The
# FOOD MAGAZINE
**Campaigning for safer, healthier food**

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# Nuts to the law!

## Loopholes in the law allow suppliers of contaminated nuts to avoid prosecution

Packages of nuts with levels of toxin 200 times the legal limit have been found on sale by food inspectors, but the suppliers cannot be prosecuted because of a legal loophole.

Tests by Suffolk County Council Trading Standards Officers (TSOs) found that six out of eighty retail samples of Brazil nuts, peanuts and pistachio nuts it analysed exceeded the maximum permitted limit for aflatoxins (4ug/kg or 4 parts per billion). The worst case was a packet of nuts with 235 times the permitted level. Furthermore, a shipment of Nigerian groundnuts (peanuts) at Felixstowe Docks was found to be contaminated with aflatoxins 300 times above the legal limit. Yet it came with a certificate from a laboratory in Durban showing aflatoxin contamination to be below the legal limit.

Such certificates have prevented Suffolk Trading Standards from taking companies to court. The suppliers of the retail nuts were able to produce certificates showing that aflatoxin levels in the bulk consignments, from which the nuts had been packed, were within the legal limit. Suffolk TSOs say they cannot prosecute those supplying the nuts as the certificates establish an absolute defence within the eyes of the law.

Roger Hopkins, Head of Food and Agriculture with Suffolk Trading Standards Department, says their experience has revealed a number of loopholes in the law intended to prevent such products from reaching the public. 'These certificates may not be worth the paper they are written on. Certificates are open-ended and take no account of the time that could elapse and inappropriate storage conditions after the certificate is issued but before the product is eaten. Our findings also raise questions about the way in which the integrity and competence of testing laboratories is assessed.'

Aflatoxins are potent liver carcinogens yet for many years farm animals were afforded greater protection than humans. Not until 1992 were legal limits on the amounts that foodstuffs can contain introduced in the UK. An unintended consequence of this UK legislation is that some shipments may have been diverted to other European countries with less stringent or no limits and then re-imported into the UK without further tests.

Under 1992 EU harmonisation changes port health authorities have power to monitor routinely shipments which come via another EU country, only to examine certificates. A MAFF survey published in 1996 found that a quarter of the consignments of nuts and dried figs sampled at ports had higher levels of aflatoxins than permitted by UK law for human consumption.

Enforcement officers are welcoming new EU-wide legislation due to come into effect over the next two years. This lays down testing standards procedures and limits for aflatoxins, although there is regret that maximum permitted limits have been raised and the regulations do not provide any standards for certification nor the storage of produce once certificates have been issued. Port health officials fear that without further resources they will only meet the more demanding sampling regime by cutting the number of consignments tested. The Association of Port Health Authorities is calling for costs to be borne, not by the public purse, but by importers, as is the case for testing of food imports of animal origin.

## Fresh! Fresh! Fresh! — for two years!

Products emblazoned with the word 'fresh' may well be nothing of the sort.

A Food Commission survey of misleading labelling has found the word 'fresh' featuring on products with shelf lives of up to a year and in some cases up to two years.

At a time when nutritionists and health workers are encouraging us to eat less processed foods and more fresh foods, the companies making processed foods are fighting back — by calling their products fresh!

Preservation technologies allow old food to be sold months and even years after it is made, with colourings and flavourings added to make it look as attractive as its fresh rivals. These foods then compete with genuinely fresh products for our shopping basket. Putting the word 'fresh' on old products adds further to the deception.

In 1966 and again in 1980, government advisers warned against the misleading use of the word 'fresh' and called for tighter controls. How much longer should we wait?


See our Checkout feature on pages 9, 10 and 11.

THE FOOD COMMISSION
Publishers of The Food Magazine

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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

## Old tricks for the new millennium

As the mad cow crisis begins to wane, as British beef finds its way, legally, back onto continental dinnerplates, and new CJD cases fail to show a rising trend, the food industry is feeling a wave of relief.

It is back to business, back to the same old business as before with the same old tricks of the trade. Cut corners. Deceive your customers. Use quick technical fixes for any problems. And if you get into trouble blame someone else.

Corners are being cut, as we show in our front page story. Port authorities have been unable to test adequately foods entering Britain, while trading standards officers cannot prosecute the sellers of contaminated foods when those foods carry certificates, even if issued by some distant country whose testing procedures are unknown Certificates may even be falsified as they were in the case of the orange juice certified from Israel, though the quantity exceeded the amount Israel could possibly produce (see page 20).

Customers are being deceived. Deceptive words are used on packaging, as we show in the centre section on 'Fresh' labelling of food that can be up to two years old. And deceptive words are spoken by ministers, as we show with the new rules for labelling of genetically modified foods (see page 5).

