept up with population growth, but has not been equitably distributed either within households, within countries or between countries. Even within rich economies such as the USA or the United Kingdom, the extent of food poverty is now well documented.<sup>6</sup> Food security — access, affordability, availability — remains out of reach for poorer families in even the richest of nations.

At the bottom of the world's income scales, the figures are sobering. The United Nations Children's Fund estimates that one in five persons — 800 million people — in the developing world suffer from chronic hunger and that over 2 billion people subsist on diets deficient in the vitamins and minerals essential for normal growth and development, and for preventing premature death and such disabilities as blindness and mental retardation.<sup>7</sup>

At present there is enough food to feed the world. According to FAO, calories per head increased from 2,120 in 1969-71 to 2,470 in 1988-90 and the proportion of the chronically undernourished fell from 36% to 20% of world population.<sup>8</sup> The 5.8 billion people in the world had on average 15% more food per person than the 4 billion of the world had two decades ago.<sup>9</sup>

But there are threats to these gains in food supply, ranging from rising populations to the ecological impact of climate change, to increasing meat consumption, to widening social inequalities between and within countries. Liberalising trade will

not resolve these concerns, and may exacerbate them.

*'Reliance on trade to achieve national food security is not usually an appropriate policy for developing countries,'* argues a preparatory paper for the 1996 summit, written by a European group of development NGOs.<sup>10</sup> *'Dependence on food imports creates vulnerability to world markets and prices. In reality, trade flows are controlled more by powerful corporations than by governments. We urge a greater degree of self-reliance in food production, at national or regional level.'*

From the Philippines<sup>10</sup> and Thailand<sup>11</sup> to Uruguay,<sup>12</sup> anger about global trade undermining local production is rising. In Kenya, grain imports have risen, subsidised by the European Union, undermining local production and creating poverty for grain farmers. In 1992, EU wheat was sold in Kenya 39% more cheaply than the same wheat which had been purchased by the EU from European farmers. In 1993, it was 50% cheaper. In 1995 Kenyan wheat prices collapsed through oversupply.<sup>13</sup> All this in a country which was self-sufficient in the 1980s. Oxfam, in documenting the reality behind the free trade rhetoric, has produced a devastating indictment of how poor countries come to depend on external trade.<sup>14</sup>

Developing countries whose populations account for around four fifths of humanity had only 30% of global wealth in 1960, and this had fallen to only 20% by 1990. This is the driving force for world hunger — the systematic maintenance of poverty, accentuated by the continued displacement of people from the land.

Export-led food policies subsidised by the treasuries of the wealthier nations needs to give way to more local production for local use. This requires more people on the land, not throwing people off to make the economic audit of farming look more 'efficient'.<sup>15</sup> The goal should be to build a better quality of life in the country, and to make public and environmental health part of the economic audit. A world coalition of peasants' organisations, Via Campesina, meeting in Mexico in April 1996, summarised this case starkly:

*'The prevailing neo-liberal economic system has been the main cause for the increasing impoverishment of farmers and rural peoples in general. It is responsible for the increasing degradation of nature, land, water, plants, animals and natural resources, having put all these vital resources under centralised systems of production, procurement and distribution of agricultural products within the frame of a global market oriented system.'*<sup>16</sup>

Popular movements and NGOs concerned about food are determined to argue their case, prepared to cite experience gleaned from decades of working with small farmers and peasants, and running campaigns trying to shame the world about continuing food poverty.

1 George, S (1976) *How the Other Half Dies: the Real Reasons for World Hunger*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

2 Moore Lappé, F and Collins, J (1977), *Food First: beyond*



# Supermarkets target minority markets

**Supermarket sales of 'exotic' fruit and vegetables and their introduction of Caribbean grocery lines, is damaging the small, ethnic minority grocers and street market stall holders, writes Michelle Harrison.**

With Jamaican hard dough bread now sharing the shelves with Sunblest in many inner-city Sainsbury's, and guavas following mangoes and kiwis into mainstream consumption, the traditional supplier of food for minority ethnic cuisines is being undermined by the giant chains as they search for yet another niche market to conquer.

Minority ethnic food products first became available in the UK in the 1960s, when market traders and independent retailers began to import Caribbean, African, Indian and Chinese produce to sell to local immigrant communities. Imports of staples such as yams, cassava, plantain and breadfruit increased during the 1970s and 1980s as export facilities in the Caribbean and West Africa improved, and the period saw a rise in street market traders and corner shops specialising in these products and expanding to include meat, fish and processed foods and developing their own trading companies for high value spices.

By the end of the 1980s a flourishing retail trade in minority ethnic foods had been developed in several inner city areas, such as London's Brixton, Southall, Deptford and Dalston. In the early 1990s the supermarkets started to see the potential for re-marketing foods such as these for a mainstream

middle class consumer looking for something exotic, while attracting ethnic minority customers by offering a range of their staple foods.

As one supermarket spokesperson told the Food Commission, 'This is a niche market, to service non-white communities, and it's one that needs developing further. At the moment large groups of ethnic minority people are not going to their local supermarket at all, or are doing 80% with us and

going to a specialist for 20%. We want to develop a one-stop shop as we have done for our white customer base.'

However, as the table shows, the supermarket prices are at the expensive end of the range. Convenience and the appearance of better quality come at a premium price.

In south London the impact of the supermarkets' strategy is already apparent. The prosperous Balham street market of the 1980s, where vendors sold Caribbean produce on the road alongside the local Sainsbury, has dwindled. A borough market inspector explained:

'In 1990 we had thirty stalls and now we're down to fifteen and they work less days. It's happening all over the borough. Sainsbury's now sells what they sell and the market traders can't compete.'

As with the baker, the fishmonger, the butcher, the newsagent, the chemist...

## Price checks (prices per lb/pack)

	Market stalls	Corner shops	Supermarkets
Plantain	30 - 49p	45 - 59p	99p
Yam	55 - 89p	39 - 99p	99p
Root ginger	£1.20	99p - £1.40	65p - £1.40
Okra	£1.40 - 1.60	£1.40 - 1.60	£3.25
Salt fish	£2.61	£2.61 - 2.89	£2.71
Hard dough bread	£1.15 - 1.25	£1.10	£1.25
Chappati flour	33p	33p	25p

Source: Food Commission 1996

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10 See 'So our Rice Bins May Always Be Full' *The Baly Declaration of South East Asian NGO Conference on Trade and Food Security*, Quezon City, Philippines. pages 13-16 February 1996.

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# UK drags its feet on methyl bromide

The UK is lagging behind many other European countries in phasing out the use of the ozone-depleting pesticide, methyl bromide. Countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany are already producing many crops without the use of methyl bromide.

Methyl bromide is commonly used as a soil fumigant for many horticultural crops such as tomatoes, strawberries, lettuce and mushrooms. It is also used for pest control of imported commodities such as grains, nuts, dried fruits and some herbs and spices (see table). Almost all nuts imported from the USA are treated with methyl bromide.

In 1992, methyl bromide was officially recognised as an ozone-depleting substance and industrialised countries have agreed

to end its use by 2010 under the Montreal Protocol, although some countries, such as the USA are phasing it out much sooner, by 2001. Depletion of the ozone layer at current levels has been estimated to increase the incidence of non-melanoma skin cancer by approximately 12-14% in the long term.

The major use of the methyl bromide in the UK is for open-field strawberries such as pick-your-own which accounts for 54% of the total methyl bromide used in the UK. Tomatoes and greenhouse protected lettuce each account for a further 6% of use, and mushrooms add a further 5%.

Almost all products can be grown without methyl bromide using alternative methods of pest control. In Germany all foods crops are

grown without the use of methyl bromide as are all horticultural crops in the Netherlands, including tomatoes, strawberries, peppers and cucumber, and similarly all tomatoes grown in Denmark.

