

The FOOD MAGAZINE

Campaigning for safer, healthier food

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Food supplements are claiming they can cure dozens of diseases and prevent many more. But are these claims strictly legal? The *Food Magazine* investigates.

Food supplements – has the hype gone too far?

Dietary supplements are regulated as foods but are sold as if they were medicines. In an exclusive survey of over 300 products, the Food Commission found many supplements being strongly marketed for their health promoting properties or their ability to prevent or even treat disease.

At a time when the dietary supplements industry is looking for government support to help it remove barriers to trade across Europe, the Food Commission has found products making claims that are possibly breaking UK government regulations, and may be illegal under the UK Medicines Act.

A claim that a product can cure or treat or prevent a disease is generally regarded as a medicinal claim, and the product would need a medicines licence. But the Food Commission's report* lists dozens of cases where manufacturers are making claims which imply the products have a medicinal effect, contrary to the Medicines Act. Others are making carefully-worded claims which imply a health benefit without expressly making a medicinal claim. We believe that consumers should not be expected to distinguish between legally permitted health claims and illegal medicinal claims, and that tough action is needed to bring the more disreputable companies under control.

For the 314 products examined by the Food Commission, 741 statements were made claiming nutritional, health or overtly medical effects. The

sheer number of confusing and potentially misleading and possibly illegal claims being made by companies shows that self-regulation by the industry is failing to protect consumers.

The Food Commission is calling on the responsible authorities – the Medicines Control Agency and local trading standards officers – to mount a series of test cases to clarify the law.

It is also calling for a review of health claims legislation, with pre-vetting of labels and advertisements, and compulsory warnings on side-effects. In 1993 the Food Commission reported tests showing many supplements were not absorbed, and that there was wide variability in the quantity of ingredients, with some products containing barely 20% of the amount stated on the label.

More details on pages 9-11.

■ **Food Supplement Claims** by Viv Stein, The Food Commission, 1997, price £125 (£20.00 to non-commercial bodies).



Studies have shown 'spirulina can prevent and even reverse certain types of cancer,' according to a leaflet for Spirulina.



Klamath Lake Algae – can it really 'destroy toxins, nourish nerves, fight infection, enhance brain activity...'?

Get the facts with The Food Magazine

The Food Magazine is published quarterly by The Food Commission, a national non-profit organisation campaigning for the right to safe, wholesome food. We rely entirely on our supporters, allowing us to be completely independent, taking no subsidy from the government, the food industry or advertising.

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

The winds of change

The signs are good that we shall see a new Food Standards Agency — or some similarly-named body — in months rather than years.

A set of proposals for the new agency¹, prepared by Professor Philip James, has been circulating since mid-May and responses are now being collated by the Cabinet Office. Already there have been squabbles between the three departments who want to control the agency — the Department of Health which has long wanted revenge over MAFF since the salmonella-in-eggs scandal, MAFF itself which has been planning to set up the agency as a new wing within the ministry, and the Cabinet Office, which is being urged to take the neutral high-ground between the warring factions, and keep the agency to themselves.

MAFF has expressed surprise at being thought incapable of running the new agency — after all, they claim, they have trained staff and a lot of experience, and a promise that they are a reformed ministry. MAFF announced in June that it had set up its own Food Safety and Standards Group designed, according to Agriculture Minister Dr Jack Cunningham², to 'create a structure that people trust to look after their interests. The process of doing that is now well underway.' Oblivious to the charge that MAFF cannot expect to promote the needs of the food business while also defending consumers' interests, one senior official even remarked 'We are New MAFF now!'

Meanwhile the food industry has not sat around idle. They have made strong representations that the new agency should be about food hygiene and safety, and not about food standards, and certainly not about factors such as nutrition or health claims. While Professor Tim Lang has argued³ that a national, coherent food policy needs to cover all aspects 'from farm to fork', the food manufacturers are keen to prevent any agency taking on such a broad-brush role.

But they are wrong. The new agency must, indeed cover all aspects of food policy if it is to deal with consumer concerns in a responsible way. The agency must not become a white-washing body for the industry, but must be given the chance to reshape the way our food is produced and sold.

It would be a tragedy if the agency became a public relations body designed simply to 'restore consumer confidence' in UK food products, when it could be an agency to change food production so that UK products deserve consumer confidence as a matter of course.

The deadline for comments has passed, but do not let that deter you from making your point to those who will now draw up a government policy paper. Contact the Cabinet Office Machinery of Government Division, Room 61 d/1, Great George Street, London SW1P 3AL (tel 0171 270 1863) for a copy of the proposals. Comments can also be sent on the internet to mchambers.co.wh@gtnet.gov.uk — and send a copy to the Food Commission as well.

¹ Food Standards Agency, An Interim Proposal, available from the Cabinet Office.

² MAFF Press Release 148/97, 9 June 1997.

³ Paul Hamlyn Lecture, delivered at Thames Valley University, 22 April 1997.

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

If you are not a regular subscriber to the *Food Magazine* why not take out your own subscription and help support The Food Commission's work? We are a national not-for-profit organisation campaigning for the right to safe, wholesome food and are completely independent, taking no subsidy from the government, the food industry or advertising. The *Food Magazine* is published four times a year.

Turn to page 18 for subscription details

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The Food Magazine does not accept commercial advertising. Loose inserts are accepted subject to approval — please contact Ian Tokelove at The Food Commission for details

Genetically modified babyfoods

Amid concern in Europe on allowing genetically modified (GM) ingredients in babyfood, we ask whether it is already too late. In an exclusive Food Commission survey, many UK babyfood companies

told us they were unable to guarantee that GM ingredients would be excluded from their products. Only three baby food companies, two of them selling organic baby food, said they could do so.

Increasing concern over the widespread use of genetically modified soya and soya ingredients has led to calls for their banning, especially in foods for babies, such as baby milks and weaning foods. Members of the European Parliament, including MEPs from the German Greens want to ban genetically modified food ingredients from babyfoods and concern was expressed by the EU's Scientific Committee on Food several years ago that such novel foods may not be appropriate for babies. However, the EC Novel Foods Regulations, introduced on May 15, provides for the banning of GM ingredients only in very limited circumstances and does not include food for babies and young children.

But, while the issue continues to arouse concern, has it already proved too late? Are the babyfood companies already introducing GM ingredients into their products?

The Food Commission asked the major babyfood and baby milk companies whether they were already using GM ingredients and whether they had plans to do so. We found that several manufacturers were relying on old stocks of soya to ensure they remained GM-free for the time being but could not guarantee to remain GM-free when their stocks ran out. This is what their customer advisers and press officers told us:

Boots said 'Growers mix both the genetically modified soya and the non-genetically modified soya beans at source, which are then supplied to manufacturers such as ourselves. Genetically modified soya may therefore be present as a very small amount in Boots products containing soya as it will no longer be possible to source soya that can be guaranteed not to contain genetically modified soya in the mix.'

Milupa told us that all their soya is conventional soya and that they have good stocks left, but that they cannot guarantee that this will continue as it 'depends on what we can get in the future.'

SMA said they were in a similar position to Milupa. They have 'large' stocks of conventional soya and will 'keep the situation under constant review.'

Cow & Gate told us that conventional soya is being used in milks and foods, and the company 'has no plans to use genetically modified soya in the future' but that the decision 'depends on what is available'. Cow & Gate's parent company, Dutch-based Nutricia, has said it is prepared to support positive 'GMO-free' labelling schemes.

Heinz said 'Although we do not currently use ingredients containing genetically modified material in any Heinz varieties, we would consider their use in the future if the ingredients were considered safe.'

Sainsbury told us that the issue was very complex and that we should come and talk to them about it. The company's product list, drawn up in February 1997, declares their First Menu babyfoods to be free from genetically modified soya.

Safeway said 'All Safeway brand baby food utilises ingredients from conventional sources and contain no soya or soya derivatives.'

Baby Organix said 'Baby Organix does not use soya in its recipes. Baby Organix is a certified organic producer. Organic producers and suppliers are not allowed to use GM materials.'

Original Fresh Babyfood Company told us they could guarantee all their products were GM ingredient-free and this would continue indefinitely.

Hipp said 'As the world's largest processor of organic ingredients we would never consider using GM ingredients. In fact we ceased using soya just in case we could not guarantee it as GM free.'



Organic must be GMO-free

European regulations are expected to be announced shortly which will exclude from the definition of 'organic' any transgenic animals or plants bred using genetically modified organisms, or any food processed with genetically modified organisms.

The move follows a vote in the European Parliament, and has been accepted in principle by Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler.

■ Visit the EC website on <http://www.europa.eu.int/> or contact the EC office in London, on 0171 973 1992.

Campaigners slam 'slippery and cunning' sugar claims

The campaigning group Action and Information on Sugars have accused food companies of 'slippery and cunning' claims about the sugar content of their products, in a report which reviewed 1410 foods and drinks making sugar-related claims.

The absence of a clear definition of sugar has allowed companies to state their products are 'sugar free' or have 'no added sugar' when they contain fruit syrups or other sugar-containing ingredients. There is also a lack of definition regarding claims such as 'low' or 'reduced' sugar, or 'light' products which can in fact contain remarkably high levels of sugar (see picture).

The authors of the report, Jack Winkler and Jenni White, cite a catalogue of illegal or misleading claims found on labels:

- Eighty products made claims about sugar but failed to declare their sugar content, as required by law. Brands included Oasis, Kia Ora, Whole Earth, Del Monte and Libbys.
- Nearly 90 products claimed to be 'sugar-free' yet nearly a third of them admitted in the nutritional panel to having a significant sugar content — as much as 26% sugar in the case of Safeway 'sugar-free' Instant Custard. A further dozen products did not declare the sugar content although required to by law.
- Nearly 300 products claimed to be 'unsweetened' or to have 'no added sugar' but the ingredients included sugar-rich fruit syrups and juices. Brands included Ribena, Cow & Gate, St Ivel and Marks & Spencer.
- There were several claims to be 'sucrose-free' when the product contained substantial amounts of other sugars, for example Farley's (Heinz) Infant Soya Formula, which had glucose syrup as the largest single ingredient.