Quick fixes for problems are still being promoted. The EU is promising to bring in harmonised regulations on irradiation of food — a quick fix for keeping food looking fresh for longer but which can be used to sterilise old or dirty food. Both food irradiation and genetic engineering are being hailed as the technical fix to feed the hungry millions of the next century.

And bucks are being passed whenever something goes wrong. As the BSE Inquiry is hearing, everyone from feed supplier to renderer, farmer to abattoir owner, claims to be free from blame. They all obeyed the rules while something went terribly wrong. The same will be said in the next few years about antibiotics used in animal feed while super-resistant bacteria gain ascendancy. And about genetic modification as it opens up paths for rogue DNA to jump species without constraint.

If BSE fades away, to become a curious episode in veterinary history, we will lose the best chance for real change since the anti-adulteration laws of the nineteenth century. The industry needs an overhaul. As the company directors tuck into their their beef, they should ask: how long before the next crisis looms?

# contents



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# Health claims: time to say no?

A joint initiative between consumer groups, statutory authorities and the food industry is set to issue a Code of Practice on the use of health claims later this summer. The Code, being drafted jointly by the non-governmental National Food Alliance and the industry Food and Drink Federation, is expected to call for tougher requirements for evidence to substantiate health claims and for a Code Administration Body to provide pre-market advice.

As regular readers of this magazine will know, we have been critical of many aspects of commercial labelling, and especially critical of claims that products can in any way protect or enhance health where the evidence is slim or absent.

Our report on functional foods (see *Food Magazine 33*) warned of the potential for misleading claims to encourage people to consume foods of no special nutritional merit (soft drinks, white bread, sweet cakes) because of some additional ingredient whose benefit was unproven. These marketing practices undermine the healthy eating messages of public health workers. We also complained to the Advertising Standards Authority about these practices, who upheld our complaints and issued a warning to manufacturers:

*'Care must be taken to avoid exploiting the public's lack of nutritional experience. 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)

Our examination of food supplement claims (see *Food Magazines 38* and *39*) also revealed a wide range of potentially misleading and possibly illegal claims for some products, and the need to regulate more strongly than at present.

The presence of a Code of Practice may appear to bring better regulation, but there are already existing codes for food supplements and for marketing baby milk substitutes which are widely flaunted by industry. Code monitoring bodies set up by the trade to monitor itself have been unable to prevent continued violation by manufacturers.

Last year, the government-appointed National Consumer Council found widespread misunderstanding and a lack of confidence in health claims on food labels, and concluded that such claims should be brought under strict control or possibly banned altogether.

In the Food Commission's response to the current Code of Practice draft paper, we have suggested that health claims are used for marketing purposes rather than consumer education, and that they tell only partial truths, rely on generalities which give a false impression about a specific product and make implications without adequate evidence. Such distortions undermine good nutrition education and the efforts by health workers to improve diets.

We propose a moratorium on health claims made for, or linked to, specific food products. We believe this could prevent a lot of unnecessary paperwork, regulations and bureaucracy. And, given that smaller companies cannot often afford the detailed clinical testing which may be necessary to substantiate a health claim for a product, a moratorium permits both small and large producers to compete on equal terms.

The international trade standards-setting body, CODEX, appears to agree. Their proposals for nutrition labelling rules stipulate that food producers should not make claims implying that a particular product can 'in and of itself' impart health. If, as we hope, this means that products should not bear labels implying that the consumption of that product has a health benefit, then this provides an excellent starting point for bringing health claims under control.

A hundred years ago, Dr Collis Browne's Chlorodyne could advertise itself as able to arrest diphtheria, act as a palliative for cancer and meningitis, and was 'the only specific for Cholera and Dysentery'. It took a lot of public health action to bring such misleading and (if you believed them) potentially fatal claims under control. What will it take to control the claims being made by food companies?


## Health claims: how far will they go?

Ribena's claim that their latest variety is kind to teeth (see *Food Magazine 42*) has split the dental profession following the British Dental Association's highly-publicised endorsement of the product. See page 6.

We also question the claims that Kellogg's new 'Healthwise' Bran Flakes are 'more nutritious' — see page 12.

Meanwhile Safeways supermarket happily describes a tuna sandwich with 4.5 grams of salt as a 'Healthy Choice' — see page 7.