Yet currently consumers in the UK have no way of telling whether a product has been grown or treated with methyl bromide and so are unable to choose to avoid or discourage its use.

The Food Commission would like to see products labelled such as 'produced without methyl bromide' so consumers can exercise a choice. We plan to conduct a survey of retailers to find out what actions they are taking to encourage their suppliers to phase out the use of methyl bromide and what products they stock which are produced without its use.

## Nature defeats fungicides

Shivers of fear are starting to run down the spines of agrochemical salesmen as they face increasing evidence that some fungicides are no longer as effective as they used to be.

In a statement by the Home Grown Cereals Authority, 'an increasing number of pathogens' have become resistant to systemic fungicides. 'The most significant example of a rapid shift was the complete failure of MBC fungicides to control the eyespot fungus,' they admitted. A more gradual shift has also occurred in the ability of fungicides to control wheat and barley powdery mildew.

The worst thing farmers can do, they say, is to apply low doses of fungicide at frequent intervals, as this encourages the development of resistance.

■ Further details from the Home Grown Cereals Authority, Hamlyn House, London N19 5PR (tel 0171-263 3391).

### Use of Methyl Bromide in the UK

	Approx. amount of methyl bromide (tonnes per annum)	percentage
Soil fumigated with MB prior to planting some fruit, flowers, nursery crops, mushrooms.	520	80%
Pest control of occasional quarantine treatment for some grains, pulses, dried fruit, nuts, herbs & spices, cocoa, raw timber	91	14%
Treatment for food industry facilities (flour mills, food processing, warehouses and transport such as ships, aircraft, railcars, trucks etc).	33	5%
Treatment for perishable commodities e.g. fresh fruit and vegetables, cut flowers, ornamental plants, fresh root crops, bulbs	7	1%
Estimated total	650	100%

### MAFF's priorities

MAFF has generously found £3m to support British food processing and marketing, and has duly handed out the money to 16 lucky food firms.

Always keen to put healthy diets

as their first criterion, we are interested to see that £1.2m is going to meat companies, and less than £0.3m on fruit and vegetables (unless you count frozen herbs)

### Price of obesity

According to Dr Andrew Prentice, Chairman of the Association for the Study of Obesity's Education Committee, 'each year obesity costs the UK well in excess of £2,000m in direct and indirect costs.'

## Functional meets genetic

The next phase in so-called 'added value' foods may come by way of the humble potato. Researchers in the USA are developing a spud-u-like with added anti-cholera vaccine. The more you eat the less your risk of cholera, they say. Very useful for the 4.5 million babies that die of diarrhoeal disease in the third world — they won't be needing better nutrition or good water supplies, just a GM potato.

What happens if you eat pounds of the stuff every week isn't clear. But other food-vaccines will surely follow. When will we see anti-CJD beef offal, anti-caries cola drinks or an anti-dandruff Flake bar?



# CHECKOUT

Spring water is not mineral water. And flavoured spring water can mean a soft drink with a fancy name. Checkout investigates

## Springing a surprise

**W**hen the Food Magazine received this letter (right) from Mrs Horrocks, we thought there must be some mistake. The front of the label implies, she said, a bottle of spring water with a hint of juice, but the small print on the back showed there to be several additives, including two artificial sweeteners and a preservative, sodium benzoate, linked to asthma, skin rashes and possible foetal damage.

Surely a reputable company like Tesco's wouldn't be misleading customers by saying one thing on the front of the label and quite a different thing on the back? Unfortunately they are not alone — as our survey on the next page shows, the

majority of manufacturers sweeten their flavoured spring water, and a large number use preservatives and a range of other additives.

**Spring water plus  
flavouring...plus  
sweeteners...plus  
acidifiers...plus  
preservatives...**

Dear Food Commission

I would like to vote Tesco's Lightly Sparkling Spring Water with a Hint of Fruit Juice to be the Food Magazine's Loopy Label of the Year.

It certainly misled me to buy a product I didn't like. The bottle was displayed with regular bottled water in my local Tesco and so I thought I was buying what the label said: water with a hint of fruit.

The bottle in fact contained a fizzy drink which I consider to be very like lemonade. It contains two artificial sweeteners and citric acid. If I had known I would have left it on the shelf.

The small print says that "Sugar free products have two benefits for you and your family — they are low in calories and do not encourage tooth decay." Surely the citric acid could be just as damaging to teeth as sugar would be, especially as there is some sugar present from the small amount of fruit juice? And they make no mention of the potential danger to children of ingesting too much artificial sweetener.

If this drink can be sold as "Slightly Sparkling Spring Water" then so can most of the fizzy drinks on the supermarket shelves! I expect a drink labelled WATER to be low in calories and not to encourage tooth decay because it does not contain anything except water. Water on its own is an excellent drink. An added hint of fruit flavour from fruit juice is all I expected from this bottle.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Horrocks, Basingstoke.





# CHECKOUT

If you don't like the taste of tap water, then try these 'Spring' waters... and think again! Many so-called spring water drinks are sweetened, preserved soft drinks trying to claim the healthier image of mineral waters. And trying to claim a price premium, too! **Checkout** investigates:

## Water's the difference?

**W**hen Perrier introduced their range of mineral waters with a hint of lemon it was an instant success. The combination of a classy-image water with a slight tang of fruit sold thousands of litres.

Not short of a trick, manufacturers have started to cash in on this success with a wide range of fruit-flavoured waters — but the original classy product has gone. Only the image — and the price — remain. Mineral water has given way to so-called 'spring' water (see Legal Niceties box), and the hint of fruit has given way to a wide range of ingredients and additives, including flavouring agents, preservatives and artificial sweeteners (see table).

Over half the twenty four products we examined contained the preservative E211 sodium benzoate. Sodium benzoate, an antibacterial and antifungal agent, has been linked to hyperactivity, asthma and urticaria (skin rash).

A third of the products contained artificial sweeteners, in several cases in addition to fruit juices. An EC Directive (which must be implemented by 1 July 1997) will require that foods containing artificial sweeteners must make this clear by indicating their presence in, or next to, the name of the food. But until next summer manufacturers are free to continue hiding the presence of artificial sweeteners in the small print.

The sugar content of those that don't contain artificial sweeteners can be as high as regular soft drinks. One 250ml bottle of Ribena Spring contains about 35g of sugar, equivalent to more than a dozen sugar cubes.

Many of these 'spring water' drinks are likely to be as tooth-damaging as regular soft drinks. Even those without high levels of sugar are acidic, and — as shown in the last issue of the *Food Magazine* — acidic soft drinks have been linked to dental erosion. The government's 1993 Child Dental Health Survey found that over a quarter of children aged 15 were showing dental erosion to their permanent teeth — and the consumption of large amounts of soft drinks were directly implicated.

Lastly, our survey found that the prices of these products was generally high. Given that most soft drink companies use their own sources of water — often from boreholes — and hence are using 'spring' water anyway, the premium being claimed because of a fancy name seems exceptionally high. The products in our survey ranged up to £2.80 per litre, with the great majority of them over £1 per litre.

■ Research: Jane Bradbury, Alice Furniss and Brigitte Griffiths.



No added sugar, these say. But both use artificial sweeteners.

### Legal niceties

There is a world of difference between mineral water and spring water. 'Natural mineral water' is a name protected by law — you can't just bottle stuff from a hole in the ground and sell it as Natural Mineral Water. The water has to come from an officially recognised source, registered and approved, and with the water conforming to a range of purity specifications and labelled with mineral analysis details.

But spring water has no such restrictions. 'Spring' water can just be water taken from a hole in the ground. Water sold in containers must comply with purity regulations, but there is no legal definition of 'spring'. Some manufacturers have agreed that the water should have come from a single underground source, but it can have undergone a range of treatments including blending, filtration and ultra violet treatment.