Action and Information on Sugars is submitting proposals to MAFF and the forthcoming Food Standards Agency calling for a new legal definition of 'sugar' to include fruit concentrates and juices. AIS is also calling for tighter definitions for sugar-related claims, and stiff penalties for those that break the law.

■ *Sugar Claims: Straight and Credible, Slippery and Cunning*, available from AIS, 55 Kemble Road, London SE23 2DH. The 70-page concise report costs £28 inc p&p, the full report with details of all 1410 products cost £225 inc p&p.



'Low' deceit? At 19% sugar these Liga rusks contain as much sugar as the average jam doughnut (18.8%). Yet the manufacturer, Jacob's Bakery Ltd, claims they are 'Low Sugar'.

Consumers win BST delay at Codex

In a landmark decision by the international food standards agency, Codex, an application to have a standard set for the use of the milk-boosting hormone BST was rejected, following appeals by Consumers International at a Codex meeting in June.

The USA, home of BST manufacturers Monsanto, had requested an international standard for minimum residue limits for the hormone, which would have effectively given it a trading licence by Codex and strengthened Monsanto's attempt to get the European moratorium on BST lifted before the year 2000, when it expires.

Canada and twenty other nations voted in favour of BST approval, 13 countries abstained, and an unexpected 38 countries voted against (including a new, consumer-friendly UK delegate). Consumers International had argued that the hormone, a genetically engineered version of one found in cattle naturally, would not lead to any consumer benefits and had significant

health and safety questions for humans and animals.

The vote may mark the start of a long-awaited sea change at Codex. Delegates agreed at the meeting that participation by consumer and other non-governmental organisations should be strengthened at Codex meetings, including granting observer status for international NGOs and possibly establishing a trust fund to enable greater NGO participation at meetings.

The currently-approved list of 111 observers to Codex meetings stands at 104 industry-funded groups, six health and nutrition foundations, and one consumer group (Consumers International).

Meanwhile, campaigners in the USA are pointing out to their government that Codex standards may undermine the USA's own food quality legislation.

The Codex standards, used by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to settle trade disputes in food stuffs, are lower than those required by the USA's Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration, for a range of foods including

unpasteurised milk and dairy products, additives, mineral water, lead contamination in food and standards of meat inspection.

The USA has been a staunch supporter of the formation of the WTO following the last Global Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations, and has used WTO rulings to insist that Europe must allow the import of USA beef. But in a new report from the Washington-based Centre for Science in the Public Interest, it appears the US government will be unable to prevent the importation into the USA of a range of foods which are of unacceptable quality under American law.

The report suggests that while consumers lose out, the real winners are the large food companies, whose presence at Codex has been so overwhelming that it has started to embarrass even the US itself — a US working group chairman had to make a public apology for permitting a Nabisco representative to attend official meetings with Codex member state delegates. 'This incident,' says

the CSPI report, 'is indicative of the influence of the food industry in international proceedings that the FDA has said are supposed to benefit the public health. This situation must be changed if Codex standards are to carry any legitimacy in the hearts and minds of the general public.'

■ For details on Consumers International action on BST and Codex, contact Leen Petre, CI Global Policy Officer, 24 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RX (tel 0171 226 6663).

■ *International Harmonization of Food Safety and Labeling Standards: Threats and Opportunities for the US Food and Drug Administration and the US Department of Agriculture*, Centre for Science in the Public Interest, 1875 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20009-5728, USA. Tel 001202 332 9110, fax 001202 265 4954, email cspi@cspinet.org and homepage www.cspinet.org.

■ See also *Cracking the Codex*, National Food Alliance, 1993 and *Consumer Involvement in Codex*, Consumers International, 1995, reported in *Food Magazine* 21 and 30 respectively.

'No evidence to refute' BSE-CJD link

The Department of Health confirmed in early July that the cattle disease BSE was still the most likely cause of the fatal human disease of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (new variant).

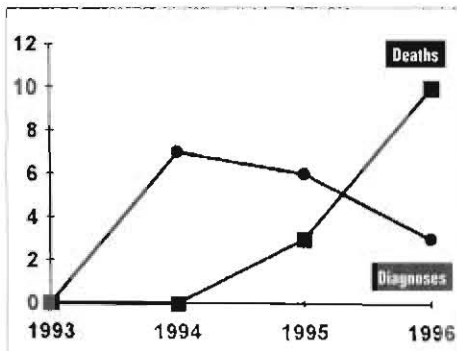
The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) had reviewed the evidence accumulated since the government first acknowledged a link between the two diseases in March 1996, and stated that the most likely cause of the new variant form of CJD was exposure to BSE.

Whether the spread of the disease to humans will reach large-scale epidemic proportions, as some

commentators have warned, or will soon dwindle to zero depends on how the early figures are viewed (see graph). In terms of new diagnoses, these appear to be falling off with half the number during 1996 compared with 1995 or 1994. In terms of deaths, however, the figures appear to be rapidly escalating (a further death was reported in early 1997, and two cases of confirmed nvCJD were still alive when figures were issued last May).

Meanwhile, MAFF has announced that some 7,600 cases of BSE were confirmed in 1996, down from over 14,000 in 1995, but still more than the figure for 1989, the year that the UK banned most cattle offal from products for human consumption. Calves brains can still be used in human food, despite evidence that calves can incubate the disease.

Number of cases of nvCJD preliminary diagnoses and deaths



European scientists not declaring interests

The European Commission's Scientific Committee on Food (SCF), the main advisory body for EU food legislation, is failing to declare its members' interests despite earlier promises that it would.

The SCF has been transferred into DGXXIV, the consumer policy directorate under Emma Bonino, who has promised that the issue of openness and transparency is one of importance, yet the promised declaration of member's commercial links and interests has not been published.

Both the Food Commission and the campaigning organisation Baby Milk Action have urged the new SCF secretary, Dr Peter Wagstaffe, to publish the members' declarations of interest but have been told that these are only available to the chair of the committee. Interests are also supposed to be declared on an *ad hoc* basis during working group sessions, but these, too, will not be published.

Concern has been expressed that at least one member, Professor Jean Rey, has close links with baby food interests but may be failing to declare

these links. Professor Rey has expressed outspoken criticism of the recent UNICEF report *Cracking the Code* (see *Food Magazine* 37), which demonstrated industry violations of the baby milk marketing code, and is believed to have many other links to baby food manufacturers, yet in the December 1996 minutes of an SCF meeting on baby food he only declared a commercial interest in mineral waters.

Despite the Commission expressing 'full confidence' in Professor Rey, it is expected that the SCF will soon be opened up to wider participation. An invitation to nominate scientists to participate in the SCF is expected to be announced shortly, with member states and, possibly, NGOs, able to make proposals.

Meanwhile the organisation Women in Technology is about to launch an Internet database of female experts working in the fields of science and technology across Europe.

■ More details on Women in Technology on 0114 253 2041.

Sainsbury's sponsorship condemned at NCT

Strong feelings came to a head at a National Childbirth Trust emergency meeting called in response to members' concerns that the NCT should not accept a £40,000 sponsorship grant from supermarket group Sainsbury's.

The motion to reject Sainsbury's money was defeated, and led to the immediate resignation of several NCT breastfeeding counsellors, who considered it inappropriate to take money from a company which sells commercial baby milk powder under its own brand name. The WHO code of marketing of breast milk substitutes prohibits baby formula manufacturers giving cash to health workers.

Meanwhile trading standards officers have issued guidelines to supermarkets indicating that loyalty schemes, such as Sainsbury's Reward Card, should not include

purchases of commercial baby milks, as this contravenes the 1995 regulations prohibiting the promotion of such products.

Dioxins levels in breastmilk fall

Despite the headlines that dioxin levels in breastmilk are at high levels, mothers should continue to breastfeed, according to the Department of Health's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Kenneth Calman.

The levels have fallen 30% over a ten-year period, but are still several times higher than the WHO-recommended tolerable levels for lifetime exposure. Baby milk companies have denied reports that their representatives have been telling health workers that it is safer to bottle feed.

Food testing cut 20%

Testing of food samples has fallen by over 20 per cent in the last four years, according to figures from the Association of Public Analysts. The rate dropped from 1.63 samples per 1000 population in 1993 to just 1.31 samples in 1996. The World Health Organisation recommended rate is 2.5 samples. *APA Annual Statistics* 1996.

FLAG is flying

A new campaigning organisation, the Food Labelling AGenda (FLAG) was launched at the end of June. A joint initiative of the Guild of Food Writers and the Guild of Health Writers, the campaign aims to ensure consumers can exercise their right to know exactly what is in their food.

■ Details from FLAG Administrator, PO Box 105, Hampton, Middlesex TW12 3TL.

LOFF is launched

A London Organic Food Forum has been formed to raise awareness of organic farming, encourage urban organic land management and hold educational and social events in the London area. A public launch is planned for October to coincide with Organic Harvest Month.

■ Details from Tanya Maxted-Frost, 34 Beaumont Court, Sutton Lane North, Chiswick, W4 4LE (tel 0181 994 6583).