# Food plastics rapped

A plastic used for microwave containers and to coat the inside of food cans has been found to reduce sperm production in male mice. The chemical, bisphenol A, which can mimic the female hormone, oestrogen, was fed to pregnant mice at concentrations equivalent to that of human exposure. The male offspring were found to have enlarged prostates and other abnormalities of the reproductive system. The researchers suggest that similar effects could occur in human foetuses if pregnant women consume bisphenol A from canned products or food heated in polycarbonate containers. The Food Commission is calling on the MAFF to review the use of bisphenol A in contact with foods.

■ Vom Saal et al, *Toxicology and Industrial Health, 14*, Nos 1/2, pp239-269, 1998.


*'Now, gentlemen. To start with, how many of us have ever been shopping?'*

# Gene food — the

**The EU rules on genetically modified organisms are an incoherent muddle, argues MEP policy adviser Steve Emmott.**

There are two main areas of legislation, relating to environmental and consumer issues respectively. Both are in disarray.

The **Deliberate Release Directive** (90/220) was published on 8 May 1990, has been amended twice, is still not fully implemented in all 15 Member States, and is currently in the process of a further major overhaul. Introduced by the Commission's Environment Directorate DGXI at a time when no gene foods were on the market, Section C dealing with commercial releases was poorly thought out. It was primarily an environmental protection measure dealing with releases of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into the environment and not a consumer or even a human health and safety measure. A marketing approval, once finally granted in any one Member State, becomes valid throughout the EU.

The procedure has proved to be tortuous to say the least. The first products to be approved for market release were Monsanto's soyabeans, PGS's rapeseed and Novartis' maize. In each case the approval process was protracted because member states exercised their rights to table objections. Denmark and Sweden in particular object on principle to the release of herbicide-resistant crops because they consider that there is insufficient evidence of the long-term consequences. They have been over-ruled on each occasion. The Novartis case had to be referred to the Council of Ministers (see comments on the regulatory process below). Four further approvals have just been given, three for various types of modified maize and one more for rapeseed — all again faced objections and had to run the full race. Another approval has been given, for a modified variety of chicory which is eaten raw in salads in Belgium and elsewhere. This would have been the first live GMO food on the market but at the last minute the application was changed to restrict it to seed production only — the food use is to come later. I understand that it is unlikely to be put on the approved list of varieties in the UK unless and until food use is granted.

Under Annex III of the Directive, it is left to the notifier to make proposals for packaging and labelling without any guidance as to what criteria should be applied. There is in any case an exemption under Article 11 so that if the notifier considers that there is no risk to human health or the environment, he can propose not to comply with Annex III. Since Article 4 imposes a general obligation to 'avoid adverse effects on human health and the environment' this was never likely to be a very meaningful set of rules.

Article 16 permits a Member State with concerns about risks to health or the environment to impose a temporary three-month ban on the use or sale of the GMO product within its territory. This applies as an interim measure after approval is given whilst their objections are re-examined by the Commission in Brussels. It was intended that such objections would be resolved quickly but this provision has been invoked by Austria and Luxembourg against the Novartis maize and for over 12 months the Commission has been unable to find enough support in its advisory committees to overturn the ban. That means that the decision ceases to be a technical or regulatory matter and becomes a political issue and has to be referred to the Council of Ministers. At a preliminary discussion on 16 June, not one member state minister spoke in favour of the Commission's position and at least five expressed sympathy with Austria and Luxembourg. France, the original applicant country, declined to speak. The Council, chaired by Michael Meacher, concluded that there was tacit support for the ban remaining in place. A final decision is to be made by 11 September, by which time the Council Presidency will have been passed from the UK to.....Austria!

Article 10 permits the marketing approval regulations of the directive to be sidestepped for products where there is other EU legislation which requires similar environmental risk assessment procedures. This is the so-called 'one door, one key' approach. It effectively strips out the marketing controls from 90/220. The only rule is that there should be a similar risk assessment procedure. It is not necessary to comply with any other provisions, such as the transparency clauses. Regulatory measures which have or will soon have their own risk assessment procedures include Novel Foods, Novel Animal Feeds, Seed Marketing, and Pesticides.

The **Novel Food Regulation** (258/97) came into force on 14 May 1997 across all Member States. It went through 14 redrafts and three Parliamentary Readings before becoming law and has been memorably described as 'a collection of loopholes'. Unlike the 90/220 directive, there are no provisions for publication of applications so we cannot find out directly what applications have been made. In theory, the only way the public will know of the marketing of a Novel Food is its appearance in the supermarket with a label (if it has one).