There are currently discussions in the EU about tightening up on the regulations to ensure spring water is from a single underground source, but in the meantime if you filled your bottles with tap water and sold it as spring water you might be misleading the public but it is unlikely you would be breaking the law.

As soon as you add a flavouring to bottled water it becomes a soft drink — and as it is legal to add artificial sweeteners to soft drinks, so it is quite legal to add artificial sweeteners to a flavoured spring water product.

And it is also legal to put a picture of a fruit, such as a peach, on the label even though the relevant ingredient is only a drop of 'peach flavouring' — this is allowed as long as the peach flavouring was derived 'wholly or mainly' from the peach.



Spring water or sweet soft drink — this product contained the equivalent of 13 sugar lumps



# CHECKOUT

Product	Ingredients include	Price	Volume	Price/100ml
Rio Tropical Spring Water with fruit juices	Sugar; fruit juices 10%, citric acid, ascorbic acid, flavourings	£0.39	330ml	12p
Tesco Spring Water with a hint of peach	Peach juice (2%), citric acid, flavouring, aspartame, acesulfame K, sodium benzoate, ascorbic acid	£0.39	330ml	12p
Clearly Canadian Orchard Peach	Sugar, citric acid, flavouring, sodium benzoate	£0.69	325ml	21p
Bottle Green Drinks Elderflower Pressé	Cane sugar, elderflowers, citric acid, ascorbic acid, sodium benzoate	£0.69	250ml	28p
Strathmore Clear Cottage Peach	Citric acid, flavoring, aspartame, sodium benzoate, ascorbic acid,	£0.99	1.5 litre	6p
Caledonian Clear Spring Raspberry	Fructose, citric acid, flavouring, sodium benzoate,	£0.72	330ml	21p
Oasis Spring Water and real fruit	Sugar solution, fruit juices, citric acid, flavouring, colour	£0.69	375ml	18p
Rio Tropical Light Spring Water with fruit juices	Fruit juices, citric acid, aspartame, tri-sodium citrate, ascorbic acid, flavourings,	£0.39	330ml	12p
Sainsbury's Tangerine Crystal Spa	Sugar, citric acid, flavouring	£0.49	250ml	20p
Sainsbury's Peach flavour sparkling spring water drink	Concentrated apple extract, citric acid, flavouring, aspartame, sodium benzoate	£0.75	1 litre	8p
Sainsbury's Elderflower Spring	Sugar, flavouring, lemon juice, citric acid	£0.59	250ml	24p
Sainsbury's Raspberry and Rosehip Pressé	Sugar, concentrated raspberry juice, rosehip infusion, citric acid, flavouring	£1.29	750ml	17p
Ribena Spring	Sucrose, blackcurrant juice, citric acid, vitamins C, niacin, B6, B12, colour anthocyanins	£0.49	250ml	20p
Marks & Spencer Peach still spring water drink	Apple concentrate, citric acid, flavouring, aspartame, sodium benzoate	£0.49	330ml	15p
Superdrug peach flavour spring water drink	Fruit juice 2% (apple), citric acid, flavourings, aspartame, acesulfame K, sodium benzoate, ascorbic acid.	£0.29	330ml	9p
Spring Mist Lite with a hint of pear	Citric acid, flavour, aspartame, acesulfame K, sodium benzoate	£0.39	330ml	12p
Ballygowan Irish spring water with orange	Natural orange essence	£0.35	250ml	14p
Waitrose Elderflower Spring	Sugar, elderflowers, citric acid, ascorbic acid, sodium benzoate	£0.63	250ml	25p
Boots Shapers Peach Spring	Citric acid, sodium citrate, flavouring, aspartame, acesulfame K, sodium benzoate	£0.49	250ml	20p
Boots Shapers still fruit cocktail drink	Concentrated fruit juices, citric acid, flavourings, pectin, potassium sorbate, anthocyanin, carotene, aspartame, acesulfame K, neohesperidine	£0.69	330ml	21p
Tom Cobley's Dartmoor orange flavoured spring water	Sugar, citric acid, flavour, sodium benzoate, ascorbic acid	£0.39	330ml	12p
Britvic Mist English spring water with apricot	Fructose syrup, apricot juice, citric acid, flavouring	£0.68	330ml	27p
Citrus Spring with orange juice	Orange juice (10%), sugar, orange fruit, citric acid, ascorbic acid, flavourings	£0.39	330ml	12p
Selzer spring water with natural fruit flavour	Glucose, fructose, flavouring, citric acid, ascorbic acid	£0.69	330ml	28p

Source: Food Commission 1996. Note: Product formulations and prices may change.



# CHECKOUT

## The benefits of deregulation

Consumer complaints that deregulation of food compositional standards has led to less consumer protection have met with MAFF stonewalling. At a meeting of the Consumer Panel at MAFF, concerns that fishcakes can now be sold with less than the 35% fish content previously required, and that fruit squashes no longer have to contain fruit, were met with a statement from MAFF saying:

*'The general benefits of deregulation are greater clarity,*

*transparency and accessibility of food law and removal of unwarranted costs on business (which will influence prices to consumers). So far as compositional regulations are concerned, the main benefits are that industry will no longer be restricted by detailed compositional rules on the products they can make... (providing) opportunities for developing new and more innovative products in response to increasing consumer demand. This will give greater choice to consumers...'*

*Deregulation has removed all the*

*detailed restrictions on such terms (as 'squash' or 'fish cake') and the consumer can now make more informed purchase choices by reading more meaningful product labels.'*

MAFF seem to have forgotten that neither fish content (in fish products) nor fruit content (in fruit drinks) has to be stated on the label — which leaves consumers completely in the dark. We are also amused to see the phrase "increasing consumer demand" which usually means any product a company can sell.

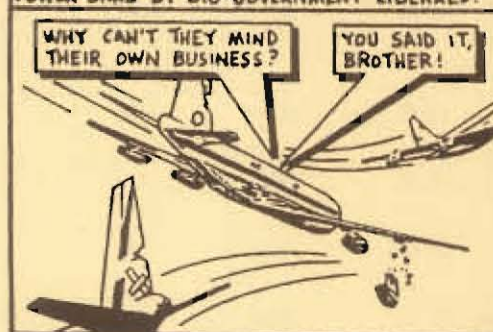
REPUBLICANS ARE WORKING TO LIFT THE OPPRESSIVE BURDEN OF GOVERNMENTAL REGULATION FROM THE COLLECTIVE SHOULDERS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC!



NO LONGER WILL GOOD OLD-FASHIONED AMERICAN INGENUITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS BE STIFLED BY FACELESS BUREAUCRATS AND PENCIL-PUSHERS IN WASHINGTON D.C.



AFTER ALL--EVERYONE KNOWS THAT ALL THOSE RULES AND REGULATIONS ARE NOTHING BUT A POWER GRAB BY BIG-GOVERNMENT LIBERALS!



WHY WE CAN'T THINK OF A SINGLE INSTANCE IN WHICH GOVERNMENTAL OVERSIGHT IS EVER WARRANTED... CAN YOU?



With apologies and thanks to the Citizens United for Food Safety (CUFFS) of Seattle.

## Sweeteners must come out front

From July 1997 the presence of artificial sweeteners in food and drink products must be declared on the front of the label in or next to the name of the food.

If the sweeteners include aspartame (NutraSweet) then the label must include a warning for

people who suffer from the enzymatic disorder phenylketonuria.

If the sweeteners include polyols then the label must warn of the possible laxative effects.

The European Union has already adopted these requirements as a Directive. Manufacturers have

known of the changes for over a year. But products labelled before July 1997 can be sold after that date — and we expect irresponsible manufacturers to continue with the old labels as long as they can.