Food for Health Network Annual Conference

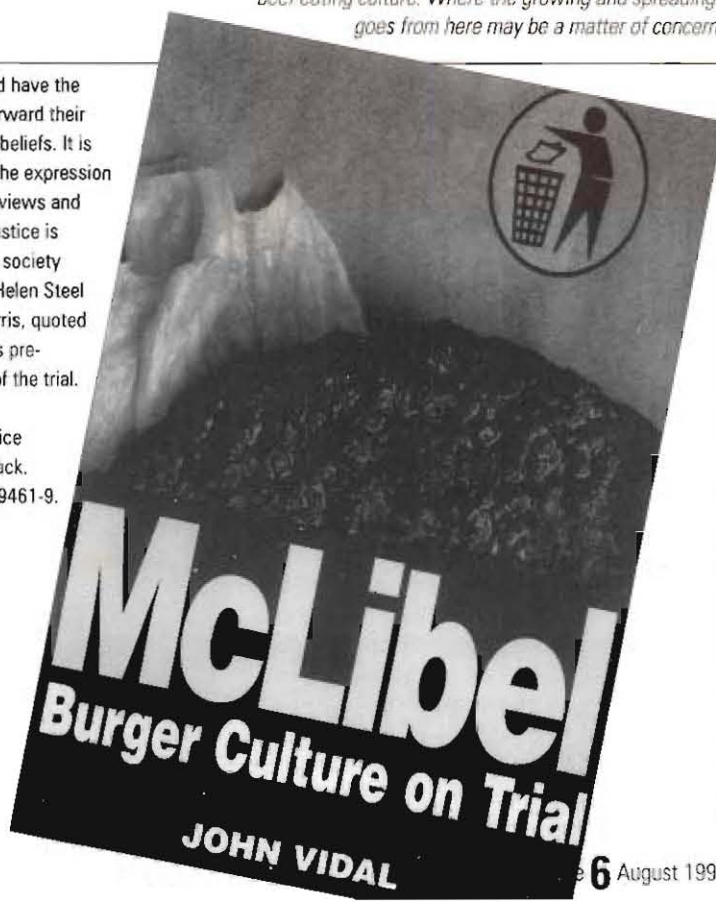
November 4th 1997
Liverpool Cathedral

Details from Cathy Cowbrough
tel/fax 01777 706880, e-mail
kathy.cowbrough@virgin.net

Statements from Justice Bell's High Court judgement summary

McDonald's food is healthy?	<i>'In my judgement a diet high in fat (including saturated fat) and animal products, and low in fibre, sustained over very many years, probably does lead to a very real risk of heart disease in due course. ... It does mean, in my judgement, that the small proportion of McDonald's customers who eat McDonald's food several times a week will take the very real risk of heart disease if they continue to do so throughout their lives, encouraged by the Plaintiff's (McDonald's) advertising.'</i>
What about advertising?	<i>If the leaflet had said that a reader 'would be well advised to ignore any McDonald's advertising which might appear to encourage him or her to eat McDonald's meals several times a week then in my view McDonald's (the Plaintiffs) would have had no just cause for complaint.'</i>
What about that lovely Ronald McDonald and the free 'happy meals' — don't children just love 'em?	<i>'McDonald's advertising and marketing is in large part directed at children with a view to them pressuring or pestering their parents to take them to McDonald's and thereby to take their own custom to McDonald's.'</i> <i>'...the sting of the leaflet, to the effect that the Plaintiffs exploit children by using them as more susceptible subjects of advertising, to pressure their parents into going to McDonald's, is justified. It is true.'</i>
McDonald's recycles paper?	<i>'There was evidence that McDonald's publicity material in 1990 was misleading about some packaging in England actually being recycled when it was not, in fact.'</i>
McDonald's doesn't cause litter?	<i>'...McDonald's restaurant frontages have been kept clear of litter but the system of regular patrols to clear up litter rather further afield has often broken down.'</i>
What about the happy animals where Old McDonald has his farm?	<i>And on that farm there was cruelty: there was 'restriction of movement of battery hens' and there was 'severe restriction of movement' for broiler hens, and there was 'severe restriction of movement' for sows in dry stalls, and there was 'a proportion of the chickens... still fully conscious when they have their throats cut'. Old McD, said the judge, is 'culpably responsible for cruel practices in the rearing and slaughter of some of the animals used to produce their food.'</i>
And the smiling workers?	<i>The practice of sending crew members home when the restaurant is quiet, depriving them of further pay 'should not happen'. 'This practice is most unfair ... it shows where the ultimate balance lies between saving a few pounds and the interests of the individual, often young, employee. Furthermore, McDonald's 'pays its workers low wages, helping to depress wages for workers in the catering trade in Britain.' The company is 'strongly antipathetic to any idea of unionisation of crew'.</i>
So, is global hamburgerisation a good thing?	<i>McDonald's 'aims to expand as much and as quickly as possible in countries where McDonald's restaurants are already established and (McDonald's) aims to continue opening up in new countries even where there is no, or no significant, beef eating culture. Where the growing and spreading hamburger industry, of which McDonald's is such a powerful part, goes from here may be a matter of concern in a number of areas.'</i>

"People should have the right to put forward their honestly held beliefs. It is only through the expression of alternative views and ideas that injustice is remedied and society progresses." Helen Steel and Dave Morris, quoted in John Vidal's pre-verdict book of the trial. Published by Macmillan, price £15.99 hardback. ISBN 0-333-69461-9.

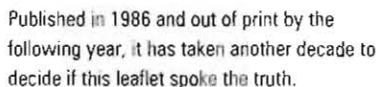


A HIGH COURT HEALTH WARNING!

You would be well advised to ignore any advertising which might encourage you to eat McDonald's meals several times a week.

Eating McDonald's meals several times a week indefinitely without taking a lot of care with the rest of your diet leads to a very real risk of heart disease and a possible increase in the risk of breast and bowel cancer.

McDonald's advertisements, promotions and booklets may pretend to a positive nutritional benefit which the food may not, in fact, match.



But where others — including newspapers and Channel 4 television — have apologised rather than take up the fight, Helen Steel and Dave Morris refuted the charges against them and spent the

In three key areas the judge found overwhelmingly in favour of Helen and Dave — animal welfare, advertising to children and workers' rights. He also agreed on certain lesser points. For a quick guide to what you can now safely say about McDonald's read our table (opposite page).

real risk of heart disease in due course and that it was possible that there would be some increase in the risk of cancer of the breast and cancer of the bowel also, and had it concluded that the reader would, therefore, be well advised to ignore any McDonald's advertising which might appear to encourage him or her to eat McDonald's meals several times a week, then, in my view, McDonald's (the Plaintiffs) would have had no just cause for complaint.

The judge was also concerned at the degree to which McDonald's may mislead consumers over the nutritional quality of their food. He found that McDonald's 'advertisements, promotions and booklets have pretended to a positive nutritional benefit which McDonald's food, high in fat and saturated fat and animal products and sodium, and at one time low in fibre, did not match.'

Strawberries and suncream – methyl bromide update

Thanks to all our readers who wrote to the Department of the Environment calling for an early phase out of the ozone-destroying pesticide methyl bromide, and to supermarkets asking for labelling of strawberries and other produce without the chemical.

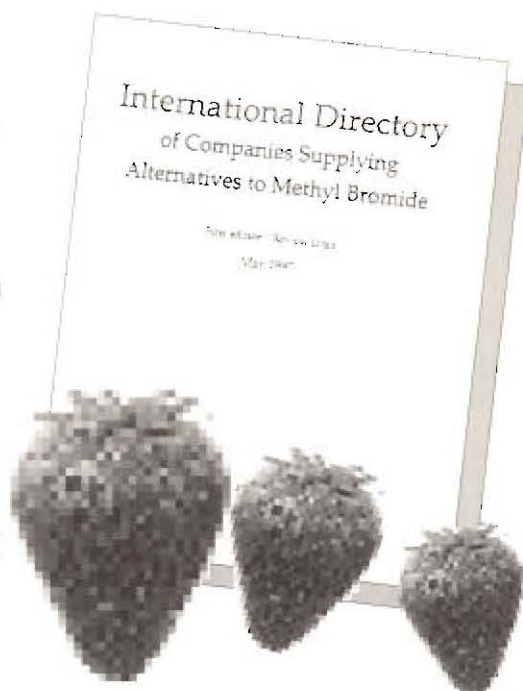
Your lobbying has resulted in at least one supermarket changing its policy. Sainsbury's now says that, alongside the Co-op, Safeway and Asda, some of their strawberries are produced without methyl bromide. But no store is yet prepared to label them — their only advice is to buy organic. So keep up your letters.

And keep up your letters to the Department of the Environment. A key meeting in Montreal in September

will decide whether to support proposals for speeding up the phase out of this ozone-depleting chemical.

The DoE told one *Food Magazine* reader that it supports the 'tightest controls possible on methyl bromide' but that 'it is necessary to consider the availability of alternatives and their suitability for UK usage'.

Yet there are safe and effective alternatives. The DoE and supermarkets should get themselves a copy of the *International directory of companies supplying alternatives to methyl bromide* by Dr Melanie Miller and available from EPR Consultancy, PO Box 665, Napier, New Zealand. Price US\$30.



National Farmers Union backs organic agriculture

Once it was hard to imagine the National Farmers Union (NFU) seeing eye to eye with organic producers. But in a welcome new initiative, the NFU is encouraging its members to consider the option of organic farming. The NFU says that for a rising number of UK farmers, organic production is becoming increasingly viable as an alternative to conventional farming. Organic produce fetches premium prices, demand is outstripping home-grown supply and government incentives for conversion have increased.

More and more shoppers are searching out organic produce. In 1987 we spent just £40 million on organic food but by 1994 this had risen to over £150 million. Yet 70% of organic produce sold in the UK is imported from other countries. Despite the rosy outlook, UK organic farmers still get the lowest government support in Europe — something the NFU, organic organisations, consumer and environmental groups would like to see improved.

Battle of the greens

The UK has won a resounding victory in Europe. 'As a direct result of persistent, and ultimately successful, UK pressure in negotiations' by the previous agriculture minister Douglas Hogg, we have won the right for British consumers to eat lettuce and spinach with higher levels of nitrates than will be permitted elsewhere in Europe.

Nitrate fertilisers are used to boost plant growth but they can end up in the vegetables themselves. There is some evidence of a link between nitrates and stomach cancer and in rare cases nitrates can cause blue-baby syndrome. The European Commission has decided, that in the interests of public health, there should be maximum levels of the amount of nitrates permitted in vegetables. However some UK-grown lettuce and spinach crops have been found to contain levels of nitrate residues higher than the EC's limit. Instead of asking growers to use less fertiliser, MAFF successfully argued for an exemption.

Producers cannot export the lettuce or spinach but they can sell it to us lucky British consumers. Imported lettuce and spinach will have to comply with the new, lower nitrate EC regulations. Perhaps UK producers will change their tune if consumers switch to imported lettuce.