Incomprehensibly, the Commission has still not produced either guidelines or detailed labelling rules for this Regulation and critics have argued that it is unworkable in its present form. Instead of tackling this problem head-on, the Commission has chosen another route. To forestall criticisms that gene food products were already on the market which, for historical reasons, did not attract any obligatory labelling conditions when they were approved under 90/220, the Commission has introduced Regulation 1139/98 which comes into force on 1 September 1998. This sets out the criteria for labelling foodstuffs produced from two specific products—Monsanto soya and Novartis maize. It is widely assumed that these criteria will later be applied to all novel foods although they fail to reflect all the requirements of the Novel Food Regulation. The provisions of 1139/98 are discussed below.

## The regulatory processes

The approval process for any given gene food product under 90/220 to which there have been objections involves an almost impossibly complex procedure. The Novartis case gives a good example of this. The maize is three-way engineered to be herbicide and antibiotic-resistant and with an inbuilt insect toxin. The application was made in France and approved under the previous French government. Various countries objected, including the UK who were worried about the antibiotic-resistance question. The Commission proposed to approve it but needed the support of the advisory committee comprised of member states' national experts.

This committee couldn't agree so the Commission was forced to refer the proposed approval to the Council of Ministers. They needed a unanimous vote to reject or amend the Commission's submission, and in the event 13 out of 15 ministers said they would vote against, France would vote in favour and Germany would abstain. The Commission withdrew the proposal and no vote was taken.

However, the rules say that if the Council doesn't reach a decision within three months, they lose their rights and the power to decide reverts to the Commission. Surprise, surprise — the Commission kept it off the table for the rest of the three month period and then approved it. That is not how democratic decision making should work. The story doesn't end there because the final consent order still had to be given by France, who had by now changed government and were opposed. Eventually and reluctantly, consent was given for importation. It still

# legislative mess

## MAFF's porkies

*'Consumer choice wins on genetically modified foods'* trumpeted MAFF's press release in May as new rules on the labelling of GM foods emerged from Brussels after much heated and drawn out debate. *'All food products containing genetically modified (GM) soya and maize are to be clearly labelled, following a new agreement between European member states'*, it opens, followed by Agriculture Minister Jack Cunningham announcing *'This change to European labelling rules will give consumers the ability to choose whether they eat genetically modified foods or not'.*

Sorry, Dr Cunningham. You are wrong. The new rules to emerge from Brussels will in fact mean that up to 90% of foods containing ingredients from GM sources will not be labelled. The EU Directive is shot through with labelling loopholes.

### A collection of loopholes

- The new rules apply only to Monsanto's GM soya and Novartis GM maize – not to any other GM foods or other GM soya or GM maize that may be in the pipeline.
- Only ingredients where 'protein or DNA resulting from genetical modication is present' need to be labelled. And there will be a *de minimis* threshold which means if the protein or DNA is there but only in small amounts (3% is being talked about) it won't need to be labelled. For example soya protein and soya flour ingredients will be labelled but soya oil (often called simply vegetable oil) and refined starches will not.
- Additives (such as the commonly used emulsifier, lecithin) flavourings, extraction solvents and processing aids such as enzymes are specifically excluded from the labelling scheme.
- Food sold in restaurants and take aways may also be exempt from labelling – MAFF has not clarified this yet.
- Meat produced from animals fed GM foods, such as the soy-cake remaining from soy oil extraction will not be labelled, despite evidence that modified DNA can cross the gut wall and enter spleen, liver and white blood cells.

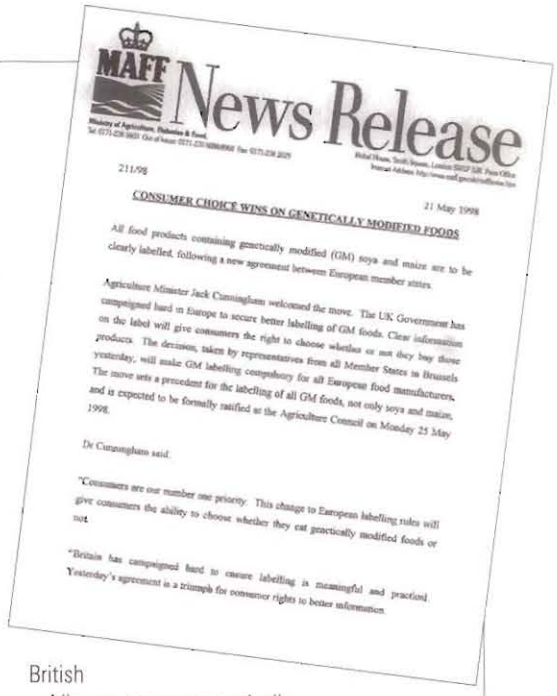
### What the rules say

- labelling will be based on testing at the end of the chain;
- testing will be based on the presence of modified protein or modified DNA ;
- the list of ingredients will indicate '*produced from genetically modified...';
- there will be no 'may contain...' labelling.