## Behind the label

A look behind the so-called animal welfare-friendly labelling schemes has been published by the Soil Association.

A year ago the Food Commission and the Soil Association published their review of the good, the bad and the down-right misleading meat and animal product labels (see the *Food Magazine* 29). Now this exposé of the retailers who pass off intensively-reared livestock as welfare-friendly has been expanded to include fruit and vegetable labels, and has been published by the Soil Association as an 18-page document.

■ *Green Tokenism* by Peta Cottey. Price £3.00 (inc 50p p&p) from the Soil Association, 86 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB (tel 0117 929 0661).

## Mislabelled honey

Around one in every fifty samples of honey examined by trading standards officers was found to be mislabelled. Of 380 samples, 7 had the wrong botanical or geographical description. (LACOTS 1995 EC Food Sampling Programme)

## Adulterated coffee

More than one in twenty samples of coffee were found to be adulterated with material other than pure coffee beans, according to local authority trading standards officers. Of 320 samples of coffee analysed, 17 were found to contain other material such as plant stems and husks. (LACOTS 1995 EC Food Sampling Programme)



**We are pleased to reproduce quotations from Prince Charles' speech at the Lady Eve Balfour Memorial Lecture, marking the 50th anniversary of the Soil Association.**

## The best of the Prince

'Today we are surrounded by evidence of what has happened to our farmland when husbandry-based agriculture is replaced by industrialised systems and where traditional management gives way to specialisation and intensification.

'It is no good looking for positively identifiable culprits for these horrors, except perhaps our society as a whole — for failing to value properly our natural assets, and the traditional, tried and tested ways of utilising them, until they were nearly gone. It would certainly be quite wrong to blame farmers for responding (as they could hardly fail to do) to the clear economic signals they were sent.

'But it is difficult to overemphasise the significance of what has been *unwittingly* destroyed in only two generations... We have all been embroiled in the experiment of intensive agriculture. We have been paying twice — not only to subsidise intensive farming through taxes, but again to restore, partially, the damage which that sort of farming creates.

'The illusion has been maintained that intensive farming practices have, at least, given us cheap food. But the real sums are never done... 'New plant varieties fed with high levels of artificial fertiliser have dramatically increased food production, to no-one's surprise. But it now becomes clear (according to the *New Scientist*) that those intensively grown crops are nutritionally

deficient. They lack vital trace elements and minerals, particularly iron and zinc.

'This deficiency has been passed on through the food to such an extent that an IQ loss of 10 points has been observed in a whole generation of children who have consumed a diet largely based on crops grown in this way.

'I think that we must recognize that for the last fifty years we have given our farmers a remarkably narrow set of goals, and accompanying incentives to help them get there:

- economic performance without environmental accountability
- maximum production without regard for animal welfare
- specialisation without consideration of the maintenance of biological and cultural diversity

'The signals we sent said what we wanted: cheap food and plenty of it. We can hardly blame our farmers now for their outstanding success in achieving those goals. But if we want to modify and add to those goals in the light of experience and changing public expectations, we are only going to be able to do so with the support of a further reformed Common Agriculture Policy.

'In 1995, only 2% of total CAP expenditure was spent on supporting agri-environment schemes, despite the fact that surveys show that most

consumers would now put 'green' farming right at the top of their priority list for CAP support... It is difficult to ignore evidence such as the recent Gallup poll which showed that 'the countryside' came second only to 'free speech' as the attribute most valued in Britain today.

'We need to find new ways in which *all* farmers can be supported for providing these (wider, environmental) services to society as a whole. There seems to be a growing consensus that the best way would be to make specific payment to farmers who commit the *whole* of their farms to environmentally sound methods, and to ensuring food safety, nutritional quality and animal welfare.

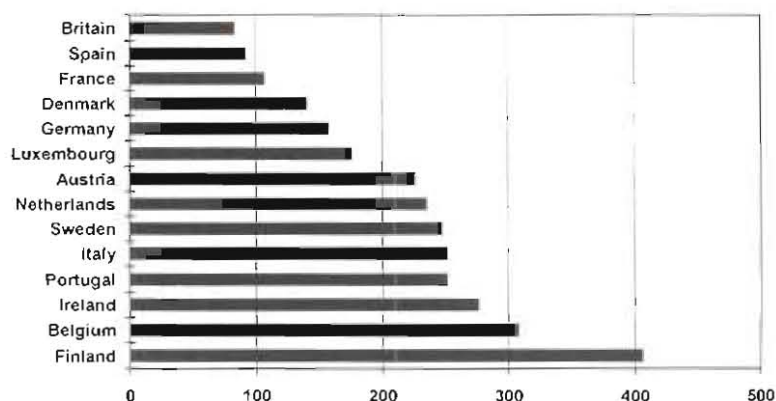
'Several countries, including Sweden, Denmark and Germany, expect to have at least 10% of their land area in organic farming by the year 2000. In the German state of Hesse, for instance, a programme has been initiated with the specific goal of using organic agriculture as a mainspring of regional development... By combining farming with the on-farm or local processing of organic produce, with other economic initiatives as diverse as tourism and community composting, farmers have been able to take a leading role as 'regional developers'.

'For the record (and nobody will report this bit, I promise you), I am *not* interested in returning to the past, and that applies — I might as well tell you — whether I am talking about farming, architecture, education or complimentary medicine! What I do believe, passionately, is that we should *learn* from the past, accept that there are such things as timeless principles, operate on a human scale, look firmly to the long-term, respect local conditions and traditions, and be profoundly sceptical of people who suggest that everything now is automatically better — invariably it turns out to be a short-lived, fashionable approach anyway.

'In particular, I happen to believe that agriculture is important as one of the foundation stones of a stable and sustainable cultural life. A society will in some ways model itself on the way it grows its food... If there is a symbiotic relationship, as much about co-operation as dominance, gratitude as self-congratulation, as much about giving back as taking out, then that, I believe, will be a powerful shaping force in the lives we lead.'

■ Extracted from Prince Charles' speech given in London on September 12th 1996.

organic incentive payments ECU/ha/year



**Britain fails to promote organic farming**  
Source: University of Wales Institute of Rural Studies.

- BSE will have cost taxpayers £1.4bn by the end of this year in slaughter, compensation and related costs — over £60 per household in the UK.
- OFWAT estimated that £1bn capital investment is required to remove pesticides from drinking water, with current monitoring and removal of pesticides costing £121m every year.
- The Office of National Statistics calculates that agriculture contributes 2% to our economy but produces 4% of greenhouse emissions and 10% of the acid rain.



# Spilling the genes

**The humble soybean is at the centre of a global controversy over the application of genetic engineering. This once benign little bean will be turning up as an uninvited guest on most menus, re-engineered courtesy of gene technology — without most of us realising it. Julie Sheppard of Genetics Forum spills the beans on genetically engineered soya and much more....**

**M**ost of us have never given the soybean a second thought — until now. But the development of a soybean which has been genetically engineered to resist a commonly used weed-killer, Roundup, has sparked concerns over the direction, safety and labelling of all genetically engineered foods.

The new soybean has been developed by Monsanto, a US-based multinational chemical company. Its scientists have inserted a gene from a bacterium into the soybean which then makes it resistant to the company's top-selling herbicide, Roundup. Currently, Roundup cannot be used on the conventional crop because this would kill both crop and weeds. But the use of Roundup-resistant soybeans will allow the grower to spray the crop, killing the weeds while the soybeans survive. Roundup's active ingredient is glyphosate, known to cause liver and eye damage and reproductive problems in animals, and genetic damage to human blood cells.