Chemical farming bad for birds

New research has confirmed what many already feared — that intensive agriculture is destroying the habitats and food supplies of many of Britain's birds, including the skylark, swallow and grey partridge.

The report, published by the government's Joint Nature Conservation Committee, has found that while modern agrochemicals are much less likely to poison birds directly, pesticides which kill weeds, insects and other organisms are indirectly contributing to the birds' decline by altering habitats and reducing the seed plants and insects that birds feed upon. As previously reported in the *Food Magazine*, greater numbers of birds such as the skylark have been found on organic farms compared with conventional farmland.

The report calls for a reduction in the use of pesticides and for more land to be farmed organically. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, one of the organisations which contributed to the research, is calling for a tax on pesticides to help save birds.

■ *The Indirect Effects of Pesticides on Birds*, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, available from the Natural History Book Service, 2-3 Willis Road, Totnes, Devon, TW9 5XN (Tel: 01803 865913). Price £10 + £1.80 p&p.

Banned drugs in eggs

Government tests have found that one egg out of eight contains traces of a banned drug, nicarbazin. Free range eggs as well as intensively produced ones are affected. Nicarbazin is routinely added to feed for broiler chickens to control parasites but it is not permitted for egg laying hens.

MAFF's Veterinary Medicines Directorate say it is an on-going problem, most likely caused by cross-contamination of feed during processing, transport or on the farm. Similar problems have been found with another drug, dimetridazole, which is permitted for turkeys but not for chickens. MAFF says the residues are not a health risk to consumers but the results highlight continuing contamination problems within the animal feed industry.

World Cancer Research Fund Food Nutrition and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective

2 day conference in London
September 30 - October 1st

Details from BCOS, tel 0171-717 1573,
fax 0171 717 1574.

CHECKOUT

Food supplement companies are making extravagant claims for their products. But are they over-stepping the law? Judge for yourself.

Health claims and the law

The UK Food Labelling Regulations prohibit labels and advertisements from making any express or implied claim that a food (or food supplement) is 'capable of preventing, treating or curing a human disease'. A disease is defined as 'any adverse condition of the body or mind.'

These regulations put the emphasis on disease, not health, and manufacturers exploit this loophole by, for example, claiming their products help maintain health in some way, rather than prevent disease.

It's not always easy to differentiate between these types of claims, but the following should help you spot the difference.

Nutrient claim:

'Skeletone is packed with valuable calcium'

Health claim:

'The calcium in Skeletone can help keep bones strong'

Medicinal claim:

'The calcium in Skeletone can prevent osteoporosis'

For a product to make a medicinal claim, it has to be licensed as a medicine by the Medicines Control Agency (MCA). Such products will have a PL (product licence) number on the packaging. To qualify for a licence, the product has to undergo tests for safety, effectiveness and quality standards. It has to be safe in normal use with minimal side effects, and it has to be able to do what it claims.

Alarmed at the flood of claims being made by functional food and food supplement companies, the MCA issued guidelines on the sorts of phrases they considered might constitute a medicinal claim.

These included:
Can lower cholesterol
Boosts the immune system
Burns fat
Detoxifies, restores
Eliminates or combats a disease,
Avoids or protects against a disease
Traditionally used for a disease
Is said to benefit those who suffer from a disease

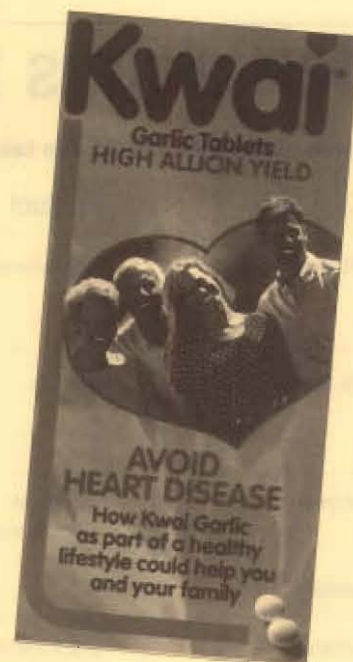
Products making claims like these, said the MCA, would normally be defined as medicines and should have a medicinal product licence. Of the 314 products examined by the Food Commission, only 13 had a licence.

Licensed and unlicensed products may contain similar ingredients and sit side by side on the shelf. To add to the confusion, some herbal remedies are licensed by a process to assess data on their traditional use, toxicity and safety, while other herbal products are covered by food law.

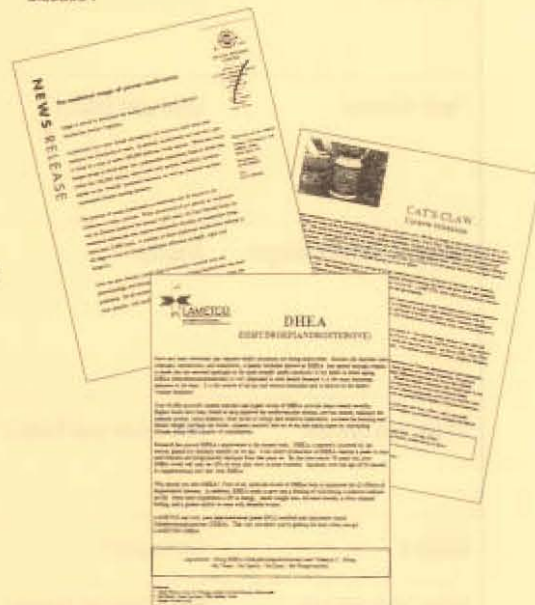
Following complaints about health claims in advertising, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) issued a warning last year:

'Care must be taken to avoid exploiting the public's lack of nutritional expertise. All health claims should be backed with appropriate scientific evidence. The further food claims move into medicinal or physiological territory, the more rigorous the substantiation expected to support them.' (ASA Monthly Report, June 1996).

These are strong words, but the ASA has no powers to prosecute and advertisements are not approved in advance. Responsibility for controlling medicinal claims lies with Medicines Control Agency inspectors, part of the Department of Health. Responsibility for controlling misleading claims and labels lies with local authority trading standards departments. The Food Commission is urging close liaison between these bodies and a series of test prosecutions to show that infringements of the law are taken seriously.



Is Kwai breaking the law? The text in the leaflet states 'How taking Kwai garlic tablets as part of a healthy lifestyle could help you avoid heart disease... a £12 million programme of research studies has shown that Kwai could help you maintain good circulation and avoid heart disease'.



Press releases sent to journalists claiming supplements can 'help prevent prostate problems', 'have been used to treat cancer' and 'used medically for ... cancer, AIDS...'

CHECKOUT

Food supplements

Ten claims that go over the top?

None of the products in this table have a medicinal product licence. Should they be allowed to make these claims?

Company	Product	Claim
Ultimate Nutrition	Aloe Vera Juice	<i>'...used over thousands of years as a drink for heart and circulation, rheumatic disorders, constipation, hemorrhoids, ulcers, colitis, irritable bowel, diabetes, liver, spleen and pancreas disorders, crones (sic) disease, skin diseases, heart and glandular problems.'</i>
Bio Serum	Sinartrix	<i>'INDICATIONS Helps to prevent and eliminate inflammatory and degenerative processes of the following rheumatic disorders:- Arthrosis, Arthritis, Metabolic Arthritis (gouty etc) Rheumatoid Arthritis ... Spondylitis (ankylosing), Synovitis, Osteoporosis ...'</i>
Lametco female	Cat's Claw (Uncaria tomentosa)	<i>'...there is evidence to suggest that Uncaria tomentosa may be beneficial in the treatment of cancer, arthritis, bursitis, rheumatism, all forms of herpes, allergies, ulcers, systemic candidiasis, diabetes, lupus, chronic fatigue syndrome, pre-menstrual syndrome and irregularities of the cycle, and numerous bowel and intestinal disorders.'</i>
Lametco	DHEA Dehydroepiandrosterone	<i>'...the most broadly useful medicine in the battle to resist aging (sic)... Over 40,000 scientific studies indicate that higher levels of DHEA provide major health benefits. Higher levels have been found to help improve the cardiovascular system, prevent cancer, enhance the immune system, block diabetes ... increasing fat burning and reduce weight, increase the libido, enhance memory and act as an anti aging agent... optimum levels of DHEA help to minimise the ill effects of degenerative diseases.'</i>
Naturopathic Health & Beauty Co	Hawaiian Pacifica Spirulina	<i>'Recent studies in Japan have shown extract of Spirulina has a marked effect in fighting viruses such as mumps, measles and flu... Above all it showed significant "anti-viral activity" against the HIV-1 virus... Other clinical trials have shown... shrinking of tumours... a reduction in cholesterol... which could aid in the treatment of obesity, diabetes and hypertension.'</i>
Tigon (Biocare)	Olive Leaf Extract	<i>'...actually strengthens your immune system and can... aid the fight against disease-producing micro-organisms... olive leaf extract is a natural treatment option for such diseases as: osteoarthritis, malaria, herpes, HIV, encephalitis, hepatitis, chronic fatigue, rheumatoid arthritis, dengue fever, influenza, common colds, shingles, urinary infections.'</i>
Neuner's Herbal Products	Propolis	<i>'...extremely effective in its ability to fight bacteria and fungal diseases... Research undertaken in China found Propolis to be effective in treating hardening of the arteries, hypertension and coronary heart disease... Propolis has been found to be helpful in protection against colds, coughs, flu and other viruses. Propolis has also been used successfully to treat arthritic and rheumatic conditions.'</i>
Solgar Vitamins Ltd	Red Clover Leaf Extract	<i>'Combined with other important herbs and nutrients, red clover has been used to treat cancer. The active isoflavone component, biochanin A has been shown to possess potent anti-cancer effects.'</i>
Kordel's	Prostaguard	<i>'...an ideal supplement to help prevent prostate problems.'</i>
Solgar Vitamins Ltd	Reishi Shiitake Maitake Mushroom Extract Vegicaps	<i>'In Traditional Chinese Medicine, shiitake is used medically for all diseases involving depressed immune function including cancer, AIDS, environmental allergies, infections, flu's and colds. It has also been shown to be beneficial for soothing bronchial inflammation and reducing chronic high cholesterol... traditional applications (of reishi extracts) have been for the treatment of liver diseases, cancer, increasing resistance, asthma, bronchitis, and hypertension... maitake has been successfully used for the treatment of high blood pressure, cancer, immune disease and liver disorders.'</i>

CHECKOUT

- a hype too far?