### Shoppers reject gene food

A MORI poll for GeneWatch published in June found that more than three-quarters of the British public want to see genetically modified crops banned until the impact of the new science is fully assessed. Futhermore 61% say they do not want to eat genetically modified foods. Tough. Despite Jack Cunningham's promises, for the vast majority of foods you won't be able to tell.

■ For further information: GeneWatch Tel/Fax: 01298 871558, e-mail: gene.watch@dial.pipex.com



MAFF News Release

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food

211/98

21 May 1998

CONSUMER CHOICE WINS ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

All food products containing genetically modified (GM) soya and maize are to be clearly labelled, following a new agreement between European member states.

Agriculture Minister Jack Cunningham welcomed the move. The UK Government has campaigned hard in Europe to secure better labelling of GM foods. Clear information on the label will give consumers the right to choose whether or not they buy these products. The decision, taken by representatives from all Member States in Brussels yesterday, will make GM labelling compulsory for all European food manufacturers. The move sets a precedent for the labelling of all GM foods, not only soya and maize, and is expected to be formally ratified at the Agriculture Council on Monday 25 May 1998.

Dr Cunningham said:

"Consumers are our number one priority. This change to European labelling rules will give consumers the ability to choose whether they eat genetically modified foods or not.

"Britain has campaigned hard to ensure labelling is meaningful and practical. Yesterday's agreement is a triumph for consumer rights to better information.

had to pass the final hurdle — to be cultivated in Europe it has to go on a national seed register (and ultimately the Community Varieties Register). It has not completed this journey. As noted earlier, the product remains banned in Austria and Luxembourg. It was also banned in Italy but this was revoked in the face of pressure from Brussels.

The same sort of bureaucratic problems have bedeviled the attempt to find a workable labelling regime for the soya and the maize. Again, the Commission was unable to get majority support in the advisory committee and again it had to be referred to the Council of Ministers. EU Industry Commissioner Martin Bangemann wanted a very limited regime, based solely on the presence of modified proteins detectable in the end product, with a 'may contain' label to validate mixed shipments of modified and conventional produce coming from the USA. Under the procedure described above, the Council vote needed to be unanimous if they wanted to change the Commission's proposal, but this time, the Council was more pro-active and produced its own, differing, set of rules (see box). Although the vote was not unanimous, the Commission appears to have learnt from the earlier experience and agreed to accept the majority view.

Now most consumers can't possibly be expected to follow all these intricacies. All they want is a simple answer to a simple question: 'Was it made using genetic engineering or not?' The regime emphatically will not deliver a clear and clean answer to that question. What consumers are likely to be faced with is a range of labels:

- It does contain GM material (as far as we can test for it);
- Possibly, it may contain GM material (meaning we haven't tested it);
- It does not contain GM material (meaning it was not detectable);
- No mention on the label (meaning it may have escaped through all the loopholes);
- Organic label (meaning what it says – made without the use of genetic engineering).

My view, and that of the Green MEPs and most consumer groups, is that such a system is looking at the problem from the wrong end of the microscope. A certificate of origin, issued at the beginning of the food supply chain identifying a food crop or product as having been genetically engineered would follow the item through the system and remove all these arbitrary testing problems and exclusions.

Consumer preferences are based on a healthy intuition that the best thing to do with gene foods is to avoid them if you can. I salute that intuition and invite the food manufacturers and retailers to do the same.

■ Steve Emmott is Policy Advisor on Genetic Engineering to the Green Group of the European Parliament. Contact him via tel/fax 00 32 2 284 2026 or e-mail semmott@europarl.eu.int

# Dentists split over Ribena accreditation

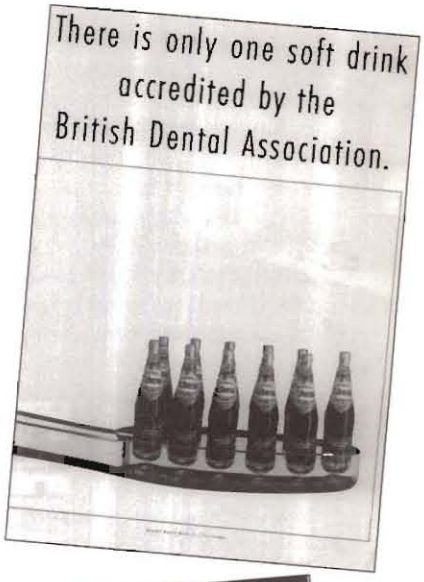
The move by the dentists' body, the British Dental Association (BDA), to endorse a soft drink calling itself 'Tooth Kind' has polarised opinion across the profession and led to outspoken editorials in the main dental journals.