Monsanto's motives in developing this new soybean are purely commercial. Roundup is its best selling herbicide, providing 40% of its operating profit. But patent protection on this global money-spinner expires in 2000, exposing the company to greater competition. With their new soybean, Monsanto hopes to pre-empt the inevitable sales decline by selling a 'package' to growers, linking sales of the new seeds to continuing use of their herbicide.

The new soybean crop is now being harvested in the USA and will be exported to markets around the globe this autumn. The company claims that the modified soybean is indistinguishable from the conventional bean. It intends to mix the two types together when importing the beans to Europe. And it is this prospect which is causing the current furor.

Soya and soya oil are together probably the most commonly used ingredients in food and so the genetically engineered variety will be turning up, uninvited and unwanted, in two-thirds of all processed foodstuffs. What has added spice to the controversy is that the consumer will not even know if the foods they are eating contains genetically engineered soya — because it won't be labelled.

This has led to a public row between retailers and manufacturers in the UK. Janet Nunn, of the British Retail Consortium, representing most major UK retailers, has said that her members had hoped the two varieties of soybeans would be separated 'so the consumer's right to choose is preserved'. Failing that, retailers will look next year for alternative suppliers or utilise soya substitutes.

But the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), representing UK food manufacturers, has stated that separation is 'impractical', 'unnecessary' and 'unenforceable'. The FDF is not prepared to back the consumer's right to know — despite the results of their own survey, published last year, which indicated that 93% of those questioned wanted to see genetically engineered foods fully labelled. Instead, on the soya issue, they suggest that 'consumers will be offered choice through the final sanction of avoiding products containing soya', an impractical suggestion, given its widespread use.

Monsanto's insistence that their bean will not be separated out from the rest, and consequently not labelled, effectively sabotages the retailers' 'softly softly' approach to creating public confidence in genetically engineered products through voluntary labelling. In 1994 the Co-op put the first genetically-labelled product (cheese) on the shelves, and last year Safeway and Sainsbury introduced a tomato puree clearly labelled 'produced from genetically modified tomatoes'. If they refused to label these products, the supermarkets reasoned, they might simply fuel suspicion of genetically engineered foods in general.

Meanwhile consumer and environmental organisations in over 75 countries are threatening a

world-wide boycott of the genetically engineered soybean. Spearheaded by veteran US campaigner, Jeremy Rifkin, the boycott is intended to 'pressure businesses and governments into taking positions that will safeguard public health, protect environmental welfare and respect consumer rights'.

The story of the soybean sets a bad precedent for other genetically engineered ingredients, such as maize or oilseed rape, which will also be hidden from the consumer in foodstuffs and rushed through the EU system with little regard for consumer protection.

Firstly, despite objections from Denmark, Sweden and Austria, Monsanto's soybean was cleared for sale in Europe following proposals from the UK government to allow its importation. Under harmonisation rules, no member state can bar a genetically engineered product from its domestic market if it has been accepted by another member state.

Secondly, the EU approved Monsanto's soybeans in advance of the new Novel Food Regulation which will impose Europe-wide legal controls over genetically engineered foods. Even

## Allergy risks from GMOs

Concern about the potential for genetically modified organisms to give rise to allergies has been expressed by research scientist Dr Mae-Wan Ho of the Open University.

Describing recent evidence on the mechanisms of transgenic resistance to pests, Dr Ho has argued that transgenic plants engineered for resistance to diseases and pests will have higher allergenic potential than unmodified plants.

Dr Ho is also alarmed at the releases of GMOs into the environment, arguing that modified genes can easily recombine with known bacteria and viruses to create wholly new strains of unknown but potentially hazardous nature. 'Vectors carrying the transgene, unlike chemical pollutants, can be perpetuated and amplified, given the right environmental conditions.'

■ *Transgenic Transgressions of Species Integrity and Species Boundaries*, Mae-Wan Ho and Beatrix Tappeser, presented to the Aarhus Biotechnology Conference, Denmark, July 1996. (Contact Dr Ho at the Open University Biology Department, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.)



so, the regulations are far from perfect and exclude genetically engineered additives, processing aids and enzymes.

Thirdly, there are no international agreements covering trade in genetically engineered organisms which means that countries with less stringent regulatory controls may legitimately export genetically modified products to markets around the world.

Fourthly, there are long-standing uncertainties

time could have harmful effects. Many cannot be tested for safety before they go on sale and there are no plans for any independent agency to monitor their impact on consumers. Just because there is no evidence of harmful effects at present does not mean that there will be no effects in the future. Recent experience with BSE demonstrated how a relatively small change in food production is capable of having a devastating impact on safety which takes many years to show up.

prematurely — before legitimate safety concerns have been satisfactorily resolved and before adequate regulatory controls are in place. The fact that a single company has been able to foist this product onto a largely unsuspecting public says a lot about corporate power and not a lot about the strength of consumer protection.

■ Julie Sheppard is consultant to The Genetics Forum, the leading independent watchdog on genetic engineering in the UK. This article is based on *Spilling the Genes: What We Haven't Been Told About Genetically Engineered Foods* which can be ordered via the flyer in this issue, or by phoning Genetics Forum on 0171-638 0606.

concerning the environmental and ecological risks of genetically engineered crops which have not been resolved. When Monsanto first applied to grow the crop in the USA, the Union of Concerned Scientists objected on the grounds that the company had failed to review adequately the risk of the herbicide-resistant gene transferring from the crop to other wild plant species. The fear is that this could create resistant 'superweeds' which cannot then be controlled by conventional weed-killers. Also, the company has never shown that the adoption of the new crop will lead to less harmful herbicide use, nor how resistant crops will reduce the grower's dependence on chemical weed-control.

Finally, no-one yet knows whether consuming genetically engineered foods over long periods of

Fears that 'foreign' genes introduced into foods could produce health risks have been fuelled by recent reports of another genetically engineered soybean, containing genetic material from a Brazil nut, causing allergies in individuals who consumed the resulting soya (see *Food Magazine* 34). The risk of widespread allergic reactions was averted by the company voluntarily withdrawing the product from the market, but other applications of genetic technology may not be so straightforward (see box).

Given the many uncertainties surrounding the introduction of genetically engineered foods, Monsanto's new product is being rushed to market

## Guess what's coming to dinner?

Food manufacturers state that it is up to consumers to avoid soya-containing products. But an estimated two-thirds of processed foods in the UK may contain a soybean ingredient — one estimate put this at seven thousand different food products.

Soya is used in many forms, including as an oil, as flour, as vegetable protein and as an emulsifier.

If you are lucky, the ingredients list may make it clear if soya has been used. However, soya finds its way into food in many forms, which are not always listed clearly, or at all. You may find soya as:

- **Vegetable protein and hydrolysed vegetable protein and protein isolate** — in savoury products, sausages, nuggets, gravy powder, soups, stock cubes, coffee creamers, frozen desserts, and in the brine injected into cured products such as ham and bacon
- **Textured vegetable protein** — in meat products and meat substitutes and vegetarian dishes
- **Lecithin** — an emulsifying agent used in a wide range of products, including chocolate, margarine, breakfast cereal, bread, cakes and biscuits
- **Vegetable oil, vegetable fat, hydrogenated vegetable oil** — in a wide range of foods including cakes and biscuits, margarines, crisps, fried foods, fast food such as French fries and other take-aways
- **Unlabelled soya flour** — for example, in baked products bought unwrapped
- **Unlabelled soya flakes** — occasionally used in the mash tun for beer production

Soya also finds its way into pet food and farm animal feed as well as providing the basis for soya milks, tofu and soy baby milks.