The Food Commission surveyed over 300 products, their labels, promotional literature, advertisements and press statements. Many claims for products appeared to be verging on illegality.

The Food Commission's survey examined a wide range of food supplements, including vitamins, minerals, amino acids, enzymes, fish oils, herbal remedies and supplements marketed as slimming aids.

We found manufacturers using a variety of ways to put across potentially misleading impressions and claims. These included:

Labels making explicit claims for the product, often with logos and pictures to imply a health benefit (a picture of a heart, for example).

Product names, such as *Mobileze*, *Immune Prevention* or *Anti Fat*.

Leaflets and books promoting the benefits of products which may be available in the same shop.

Company-run information services and 'help lines'.

Advertorials - paid for advertisements designed to resemble articles in magazines or the press.

Testimonials - by personalities who are well-known to have survived cancer for example.

Newspaper or magazine reports based on press releases from manufacturers.

Press and poster advertisements - these are not pre-vetted. If claims are found to be untrue the advertisement has already had its effect.

We focused on the manufacturers' and distributors' statements on labels, in leaflets and booklets and in press releases and advertisements. Of the 314 products examined, we found

■ 741 claims were being made

■ Only 13 products held product licences

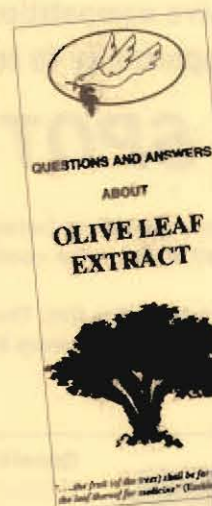
■ Nearly one hundred products made claims relating to digestion or metabolism, such as 'supporting enzyme activity', aiding absorption of nutrients, or for helping the muscular or skeletal system, alleviating arthritis, helping the skin or bones or aiding joint mobility.

■ Over sixty products made claims for aiding the cardiovascular system. None of these were licensed. Four made claims to lower cholesterol, which may constitute a medicinal claim, and one claimed to reduce chronic high cholesterol, which we believe is clearly a medicinal claim.

■ Fifty-five products made claims relating to the immune system. Some of these claim to strengthen or boost the immune system, which we believe is a medicinal claim.

■ Thirty products made slimming, weight-reducing or fat-burning claims.

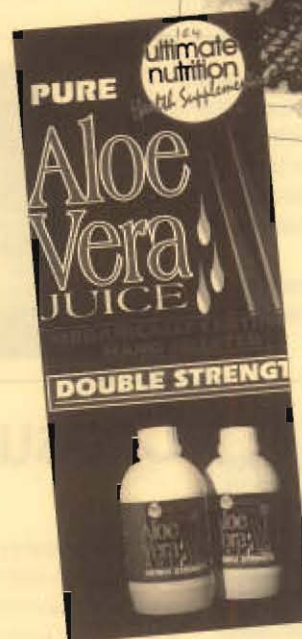
■ Other claims included the ability to assist the body's nervous or glandular systems, reproductive system, or to improve mental and emotional health. Claims were also made for improving eyesight, preventing ageing and maintaining health while travelling.



Is olive leaf extract 'a natural treatment for HIV'?

Is propolis really 'effective in treating hypertension and coronary heart disease'?

The Power of Propolis



Should you use aloe vera 'as a drink for ulcers and diabetes'?

Time for better regulation

The Food Commission is calling for tougher measures to regulate these products and protect consumers from misleading claims. As our report shows, manufacturers are bending and breaking the rules. Unregulated marketing means the public are being sold products which may be of little proven value. A century ago various patent remedies claimed they could treat and cure diseases. Dr Collis Brown's

Chlorodyne claimed it was a remedy for diphtheria, cholera and dysentery, could treat epilepsy and was a palliative for cancer and meningitis. Reputable companies know that unfounded claims will damage the market for everybody. But self-regulation is clearly not working. Tough regulations are needed.

The National Consumer Council has called for a ban on all health claims made for food products. A

similar ban on claims made for food supplements might be a necessary last resort if companies continue to flout the law.

■ *Food Supplement Claims* by Viv Stein, The Food Commission, 1997, price £125 (£20.00 to non-commercial bodies).

EXCLUSIVE PRIZES!

TRY YOUR LUCK!

COMPETITION

Loopy labels

In an exclusive competition, the Food Commission offers readers this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to test their skills and knowledge and prove they can...

SPOT THE SWEETENERS!

Take a look at the four questions below. Ponder them carefully. Can you tell which ones contain artificial sweeteners?

Choose your answers from the list. Then check them against the facts — see The Answers below.

If you got them all correct — no cheating mind — then we invite you to award yourself with a title from the Food Commission's own Honours List. As your prize you may call yourself 'Local Loopy Label-Reader of 1997'!



Question 1 Here are two cans of Tango. One is Tango Orange and the other is Tango Diet Orange. Can you spot the artificial sweeteners? Are there artificial sweeteners in

- (a) Neither?
- (b) Tango Orange?
- (c) Tango Diet Orange?
- (d) Both?



Question 3 Here are two bottles of Lucozade, Lucozade Light and Lucozade Energy. Can you spot the artificial sweeteners? Are there artificial sweeteners in

- (a) Neither?
- (b) Lucozade Light?
- (c) Lucozade Energy?
- (d) Both?

Question 2 Here are two bottles of Schweppes Bitter Lemon. One is Original Bitter Lemon and one is Slimline Bitter Lemon. Can you spot the artificial sweeteners? Are there artificial sweeteners in

- (a) Neither?
- (b) Original Bitter Lemon?
- (c) Slimline Bitter Lemon?
- (d) Both?



Question 4 Here are two Ribena fruit drinks. One is Orange and Apricot, the other is Strawberry. Can you spot the artificial sweeteners? Are there artificial sweeteners in

- (a) Neither?
- (b) Orange and Apricot?
- (c) Strawberry?
- (d) Both?



Consumers get sweet nothing

'Whereas the prime consideration for any rules on sweeteners and their conditions of use should be the need to protect and inform the consumer...'

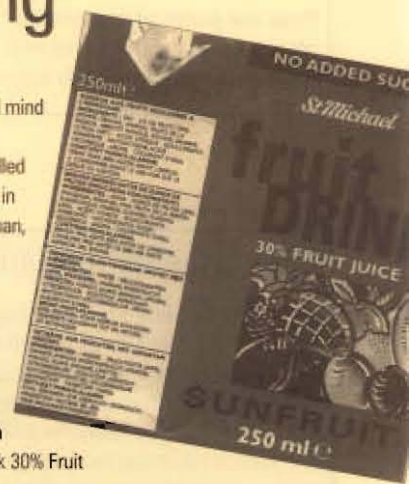
Fine words from Directive 94/35/EC but much flouted in reality. Consumers are not being properly informed and manufacturers have done all they can to delay and minimise the impact of the directive while maximising the use of sweeteners as cheap ingredients in increasing numbers of foods.

And while other countries required new labelling of sweeteners on the

label from January this year, the UK has delayed implementing their labelling a further six months and even then will allow products labelled before this July to remain on sale until they are sold. Even after July, as we pointed out in the last *Food Magazine*, the new UK product labels will hide the 'with sweeteners' information around the side of the label, not with the name on the front. Is this truly giving 'prime consideration' to informing the consumer?

See letters, page 19.

What cynical mind at Marks & Spencer labelled their product in French, German, Dutch and Spanish as 'Fruit Drink Sweetened With Aspartame' but in English as 'Fruit Drink 30% Fruit Juice'?



The Answers

1. (d) Both. Tango Diet Orange contains Aspartame, Acesulfame and Saccharin while Tango Orange contains Saccharin and Aspartame. 2. (d) Both again. Schweppes Slimline contains Saccharin and Aspartame while Schweppes Original contains Saccharin and a dose of sugar. 3. (a) Neither. The word Light refers to the colour. Both products contain a lot of sugar — the equivalent of ten to fifteen sugar cubes. 4. (b) There is artificial sweetener (Aspartame and Acesulfame) in Ribena Orange and Apricot but not in Ribena Strawberry. There is also sugar in both of them.

A menu for the 21st century

The environmental group SAFE has launched a pan-European campaign to promote awareness of sustainable food supplies. Sue Dibb reports.

One of the greatest challenges facing us at the close of the twentieth century is the challenge of feeding the growing global population in a way that is sustainable. Launched this summer by SAFE (The Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment) Alliance is the pan-European Sustainable Menus Campaign which, with environmental organisations in Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the Ukraine, is designed to increase awareness of the potential for sustainable agriculture.

For the UK, SAFE has produced an information pack, *Feeding the Future*, containing a wealth of practical information for promoting greener shopping and reducing health risks in food. SAFE says that by acting now and choosing food that is free-range, organic, grown from traditional varieties, locally produced where possible and fair-traded, we can help support a more sustainable food culture, which conserves our wildlife and countryside, reduces food miles, preserves rural jobs and reduces health risks in food.

Green indicators

SAFE's comparison of the UK with nine other European countries for 'green' indicators of food production, rates the UK as a poor 7th. In comparison to many of our European partners our food culture is far from being as sustainable as it could be. SAFE says we've focused on promoting agricultural productivity at the expense of promoting more extensive and diverse farming systems. This has left the UK with very low scores for the area it has under organic agriculture, the lowest rate of agricultural employment in the survey and a massive deficit in our balance of payments in food and feedstuffs — a reflection on our current inability to be self-sustaining and to minimise long distance food transportation. We score highly for agricultural productivity, but such productivity has been at the expense of agricultural pollution and loss of countryside and wildlife.

■ To join SAFE's Sustainable Menus Campaign send £10 (including p&np) for 'Feeding the Future' Campaign Pack from SAFE, 38 Ebury Street, London SW1W 0LU.