An editorial in *The Dentist* expressed concern that the BDA had diluted the one simple message that dentists had been giving for decades, that sugary foods cause tooth decay. To endorse a soft drink on the basis of claims that it may cause less decay is, they suggested, equivalent to the idea of the British Medical Association 'accrediting a cigarette because it was low in tar and thus less carcinogenic'. The journal revealed that the members of the BDA's Representatives Board 'were kept totally in the dark' even though they, as company directors, are ultimately legally liable for the BDA's actions. The BDA's Council, which met just three weeks before the product launch, were also not told, said *The Dentist*.

A second dental journal, *The GDP*, expressed concern that 'only one variety of Ribena has been accredited ... the public may not realise this and may think that all Ribena drinks are safe from tooth erosion or tooth decay.'

In contrast, the BDA's own newsletter wrote a stinging rebuke to our criticism of the BDA's action (see *Food Magazine 41*) suggesting that the data presented to the BDA would have been made available to us if we had asked (the same comment is made by Professor Rugg-Gunn, see below). But when the campaign group Action and Information on Sugars applied to see the data both the BDA and SmithKline Beecham refused to reveal it. Only several weeks after the April 8 launch of the product did the company reveal some of their material, at the BDA's Harrogate Conference on April 24th and at a press conference for professional journals on April 28th. To date, we understand that the data has not been published in a fully peer-reviewed scientific journal.

We also understand that there is an internationally recognised cariogenicity test for assessing Tooth-Friendly products, but that this procedure was not undertaken for the Ribena application.




## British Dental Association defends its position

Stung by the comments published in the last issue of the *Food Magazine*, the chairman of the BDA's Food and Drink Accreditation Panel, Professor Andrew Rugg-Gunn, wrote the following letter:

*As chairman of the panel of four scientists which advised the BDA that the claims made by Ribena Tooth Kind were scientifically supportable, I must comment on your May criticisms. If we were not providing an independent assessment then I'm not sure what I and my colleagues were doing when we examined a large dossier of research data from SmithKline Beecham.*

*This product's use of a calcium system to reduce erosive potential is new. The research will be reported in the* Journal of Dental Research *in the near future. In the meantime and while patents are pending, the science is confidential. The BDA's accreditation process enabled SmithKline Beecham to communicate a new benefit to the public in advance of publication.*

*The company also commissioned independent research which showed negligible cariogenic potential, using plaque pH tests. If your reporter had contacted SmithKline Beechem this data would have been made available. I would like to point out that while bovine milk is considered safe for teeth it contains about 4% sugars, but also protective factors against dental caries, principally calcium. Ribena Tooth Kind contains 0.7% sugars or less. It was very wrong to allege cariogenicity in the way that you did* without investigating the evidence. Tight deadlines are not a good enough excuse.*

*You criticise us for examining our own research. One member of the panel was involved in the erosion research, three were not. One other member was involved in the cariogenicity research, three were not. All research involvements were declared and we followed BDA rules for accreditation panels precisely. It would have been easy for us not to make a decision if there had been any reason to doubt the findings. We made unanimous decisions.*

*I urge you to look again at the arguments about Ribena Tooth Kind. Too many children still have high levels of decay. Erosion (a condition that was not mentioned in your report) is increasingly seen as a problem. By reformulating foods and drinks we could improve oral health but we need industry's help to do it.*

*It is disturbing that the Food Commission were so willing to accept Action and Information on Sugars' assertions uncritically, rather than seeking more information or getting comments from the panel which reviewed the evidence. It must also be disturbing for your dentist readers to see the* Food Magazine *spreading scares about non-sugar sweeteners, when they are such an important tool for us in the fight against caries. Aspartame and Acesulfame K are accepted as safe by MAFF. Ribena Tooth Kind is not aimed at children under 3 and will not be on sale amongst toddler or baby drinks.*

*It is worth trying new ways to prevent disease. We still think milk and water are the best drinks for children but we're realists and we'd rather industry offered choice, if the old cariogenic and erosive products can't be totally dislodged from supermarket shelves.*

* We did not allege cariogenicity. We cited sources raising doubts about the reliability of the evidence.


Quick to exploit their new-found dental approval, Ribena rushed through adverts showing toothbrushes with Ribena bottles, and dazzling white teeth on a child. This second advert was published in the British Dental Association's own house magazine, the *British Dental Journal*.