## Taking action

If you are concerned about genetically engineered soya or genetically engineered foods in general then there are several things you can do:

- **Find out as much as you can about genetically engineered foods** by sending off for a copy of *Spilling the Genes* and take out a subscription to *The Splice of Life* (Contact Genetics Forum, 0171-638 0606)
- **Write to your local retailer** asking what they intend to do about labelling genetically engineered foods and ingredients
- **Ring the Monsanto Soya Information Centre** 0345-023288 and ask them to explain why they won't segregate their soybeans.
- **Contact your local MP and MEP** and ask why genetically engineered foods are being allowed onto the market without legally binding controls or comprehensive labelling
- **Write to the producers of foods** you like which contain soya, and ask if they will be using genetically engineered soya
- **Buy organic products** where possible and where finances permit
- **Study food labels carefully**





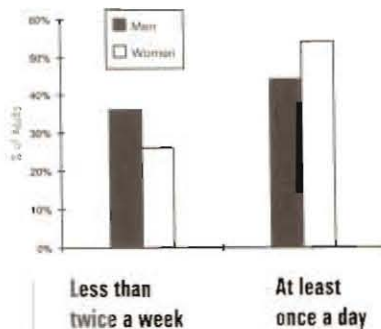
**A huge new resource** from the School Meals Campaign, this pack contains contact details for some 500 school food initiatives around the UK.

Taking the view that the best initiatives involve the participants, and that the best approach is to link what is taught at school with what is eaten, the pack encourages school food activists to set up a 'whole school' forum, including parents, caterers, teaching staff and local professionals such as dietitians and environmental health officers.

The pack is full of ideas for developing new initiatives, where to turn to for support, how to avoid the problems others have faced, and it gives examples of letters, promotional activities, press releases and a funding application.

Two follow-up conferences in London and Newcastle are planned for February in 1997.

■ **School Food Action**, price £14 — contact the School Meals Campaign on 0171-383 7638.



## Fruit and sex

The graph above, reflecting how often men and women indulge themselves in — sorry — fruit-eating, might explain why women are less prone to heart disease. Figures from the British Heart Foundation, using 1994 health survey data, show significant differences in consumption levels.

■ **Coronary Heart Disease Statistics Diet and Nutrition Supplement**, £4.99. Contact BHF Education Department: tel 0171-486 5820.

**A National Food Alliance follow-up** to their successful pack *Get Cooking!*, their new resource *Get Shopping!*, provides a guide to shopping and cooking for older children and young people.

It takes account of healthy eating and environmental concerns and gives tips on shopping wisely, cheaply and nutritiously, and then cooking what you have bought. It also includes tips on label-reading and complaining about advertisements.

■ **Get Shopping!** price £6.95 — contact the National Food Alliance, tel 0171-628

## Friends With Food

The Huddersfield project Friends With Food which ran from 1990 to 1994 has now been written up as an evaluation report. The project, funded by the Health Education Authority, targeted low income families with young children and was inspired by the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Programme in the USA.

The evaluation document concludes that 'it is possible to achieve both significant increases in nutritional knowledge and potentially beneficial changes in the dietary practices of limited income families even though they are traditionally considered "hard to reach". The best approach is one which guided "hands on" food preparation/cooking

sessions allowing participants to acquire the knowledge and skills needed... using examples relevant to their cultural, social and economic circumstances.'

Success also depended on the quality of the session leaders and the need to make only gradual changes to dietary habits. Recommendations include the involvement of both partners in the family. The evaluation acknowledges that the initiative used a lot of staff time and resources, but that 'lay' leaders, as used in the US programme, may not be so successful in the UK.

■ **Friends With Food — Final Report**: contact Patricia Hodgson, Health Promotion Unit, Princess Royal Community Health Centre, Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4EW

## Women's eating issues

The cartoon below — the cycle of dieting and comfort eating — comes from *Women, Food and Health*, a resource pack for working with women in groups, looking at slimming and food issues.

The pack aims to help community group leaders and health professionals working with women, and consists of over 160 pages of material designed to stimulate group activities.

The idea is to develop a support network for women working together, based on slimming groups but also exploring the wider issues of women's roles, self-image, family meals, as well as budgeting, menus and recipes.

Developed by dietitians

working with low income groups in Wythenshawe, Manchester, the pack is available, price £26, from the Community Nutrition Service in Wythenshawe — tel 0161-945 8709, fax 0161-946 0798 for ordering details.



Cartoon by Angela Martin.

## Children and poor nutrition

The government's recent survey of nutrition in children under five gave little details on the numbers of children failing to get adequate nutrient intake. At a meeting of the McCarrison Society earlier this year Dr Joyce Hughes of the Department of Health acknowledged that significant numbers of young children in the survey were falling below levels considered seriously deficient (the lower reference nutrient intake levels).

And in a survey\* of school children aged 11-14 receiving a free school meal every day, 70% of the children were found to be consuming

amounts of vitamin C below the RNI level — the amount considered sufficient for the majority of people — and nearly a quarter, 24%, were consuming less than the LRNI — the amount considered insufficient for the majority of people. At a school where two free meals were offered each day, the figures were a little better: 60% below RNI and only 10% below LRNI.

\* *A Comparison of the Dietary Intake of Vitamin C Between Schoolchildren From Low Income Families*, Fiona Hampton, University of Plymouth Department of Biology, 1996.

Nutrient	Infants below LRNI levels
Vitamin A	8% aged 1½ to 4½
Vitamin B6	6% aged over 4
Iron	15% aged under 4
Zinc	15% aged under 4 and 40% aged over 4
Source: Department of Health	



## Scots plan healthy diet 'in nine years'

'The Scottish diet is notoriously bad,' admitted The Scottish Minister of State, Lord Douglas-Hamilton, introducing the *Diet Action Plan for Scotland*, which will involve 'everyone with an influence on what we eat — from food producers and processors to the NHS, local authorities, schools, caterers, retailers, the media and, of course, consumers themselves'.

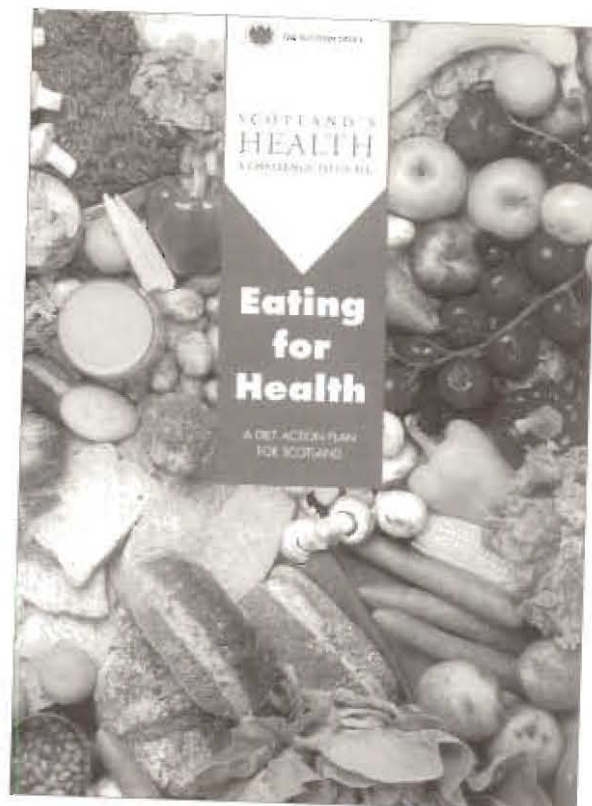
He neglected to add his own department, which has overall responsibility for policies on Scotland's health and eating habits and which, despite reported opposition from Whitehall, is to fund several of the recommended activities. The plan invites Scotland to participate in a range of activities involving all these bodies, including the Scottish Office, in what must be the most comprehensive programme to be recommended in an official document since the last War.