Flown across the Atlantic while local strawberry crops are at their best.

How Green are our Strawberries?

UK strawberry production illustrates some of the problems the UK faces in moving towards more sustainable food production. SAFE says that the supermarkets' demand for perfect strawberries all year round is bad news for UK strawberry growers, for the environment and for shoppers. We're importing more and more strawberries mainly from Spain and California. In 1995 only half of the strawberries we ate were home grown, down from 70% in 1985.

Three-quarters of strawberries sold in the UK are from just one variety, known as Elsanta. Supermarkets' demand for this variety, which can survive long journey times and has a long shelf life, means reduced consumer choice in terms of taste and requires greater chemical use as Elsanta is more prone to damage by pests. Government tests have found pesticide residues in 88% of both imported and home grown strawberries.

In addition there are further, hidden costs — the costs to the environment of long-distant transport of strawberries, intensive use of pesticides and ozone depleting chemicals and the loss of strawberry varieties. Now genetic engineering is being used to produce the 'perfect' strawberry.

What you can do

- Try to buy UK grown strawberries in season (between May and the end of August). Ask your local supermarket to stock local strawberries from local growers to cut down on food miles within the UK.
- Ask your supermarket to stock UK grown organic strawberries, grown without pesticides. As a first step ask for strawberries grown without the ozone damaging chemical, methyl bromide.
- Visit a pick-your-own farm with greater varieties than can be bought in supermarkets. Check about the pesticides used.
- Grow your own.

A menu for the 21st century

Your choices today will affect your choice tomorrow

Free-range locally bred	Chicken Wings baked with Tarragon	Intensively farmed in Brazil, full of antibiotics
Locally bred, extensively reared cattle	Beef Casserole	Imported beef because of health fears
Free-range	Eggs Florentine	From battery kept chickens
From traditional and rare varieties	Potato Salad	From a modern variety grown in monocultures
Locally grown, organic	Green Leaf and Herb Salad	Imported from Spain
Natural, organic	Tomato and Onion Salad	Genetically modified
Organic	Beetroot and Carrot Salad	Laden with organophosphates
Local apples, unusual varieties	Apple Pie and Custard	Standardised apples, BST Milk
Fairly traded	Tea and Coffee	Grown on estates where workers are exploited

Tinned paste a

Two years after the Food Commission's damning report on babyfood, we might have hoped for some improvement. No such luck, reports Tim Lobstein.

Two years after the Food Commission's damning report on the poor quality of Britain's commercial weaning food products, and three years after a government advisory report urging improvements in babyfood standards, we find little has changed. Only one improvement stands out — and that has happened because of a change in the law, not a voluntary move by manufacturers.

The Food Commission survey of 407 first and second stage babyfoods undertaken in 1997 found

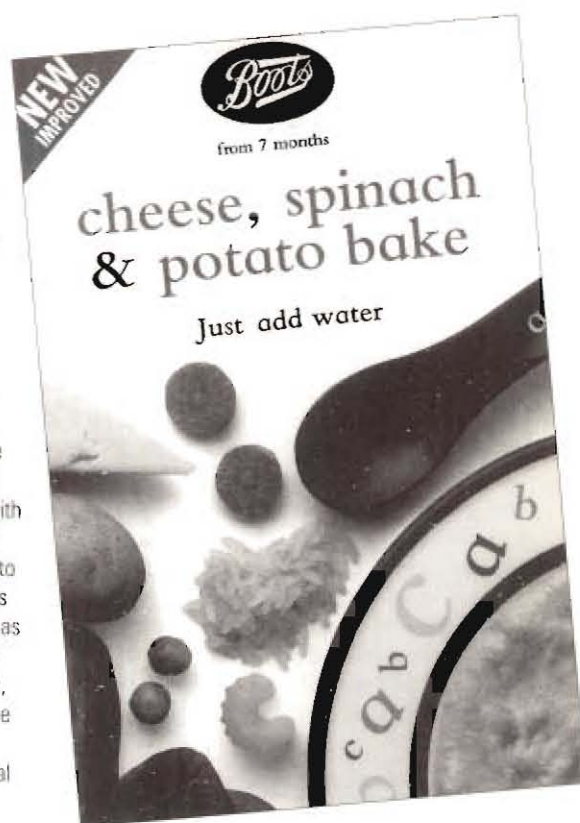
- the number of first stage baby foods promoted as suitable for babies under four months has fallen dramatically. The change follows European legislation requiring the UK not to permit such labelling. The government's Weaning Diet advisory committee recommended in 1994 that parents should normally be advised not to start weaning before their baby is aged four months on the grounds that a baby's digestive system may not be developed sufficiently to cope with weaning food before that age.
- The proportion of first stage weaning foods containing gluten (a protein found in wheat, rye and barley that can provoke the digestive disorder, coeliac disease) has barely changed. This is despite the recommendations in the government's 1994 Weaning Food report stating: *'To prevent coeliac disease the cereals given to infants under six months should preferably be gluten free, such as rice or maize.'*
- At an alarming 54%, the proportion of first stage products containing non-milk extrinsic (NME) sugars is virtually the same as it was in 1995 despite continued criticism of manufacturers (see also page 4 on sugar claims). In 1994, government experts advised *'infants should be weaned onto foods and drinks free as far as possible from NME sugars.'* Manufacturers appear to be ignoring that advice and continuing to put infants health at risk.
- Recognising that some foods, such as desserts, would be expected to contain NME sugars, we examined all savoury and complete meal foods

('dinners', 'tea timers', 'breakfasts') for the presence of NME sugars. We found manufacturers are continuing to add sugars to these items where they might not be expected, at much the same rate as they had in our previous survey.

- Lastly we looked at the use of low-nutrient starches and gums used as fillers and thickeners to absorb water and increase the bulk of food. These low nutrient fillers serve the purpose of replacing 'real' ingredients with less expensive ones. Although not a health hazard, such low nutrient ingredients serve to dilute and replace higher nutrient ingredients which are essential to health. Sadly, there has been little change in the proportion of baby foods using fillers, three out of five products, despite the fact that several companies have now shown that the presence of fillers are unnecessary in the production of commercial baby foods.

In the 1995 Food Commission survey we concluded that the majority of manufacturers were failing to meet the recommendations of the government's expert advisers, and that regulation should be brought in to force manufacturers to meet adequate standards. It is clear from the 1997 survey that this approach is correct: manufacturers are not making changes voluntarily and are only making changes when they are required by the law.

Both surveys found examples of better quality products, showing that it is feasible for companies to make such products if they so wish. At present, parents need to shop carefully and scrutinise labels.



Cheese first in the title, but eleventh in the ingredients list. There is more low-nutrient filler (maltodextrin) in this product than real cheese.

Change, but only when the law requires it

New regulations prohibit marketing babyfood as suitable for babies under 4 months. Otherwise there has been little change.

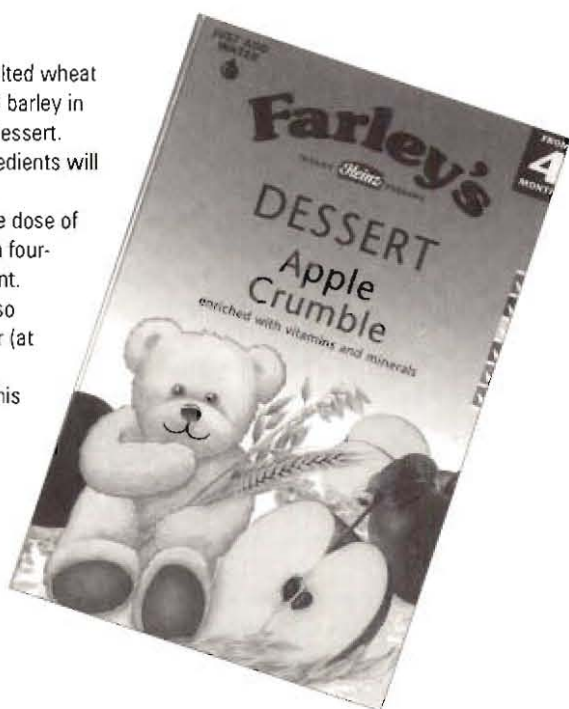
	1995	1997
Proportion of first-stage products labelled as suitable before 4 months	69%	2%
Proportion of first stage products containing non-oat gluten	20%	17%
Proportion of first stage products containing NME sugars	55%	54%
Proportion of savoury and complete meal products containing NME sugars	21%	19%
Proportion of all products containing low-nutrient fillers	63%	60%

and polyfiller 2

How the brands line up in 1997

	Stage 1 under 4 months	Non-oat gluten in stage 1	NME sugars in stage 1	NME sugars in savoury and meal items	Use of low nutrient fillers
Boots regular jars and dry packs	0	8 (34%)	18 (53%)	1 (4%)	29 (76%)
Boots First Harvest jars and dry packs	3 (17%)	6 (33%)	9 (50%)	0	4 (12%)
Boots Mothers Recipe jars and dry packs	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)	0	0
Boots International jars	0	0	0	4 (24%)	11 (65%)
Cow & Gate and Olvarit jars and dry packs	0	1 (2%)	30 (73%)	19 (46%)	44 (73%)
Heinz jars and cans	0	8 (13%)	40 (67%)	5 (10%)	72 (84%)
Hipp jars	0	0	3 (33%)	0	3 (20%)
Baby Organix jars and dry packs	0	0	1 (5%)	0	0
Milupa dry packs	0	4 (24%)	7 (41%)	3 (20%)	19 (100%)
Farley's dry packs	0	10 (37%)	15 (56%)	9 (36%)	33 (94%)
Safeway own label jars and dry packs	0	1 (14%)	3 (43%)	1 (9%)	5 (31%)
Sainsbury own label jars and dry packs	1 (4%)	7 (27%)	19 (73%)	5 (33%)	25 (81%)

Wheat, malted wheat and malted barley in this baby dessert. These ingredients will provide an unwelcome dose of gluten for a four-month infant. There is also more sugar (at 33%) than apples in this product.