# Salt in our sandwiches

**Continuing our occasional features on how we are sold a high salt diet, Tania Serzedelo takes a look at the salt in our sarnies.**

Often portrayed as the healthier option when we want a take-away snack, sandwiches are a popular purchase among millions of working adults. Supermarkets have quickly realised that it is worth their while to invest in chill cabinets and quick-purchase checkouts, to catch the sandwich-eating shopper. Sandwiches are now big business, with more than three million being made, delivered and eaten every day.

But just how healthy are they? While we might expect a cheeseburger and fries to give us a fairly large dose of salt (in fact some 2.5 grams of salt, nearly half the recommended maximum daily intake) we expect a sandwich to be healthier.

Yet this was not the case. We examined the pre-packed sandwiches from leading high street retailers, and found many with 3 grams of salt in a pack, and some with over 4 grams. And it was not just the ham or bacon that boosted the salt — the ingredients lists show that there's salt in the bread, salt in the spread, salt in fillings like chicken or prawns, and salt in mayonnaise and other sauces.

We found very few sandwiches with less than a gram of salt in the pack. This may not be surprising, as the bread alone for most sandwiches will typically contain about half a gram of salt per slice. The only sandwiches we found with very low salt were in Tesco's Healthy Eating range.

If you are a regular sandwich eater and keen to watch your salt intake, you may need to look more carefully at the small print, and check the salt (or sodium) levels. And that's when you meet the next problem — not all the major supermarket chains bother to label their products with the sodium value. Neither Safeways nor Tesco declared the salt content of their main ranges (they did in their Healthy Choice/Healthy Eating ranges) and few of the high street independents gave salt levels or, indeed, any other nutrition information.


Over 4 grams of salt in this pack — and sold with a free bag of salted crisps!

Clear labelling of take-away foods including sandwiches, with full nutritional disclosure of salt, fat and calories, is an urgent priority. If the sandwich-makers were obliged to declare the salt in big print they may start to change their methods — and switch to low-salt versions and healthier ingredients.

Over 4 grams of salt in this pack and labelled 'Healthy Choice'.

## It gets this bad...

We went shopping for sandwiches in the high street. We found several with very high levels of salt and very few we considered to be 'low in salt'. One gram of sodium is equivalent to 2.5 grams of salt.

| Supermarket | Sandwich | Price | Sodium per pack |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Most salty*** | | | |
| Marks & Spencers | Smoked Ham (large) | £1.29 | 1.54g |
| | Chicken & Sweetcorn | £1.59 | 1.42g |
| Safeway | Sodium levels declared on very few products | | |
| | Healthy Choice Tuna | £1.11 | 1.8g |
| | Healthy Choice Chicken Salad | £1.49 | 1.7g |
| Tesco | Sodium levels declared on very few products | | |
| Sainsbury | Bacon, Lettuce & Tomato | £1.55 | 1.3g |
| | Tuna & Cucumber | £1.55 | 1.3g |
| Boots | Egg & Bacon | £1.55 | 1.4g |
| | Sausage, Egg & Bacon | £1.79 | 1.8g |
| Superdrug | Egg & Cress | 89p | 1.2g |
| | Ham & Cheddar | 79p | 1.1g |
| Waitrose | Egg & Bacon | £1.65 | 1.4g |
| | Smoked Ham & Tomato | £1.29 | 1.4g |

## But it needn't be...

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Least salty*** | | | |
| Tesco | Healthy Eating Pork & Stuffing | £1.45 | 0.3g |
| | Healthy Eating Egg Salad | £1.09 | 0.2g |

NB Formulations are subject to change. Our samples were checked in mid-June 1998.

Men should aim for a daily maximum of 2.5 grams sodium (about 7g salt) and women for 2 grams sodium (5g salt) unless performing very sweat-inducing work. This compares with the UK current average of over 9 grams of salt per adult per day.