The Action Plan makes 71 recommendations which are both more detailed and more specifically targeted than those that emerged from the Department of Health's Nutrition Task Force. For example:

- Directors of Public Health should designate nutritionally-trained staff members to be responsible for improving diet in low income communities
- The Scottish Consumer Council should appoint a national project officer to promote dietary initiatives in low income areas, and bring them within a strategic framework — with Scottish Office funding for the post and for supporting and sustaining the local initiatives
- The Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, when meeting with the Convention of Scottish Local

Authorities, should ensure that strategies for regenerating deprived areas take full account of the dietary needs of the local population

- Scottish Office Department of Health should use supermarkets' point-of-sale (EPOS) information to monitor dietary initiatives
- Health Boards should monitor the dietary information provided to expectant mothers by GPs and other health workers
- Local authorities and the Scottish Care Sector Consortium should ensure that under-fives care workers have been trained in the dietary and nutritional needs of young children, and the Scottish Vocational Qualification training courses should meet this requirement. HM Inspector of Schools should ensure that applicants for the pre-school voucher scheme can meet good dietary practice
- The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum should introduce a short course on practical food preparation for all pupils post S2 (secondary second year)
- HM Inspector of Schools should monitor the provision of both health education and healthy food choices in schools and publish their findings in inspection reports
- The Scottish Office should fund the cost of a pilot scheme offering caterers free nutritional advice and analysis of recipes



- Nutrition training should be included in SCOTVEC and Industry Training Groups courses for food manufacturing, processing and baking
- Baby food companies should develop products free of non-milk extrinsic sugars

The document then spells out the dietary targets to be met within 9 years (by 2005):

■ *Eating for Health: A Diet Action Plan for Scotland*, The Scottish Office, HMSO Edinburgh (tel 0131-228 4181). The document is also being put on the internet:

	target daily average intake by 2005
Fruit and vegetables	400g (double present levels)
Bread	106g, mostly wholemeal and brown (45% increase)
Breakfast cereal	17g (double)
Complex carbohydrates	155g (up from 124g at present)
Fats	to fall from 40.7% to no more than 35% food energy
Saturated fats	to fall from 16.6% to no more than 11% food energy
Fish	White fish, no fall in consumption; oily fish, 88g/week (double)
Salt	to fall from 3750 mg to 2300 mg
Sugar	adults, no increase; children, no more than 10% food energy (50% cut)
Breastfeeding for six weeks	at least 50% (up from 30%)

## Healthy Scottish Database

In 1995 the Health Education Board for Scotland commissioned the Human Nutrition Department at Glasgow University to compile a database of community-based food initiatives in Scotland.

The report evaluating the 98 projects found, and the accompanying database, are expected to be published by the time we go to press. Over 40% of the initiatives had been running for over 5 years, and ranged from urban food co-operatives to regional school-based healthy eating campaigns. The projects are 'a largely untapped resource of ideas and experience for future policy makers wishing to overcome the barriers to healthy eating' and should be supported and encouraged.

■ *Community Food Initiatives in Scotland*, HEBS, Woodburn House, Canaan Lane, Edinburgh EH10 4SG.



## 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. £10.99 including p&p.

## Teach Yourself Healthy Eating for Babies and Children

An authoritative yet down-to-earth guide giving you the information you need to feed your family. Includes over 60 pages of excellent recipes. £6.99 inc p&p.

## The Food We Eat

The award-winning author Joanna Blythman's examination of the best and worst in British food today. £8.99 incl. p&p.

## Back issues of The Food Magazine

Back issues cost £3.50 or £30.00 for a full set of available issues. Send for index of major news stories and features in past issues. Stocks are limited and some issues are already out-of-stock.



## 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.

## More than Rice and Peas

Essential guidelines for multi-cultural catering. Includes over 90 pages on specific cultural beliefs and practices and 40 pages of local projects and initiatives. £17.50 inc p&p.

## Poor Expectations

Written by The Maternity Alliance and NCH Action for Children. A devastating report on under-nutrition among pregnant women on low incomes, showing the poor diets being eaten at present and the difficulty of affording a healthy diet on Income Support. £5.50 inc p&p.

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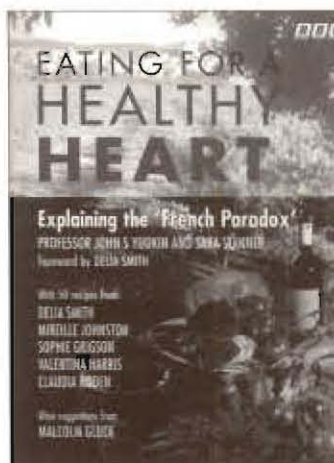
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## Eating for a Healthy Heart: Explaining the French Paradox

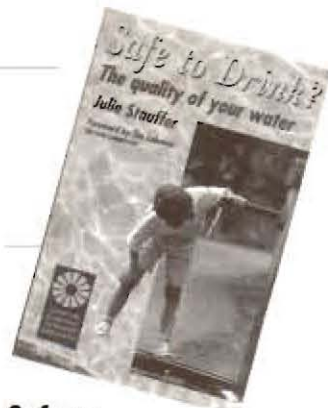
John S Yudkin and Sarah Stanner, BBC Books, BBC Worldwide Ltd, Woodlands, 80 Wood Lane, London W12 0TT, 1996, £10.99, ISBN 0 563 37165 X

Popularising the complexities of low-density lipoproteins, trans fatty acids and omega 6 to make them accessible for intelligent non-biologists is no easy task, but John S Yudkin (Professor of Medicine at University College London, and nephew of the late John Yudkin of *Pure, White and Deadly* fame) makes a good read of it.

The gist of the story is that the French seem to have much lower heart disease than we should expect, given their meat and saturated fat consumption. It is not simply that French doctors diagnose the cause of death differently. There is more to it, and that comes through a combination of factors — all of which improve our understanding of how heart disease develops.

Yudkin and Stanner develop the thesis that the impact of 'bad' fats can be reduced through a variety of foods — many of which the French eat in abundance: bread, vegetables, olive oil, and a glass or two of red wine. That's not the only good news. The book goes on to celebrate the best of French and Mediterranean ingredients with contributed recipes from BBC favourites: D Smith, M Johnston, S Grigson, V Harris and C Roden.

Proceeds from the book will go towards the Centre for Diabetes and Cardiovascular Risk at University College London.



## Safe to Drink? The Quality of Your Water

Julie Stauffer, Centre for Alternative Technology Publications, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9AZ, 1996, £7.95, ISBN 1 898049 14 9.

What, if anything, is permitted in drinking water, besides pure water? Who is responsible? And how do you find out about the quality of your own local supply, and where do you complain to get things improved?

With a quarter of water supply zones failing to meet pesticide removal targets, and with capital investment in water plummeting and profits sharply rising, privatised water companies have come under increasing public scrutiny, and increasing consumer suspicion. To find out how good your water is, and what measures you can take to get it improved, dip into this book.

### Vimto news

*Our concern that Vimto free samples had inadequate labelling, but that the Food Labelling Regs only made in an offence to sell mislabelled food, has been picked up by a trading standards officer who writes:*



'Under the Food Safety Act 1990 "the supply of food, otherwise than on sale, in the course of a business, shall be deemed to be a sale of a food". The supply of free samples through letter boxes is intended to promote the product and would be generally interpreted as being "in the course of a business". It should, therefore, be properly labelled.'

### Jelly deals

I was very concerned to read your wild and inaccurate allegation that Nestlé has recently launched a number of new products in order to make use of, as your journalist put it, 'Europe-banned gelatin' (*Food Magazine* 34, p4).

May I say that there is no reason to believe that gelatin is anything other than perfectly safe.

It would have taken you just a phone call to find out that since 1988 Nestlé has only ever used non-UK gelatin in its confectionery products and prior to this we used pork gelatin.