The picture on this jar leaves out the largest single ingredient in this product: added water. There is much more water than yogurt. Low-nutrient cornflour and rice starch thicken the water and help it to substitute for real fruit and yogurt.

This product, like many baby foods, contains ingredients derived from cow's milk — this one has yogurt and cream and dried skimmed milk powder. Yet health experts recommend that milk other than breast milk or formula milk should be avoided till a baby is at least six months old, and that liquid cow's milk as a drink should be avoided until the baby's first birthday, to limit the risk of intolerance reactions and allergies.

The rising cost of healthy food

Price changes over the last two decades have favoured the choice of unhealthy food products compared with healthier ones, according to figures analysed by the Food Commission. Over the period 1982-1995, healthier food items have increased in price by some 80% and less healthy items by barely 40%.

Government food price data analysed by the Food Commission show the average increase in food prices during the period was 62%, but the increase in the prices of some commodities was much more, and for others far less. There appeared to be a strong tendency for more processed, less healthy foods to show lower price increases than fresher, healthier foods. Over the period, chocolate biscuits rose only 54%, ice cream only 44%, margarine 39%, sausages 37% and cream just 12%. In contrast, the price of oranges rose 80%, leafy salad 86%, fresh fish 110%, yoghurt 115%, rice 200% and potatoes 250%.

These are selected items, but as the table shows, the overall pattern appears similar within several broad categories of food.



Potatoes, up a massive 250%



Cream, up only 12%

Prices show bigger rises for healthier options

Price rise
1982-1995

Dairy

Plain low-fat yoghurt, natural cheese	98%
Full-fat cream, processed cheese	35%

Meat & fish

Chicken and poultry, fresh fish, shellfish, canned fish	77%
Sausages, meat pies, frozen meat and fish products	59%

Fats and oils

Vegetable oil, salad oil	67%
Margarine, butter	48%

Vegetables

Potatoes, greens, onions, tomatoes, carrots, salad	122%
Chips, crisps, instant mash, dehydrated vegetables	64%

Fruit

Oranges, bananas, apples, grapes, rhubarb	90%
Canned peaches, other canned fruit	60%

Baked goods, staples

Wholemeal bread, crispbread, rice	117%
White bread, cakes, pastries, biscuits	55%

■ Analyses performed by Drs Viv Lund and Tim Lobstein, based on data in *Household Food Consumption and Expenditure 1982* (MAFF, HMSO 1984) and *National Food Survey 1995* (MAFF, The Stationery Office 1996).

Caroline Walker Trust £2500 bursary

The Caroline Walker Trust is offering £2500 to support innovative research or developmental work which focuses on factors linking inequalities and food choices.

The bursary is offered to registered postgraduate students who wish to carry out a specific, food-related project within voluntary or statutory organisations. Applicants should consider how their project may improve health and develop policies.

£500 prize

The Trust is offering a prize of £500 to registered students for a 5000-word essay on the theme of cultural and social factors which affect food choice with a particular emphasis on health.

Closing date for the essay is September 1st and for the bursary is September 30th 1997. Full details from Mrs Sarah Ivatts, The Caroline Walker Trust, 12 Thistle Grove, London SW10 9RZ.

Hole-food. If ever capitalism needed one single indictment to summarise its wasteful, resource-consuming, inhuman nature then this report contains it. *£1 million-worth of edible food is dumped in UK landfill sites every day of the year.*

By far the largest amount of waste came from the supermarkets, which between them were dumping edible food worth over £353 million last year. The cost of this food, plus the cost of compressing it, transporting it and paying for landfill sites is, of course, borne by shoppers.

The report was published by Crisis, the charity for homeless people, which is keen to see greater redistribution of edible food to homeless centres. There is a danger, though, that such handouts serve to ease the conscience of capitalism while prolonging the dependency of the poor on the benevolence of the rich.

■ *Waste not, want not: A report on surplus fresh food in the food industry*, by P Cottee and J Webster, and available from Crisis, Challenger House, 42 Adler Street, London E1 1EE (tel 0171 377 0489) price £3.



Countering myths

'You can easily manage on a tight budget — we all had to during the war.' This and nearly twenty other common myths and assumptions are analysed and exploded in a fact-packed report from the National Food Alliance.

Written by the Food Commission's Tim Lobstein, it looks at the cost of food, the amount available for food in weekly benefits, the amounts spent by large companies on food advertising, the role of supermarkets, and a host of other facts and figures to counter the commonly-held arguments that the poor have only

themselves to blame for a bad diet.

One set of figures is particularly disturbing. The report estimates that families on Income Support have less than £1 per day available to spend on their children's food. Children need up to 2000 calories a day to ensure they don't go hungry, and

Daily food element allowed in Income Support, 1995-6*

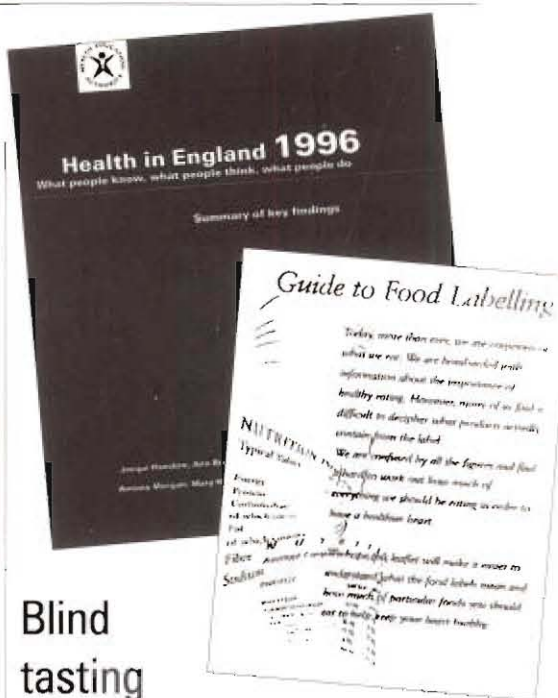
Adult	£2.37
Person aged 16 or 17	£1.16
Child 11 - 15	93p
Child under 11	63p

* estimated from the 1986 figures in the DHSS 'S' manual, updated by the food retail price index.

the report notes that while white bread and hard margarine can cost as little as 2p per 100 calories, and sausage and chips 8p per 100 calories, tomato and lettuce salad costs over £1 per 100 calories.

■ *'If they don't eat a healthy diet it's their own fault!'*
Myths about Food and Low Income, National Food Alliance, 5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH, 1997, ISBN 1 900 670 003, £20.00.

A pamphlet based on the report is enclosed in this issue of the *Food Magazine*. Further copies of the pamphlet may be obtained for £25 per 100 from Jacqui Webster, Food Poverty Project Officer, NFA, tel 0171 628 2442.



Blind tasting

Only 50 per cent of adults look at the ingredients lists on the food, according to this Health Education Authority's survey. Women aged 35-44 were most likely to be label-readers, men aged 16-24 least likely. Female shoppers were twice as likely to look for statements of fat content and sugar content compared with male shoppers, and women were better able to describe a healthy diet than men.

Meanwhile a report from the British Heart Foundation (BHF) shows the immense confusion many shoppers have over claims like 'low fat' or 'high fibre'. Over 40 per cent of those questioned did not realise that sodium referred to salt, and over 50 per cent thought a 'low fat' sausage had less fat than an ordinary yogurt (in fact it has some 80 times as much fat).

The BHF has issued the following guidance to help shoppers quickly recognise the nutritional quality of the food they are buying. 'For ready meals and other foods which you eat in large amounts, you need to look at the "amount per serving". For snacks, and other foods you eat in small amounts, look at the "per 100g" information. Then work out from the table below whether there is a lot or a little of each nutrient. But remember — the most important nutrient to look for is fat.'

A lot	A little
20g fat (5g saturates)	3g fat (1g saturates)
10g sugars	2g sugars
3g fibre	0.5g fibre
0.5g sodium	0.1g sodium

■ *Health in England 1996*, The Health Education Authority and Office for National Statistics, 1997, ISBN 0 7521 0876 X, summary booklet £2.50.

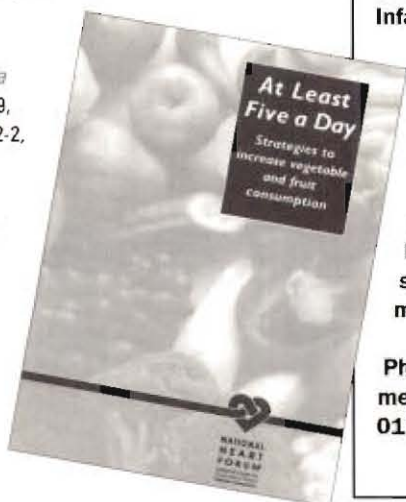
■ *Guide to Food Labelling*, British Heart Foundation, 14 Fitzhardinge Street, London W1H 4DH (tel 0171 935 0185).

Fruity messages

Fight heart disease with the fruit bowl, not the medicine cabinet. That's the message of the National Heart Forum's reports *At Least Five a Day: Strategies to increase vegetable and fruit consumption*, and *Preventing coronary heart disease: The role of antioxidants, vegetables and fruit*.

Suggesting that we need to double the amount of fruit and vegetables we eat if we are to get the health benefits other countries enjoy, the Forum is calling for a national strategy to promote the 'at least five a day' message. The report also warns that anti-oxidant dietary supplements may not offer the same benefits as eating fruit and vegetables and could possibly be dangerous.

■ *At Least Five a Day*, price £12.99, ISBN 011322002-2, and *Preventing coronary heart disease*, £19.99, ISBN 011322001-4, available from The Stationery Office (tel 0171 873 0011).



Check your school meals

Does your service meet the government's guidelines?

Iron40% RNI?
Energy30% EAR?
Vitamin C.....35% RNI?

The Food Commission can help school meals providers assess the nutritional quality of their service.

Infants, juniors and secondary schools meals services can be assessed against the new Department for Education and Employment recommended targets. These targets may soon be incorporated as regulations following David Blunkett's proposals to improve school meals. Can your service meet the challenge?

Phone for details of our school meals consultancy.
0171-628 7774.

marketplace

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. Limited stocks with marked covers - special price only £2.50 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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Consumption, Food and Taste

Alan Wardle, Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4PU, £13.95, ISBN 0-8039-7973-8.

Consuming Geographies: We are where we eat

David Bell and Gill Valentine, Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE, £14.99, ISBN 0 415 13768 3.

Wardle's book is not easy reading, but it should be tried if you have any interest in analysing cultural

phenomena. Don't let the subtitle — Culinary Antimonies and Commodity Culture — put you off.

The author, Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University,



takes on the struggle between Marx and Post-modernism, or as he prefers to describe it, between the shop-floor and the theme park. In crude terms, he attempts a synthesis between those who emphasise production as a determinant of culture, and those who emphasise consumption.

Two hundred pages later, the author admits that 'personal tastes must remain forever beyond the limits of sociological explanation. But more attention to the situational logic of selection, put in the context of general institutional forces and collective action, can yet enhance sociological understanding of the field of consumption.' Judge for yourself.

Consuming Geographies, on the other hand, plumps for the bold approach. 'By exploring geographies of food consumption, we can begin to unpack the role food plays in constituting

place identities. We all think place (and) identity through food: we are where we eat.'

Unlike Wardle's book, which is 90% conceptual and 10% material, this is the reverse. It follows its one main premise, that food has locational attributes, for 200 illustrated pages with example after example, drawn from a marvellous range of sources. It has the 'maggie' feel that surfing the internet can give: lots of stuff but lacking an unfolding conceptual analysis. As a Marxist might add, we are a product of historical forces rather than spatial identities — history produces the present. We are *when* we eat.

Factor Four: Doubling Wealth, Halving Resources — The new report to the Club of Rome

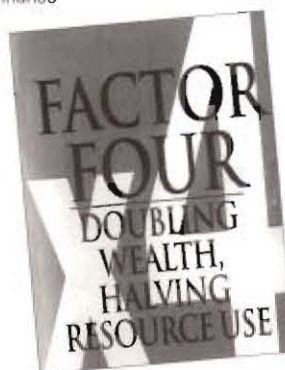
Ernst von Weizsacker et al, Earthscan Publications, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, £15.99, ISBN 1-85383-407-6.

Bananas, oranges and avocados ripen in specially-built greenhouse at 7,000 feet in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Blizzards and frost, known even in July, have no effect on the crops of tropical fruit, thanks to passive solar heating through superglass, equivalent to six layers of regular glass.

Cars, buildings, computers, lightbulbs — we have barely begun to take energy and resource conservation seriously. This book gives the human race just fifty years to transform itself into one that can sustain life indefinitely. It can be done. 'Assuming 4 per cent annual gains in resource productivity, stabilisation can be expected after 2050 at a higher level of prosperity,'

says the book, with a series of impressive graphs to prove it.

The problem with these exhortations is that they meet the stone wall of commercial interests. Where's the



profit in saving energy, conserving materials, restricting consumption? The book eloquently pleads for 'nonmaterial wealth' and argues that 'markets are not a substitute for civilisation'. Fine words. Now for the politics...

Local Harvest: Delicious ways to save the planet

Kate de Selincourt, Lawrence & Wishart, 99a Wallis Road, London E9 5LN, £11.99, ISBN 0-85315-853-3.

A book about delicious and healthy food, yet it contains no recipes. A book urging us to buy locally-produced fresh produce, and join vegetable box schemes, yet it spends just four lines on page 223 telling us where we must write to if we want a directory of farm shops and vegetable box distributors. It must be good!

In fact, Ms de Selincourt has done a good job of summarising why we need to 'think global, act local' in an easy, chatty style. Full of quotes from organic farmers, it is a surprisingly encouraging book, and perhaps of more practical use than the others on this page.



Small ads

WANTED: ONE PERSON or two, to help vegetarian Quaker couple develop gardens and 10-rod allotment. Room and board offered in return. Send letter outlining storyline so far and hopes for the future, to Rob Oulton & Debbie Thomas, 55 Ederline Avenue, Norbury, London SW16 4RZ.

RUN YOUR OWN RESTAURANT. Brighton sea-front hotel would like to find like-minded entrepreneur to run their restaurant. Generous lease terms available. Phone Mick or Sue 01273 326302.

Keep on writing but keep your letters short! You can fax us on 0171 628 0817

Be more positive

I have decided not to renew my subscription. Much of what you explore is very topical, but I find your constant bashing of government, MAFF and the food industry quite depressing and, unfortunately, tends to create a very critical complaining attitude among my students.

We are an much better nourished nation than ever before, and good food is available to a far greater percentage of the population than at any time in our history, despite factory farming, BSE, E Coli and many other issues of alarm.

It is important that a body such as yourselves exist, but to simply act as food industry police without offering real solutions is somewhat unhelpful.

Mrs R Shannon, Therfield School, Leatherhead

Hidden sweeteners

Your story about manufacturers declaring 'with sweeteners' in small print on the back of the packet (Food Magazine 37) reveals a situation that LACOTS (the trading standards co-ordinating body) sought to avoid when it issued advice on the subject in 1996.

The problem may arise as a result of MAFF guidance to food manufacturers about what they should do when the name of the food appears on the product labelling more than once. MAFF issued guidance that when this happens, the 'sweeteners declaration' need only appear once, providing it is easily visible, clearly legible and indelible, but forgot to say that it has to appear in a conspicuous place.

LACOTS have issued supplementary advice to say that the issue of prominence was important because the regulations require statutory information to be marked in a conspicuous place in such a way as to be easily visible to consumers.

Food labelling laws are enforced by local authority Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers who are always pleased to hear about examples of unsatisfactory food labels or advertisements. Anybody can ask them to look at specific food labels or adverts, including those quoted in your article.

Tony Wheale
Chair LACOTS Food Labelling Panel,
London Borough of Ealing



Ingredients of baked bean flavoured peas: Peas, sugar, modified starch, salt, tomato powder, potato granules, maltodextrin, carboxymethylcellulose, hydrogenated vegetable oil, flavouring, soy sauce powder, saccharin, herb extract.

A spoonful of medicine helps the sugar go down...

A cause of caries or a cure for cancer? Iceland's 'Wacky Veg!' have a prominent logo from the Cancer Research Campaign promoting such vegetables as well-researched foods for 'protecting against many common cancers'.

Whether this amounts to a medicinal claim has yet to be tested, but what might be more significant in terms of the eater's health is the hefty dose of added sugar in a nice sticky sauce. Dentists are horrified.

Iceland's frozen chocolate flavour carrots, baked bean flavour peas, cheese and onion flavour cauliflower and pizza flavour sweetcorn rely for their novelty on a sprinkling of damp granules — effectively a sauce — sweetened and flavoured with the processed food manufacturer's usual armoury of additives, including saccharin, plus hydrogenated fat and sugar. And at 99p per pound, they cost up to twice the price of Iceland's unflavoured vegetables.

New Britain, New Hypocrisy

Who deserved the award for the 'company that best demonstrates long term social commitment'? The prizes were handed out by the Institute for Grocery Distribution, the supermarket and grocers trade body who are keen to promote a caring image for their clients.

Over 400 companies celebrated with a huge bash at the Royal Lancaster Hotel. Companies were eligible for prizes if they supported charities, helped local communities, provided for minority groups, or, interestingly, showed 'responsible trading with 3rd world countries'.

Who was main sponsor of the event? Nestlé — the company still under boycott for their continued promotion of baby milk in violation of the UNICEF marketing code.

Grand Metropolitan won the big prize (an angel mounted on a pedestal). They have been working on a project to support disadvantaged youth in India — a project explicitly designed to help redress the local 'ambivalence towards multinational companies.' Is that a public relations exercise we can smell? Or have we just been sick?

Burger Off!

Transport supremo John Prescott may have to think twice about privatising London Underground if he wants to encourage more use of the tube and less use of the car.

Why? Because it has suddenly dawned on tube station managers that they are sitting on valuable real estate in the form of 'park and ride' car parks alongside their suburban stations. They are already in the process of selling off 100 parking spaces at Blackhorse Road station to create a drive-through McDonald's, and other car parks are going the same way.

If you don't like the idea of public transport giving encouragement to burgers and cars, contact Ray Dudley of the McBurger Off Campaign on 0181 520 7855.

Burgers with strings

If you are looking for a sponsor for your children's summer fete — beware!

Last summer, residents and parents organised a local community Fun-day for children in Tower Gardens, north London and were promised a £500 donation from the local McDonald's. But, according to the local newsletter *Haringey Community Action*, the money came with strings attached:



- The two performances by Ronald McDonald were used to promote company products;

- The marquee, hired by the local playscheme for £250, was taken over to promote McDonald's materials, while local children ran stalls in the rain;

- Parents who raised concerns were followed by company reps and asked to leave.

- The Fun-day was widely advertised as a McDonald's event;

More details from Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474, London N8, tel 0181 802 9804.

Gene therapy

Express your anger, say the therapists. Hit a cushion. Scream.

And then, presumably, get on with your life as before. One angry old man is Professor Derek Burke, retired Vice Chancellor of the University of East Anglia, who got upset about Monsanto's genetically modified soya beans. Listen to this:

'Consumers do not see why they should lose their ability to choose whether to consume a product about which they may have concerns, simply to put money into the pockets of farmers and a company... It is extremely unfortunate that Monsanto has taken an aggressive approach, largely ignoring consumer concerns.' Strong words, expressed at the annual meeting of the Scottish Society for Crop Research last May.

Presumably the good professor feels that the government has not done enough to ensure that genetically modified food is properly labelled, so that consumers can make a choice. He must be furious that the government's Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) has repeatedly endorsed the view that GM food products are safe and that 'no special labelling requirements are necessary'.

Perhaps he should address his anger to ACNFP's chairman, a person whom our angry professor should know well. The chairman's name? Professor Derek Burke.

What can Boots the Chemist be up to? They take calories from us with one hand and give them back with another.

Their Shapers range of slimming products includes salad bowls for lunch-time calorie counters — with a free offer to take an ice-cream for no extra charge!

How well they know the psychology of slimming!