The launch of the softer Fruit Gums and other new products mentioned was planned well before the BSE crisis arose. The Fruit Gums were reformulated to contain gelatin after consumers, through market research, told us they would prefer a softer sweet.

Your readers may also be interested to know that we have recently removed gelatin from Polo mints, again for reasons unconnected with BSE.

Hilary Parsons  
Nestlé Public Affairs Manager

## Small Ads. Just £10 per 30 words. Send a cheque or use our credit card hotline: 0171-628 7774.

### Study tours

Healthcare study tours in 1996 to China and South India. Full details from: INTERCHANGE, 27 Stafford Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 4NG. Tel: 0181-681 3612. Fax: 0181-760 0031. Please quote 'Food Magazine' when enquiring.

### Socialist Health Association holds regular meetings in:

- ◆ Greater London (bi-monthly) phone Huw Davies 0181-748 7284
- ◆ Greater Manchester (monthly) phone Guy Lancaster 0161-860 5307
- ◆ North-East Region (bi-monthly) phone Dennis McDonald 0191-549 2029
- ◆ Scottish Branch phone Dr Miles Fisher 0141-956 5915
- ◆ Swansea and District Branch phone Ms Maurer Stuckley 01792-596974

### Local Food Links

A 3-year Soil Association project to

ensure organic food is widely available

- delivered to the door
- with reduced transport damage
- linking farmers to customers
- at fair prices for both
- promoting box schemes, farm shops and food co-ops

Details from the Soil Association  
0117 929 0661

### Unhealthy Societies

by Richard Wilkinson, University of Sussex

It is not the richest societies that have the best health, but those with the smallest income differences between rich and poor. £13.99 from Routledge. Credit Card Hotline 01264 342923.

### Apple Day, October 21st

Celebrate the huge variety of apples grown in Britain. For details of local

events during October, contact Common Ground, tel 0171-379 3109 fax 0171-836 5741.

### Antioxidants and Health

One day conference by The Royal Society of Health - Wednesday 23rd October  
■ Details from Samantha Jeffries, tel 0171-630 0121, fax 0171-976 6847.

### Student digs/Bed and Breakfast

in Finsbury Park, London, with green-ish family. £80 per week.  
Tel 0171-359 8780 for details.

### Longview

*Butcher:* Like some of this ox tongue?  
*Customer:* Er... I'd rather not.  
*Butcher:* Worried about BSE then?  
*Customer:* Oh, no. I just don't want to eat something that's come from a cow's mouth. But while I'm here I'll have a dozen eggs.



## Be Honest

'It's All About You' declares the headline of *Food Insight*, an American newsletter from the International Food Information Council Foundation, Washington. Nutritional advice from the US government, says the newsletter, can be summed up as 'Be Sensible, Be Realistic, Be Flexible, Be Active, Be Adventurous'.

Come again? 'Be sensible: Enjoy all foods, just don't over do it.' 'Be Adventurous: Expand your tastes to enjoy a variety of new foods.'

Be Cynical might be more appropriate. These exhortations to consume more food (and if you develop a dietary disease then obviously you weren't listening properly) are disguised as semi-official nutritional advice from a 'non-profit organisation'. But the small print reveals that the Foundation is affiliated to the International Food Information Council, a body 'supported by the food and beverage industry.'

## McThought of the Day

After five years of extremely expensive litigation, the McLibel trial goes quiet while the jury (i.e. the judge, Justice Bell) retires to consider his verdict.

It would be nice to think that fearful food companies were besieging the government with letters against the privatisation of the postal services, and equally besieging local authority parks and gardens departments not to lay off any staff. Why? Because it took just one unemployed postman, Dave Morris, and one unemployed gardener, Helen Steel, to set back McDonald's several hundreds of thousands of pounds. What might dozens of such unemployed people achieve?



Doing their bit for public health, Sainsbury's are selling 500ml packs of Indulgence ice cream 'designed to be finished in one sitting straight from the tub!'

Have they forgotten that ice cream is rather fatty? Oh no. The product comes 'With all the goodness of lashings of double cream!'

'Spurred on by his wife, Clementine, Henri Nestlé began searching for a nutritionally complete substitute for mother's milk. His answer came in 1867 when he perfected a powder made from cow's milk and wheat flour...'

See **Web Site Vanishes**.

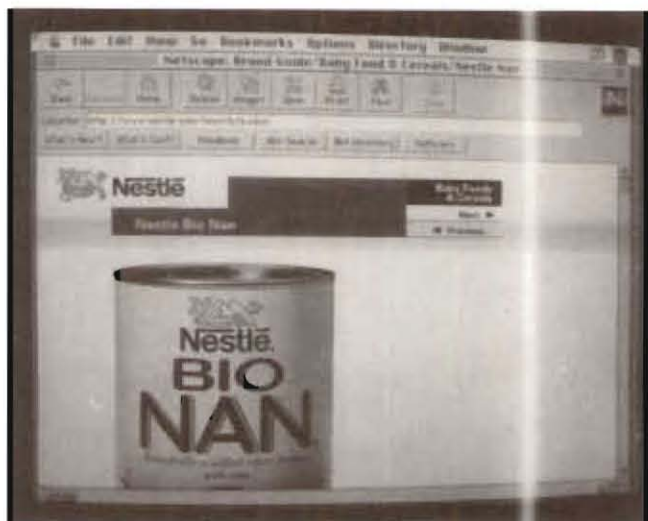


Photo: Patti Rundall, Baby Milk Action

## Old New Labour

'New research by New Labour's Martyn Jones,' said a press release in September, 'has uncovered the Government's severe neglect as Britain turns into a nation of fatties, despite Tory health targets.'

It then quotes data on obesity rates which readers of this magazine should be quite familiar with — we published the figures in the July issue of the *Food Magazine* (34, page 9). If new research means old data from the *Food Magazine*, perhaps Old Labourites have nothing to worry about after all.

## Mouli in a mix

The makers of the mouli, the French hand-blender, have long recognised that a mouli is the ideal tool for preparing baby food from everyday ingredients. And they have recently taken to throwing in a recipe sheet for infant meals, with every new mouli.

Nothing wrong with that, of course. But what a shame that the recipe-makers didn't read the government's advice on weaning foods for babies.

Of the five recipes offered, two have added salt, two more have added sugar and the fifth has added raw egg. All, sadly, contrary to current advice.



## Web site vanishes

What is the world's largest food company doing on the Web? Breaking the Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, for a start.

Nestlé's apparent violation of the Code on the [www.nestle.com/html/bfb.html](http://www.nestle.com/html/bfb.html) site on the internet (the picture shows their Bio Nan baby milk) raises some interesting points. Who is going to prosecute? Every country where the Code is enacted in local law? Or the organisations that drew up the Code — the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)? Or individuals who come across their promotion when surfing the net?

It is unlikely that anyone will prosecute because, as we go to press, Nestlé must have realised what a public relations disaster they could be heading for. The site has been changed and the offending Bio Nan removed.

## 'Let them drink Perrier'

Once again the government has retreated behind a pseudo-scientific statement about the nature of evidence, this time about the value of water.

Responding to concern expressed by the British Medical Association over the hazards that might follow cutting off water supplies because of non-payment of bills, the Department of Health said there was no evidence that people became ill because their water supply was disconnected.

A spokesman said: 'We have never been able to establish any direct relationship between water disconnection and the spread of communicable diseases in the UK.'

*Historical note:* The foundation of Britain's municipal waterworks — the pride of the civilised world for over a century — lay in the recognition of the links between the spread of disease and the absence of plentiful clean water. The Department of Health should try reading Edwin Chadwick's 1842 *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, which set out the need for a public water supply. And they should remember the outcry following the tragic death from typhoid in 1861 of the Queen's beloved Prince Albert.