# BST: new calls to keep the moratorium

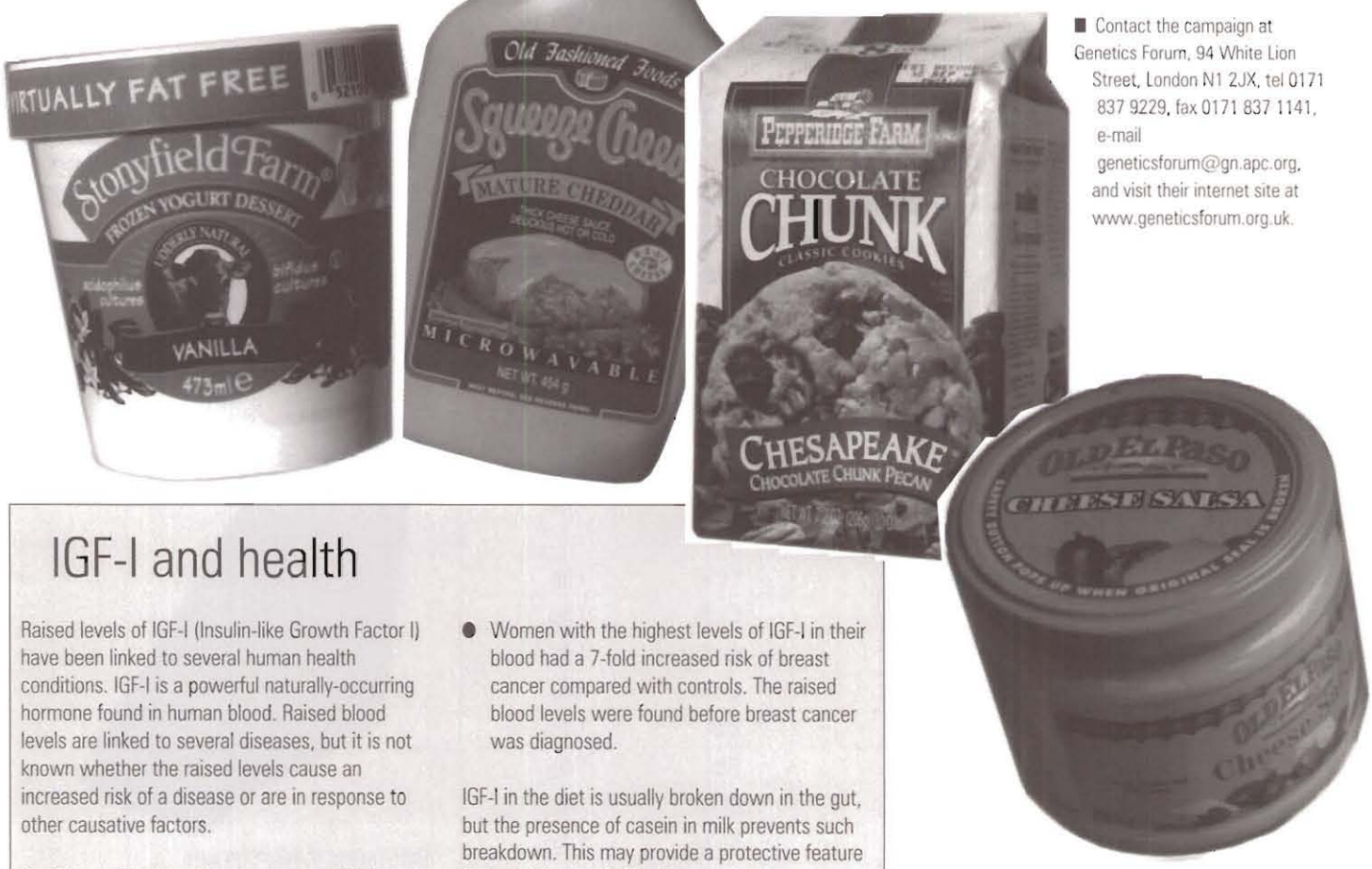
Ten years after the then London Food Commission published its ground-breaking report *BST – A Product in Search of a Market* on the newly developed milk-boosting hormone Bovine Somatotropin (BST), a new campaign on BST is being co-ordinated by the group Genetics Forum.

The EU moratorium on BST introduced in 1991 in response to consumer and dairy industry concern over animal welfare and human health issues was extended in 1993 until the end of the century. With the possibility that BST may be licensed ready for use at the end of 1999, the campaign is focusing on lobbying the national, EU and CODEX committees and on generating publicity about the possible health and welfare issues.

BST is manufactured in the USA by Monsanto, but outside North America Monsanto has handed over BST licensing rights to Eli Lilly. The drug is being produced at a factory in Austria, and it is thought that Eli Lilly may start production at its factory in Merseyside, reportedly built with EU grant assistance.

The drug was among the first commercial products to be made using genetic engineering, using modified bacteria to make large quantities of cow's growth hormone which, when injected into a cow, increases milk yield but at the cost of udder infections, enlarged hocks, lesions in the knees, ovarian cysts and an overall increase in the need for medication including antibiotics. The milk produced using BST has raised levels of the hormone IGF-I which in turn has been linked to a range of human health problems (see box).

■ Contact the campaign at Genetics Forum, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 2JX, tel 0171 837 9229, fax 0171 837 1141, e-mail geneticsforum@gn.apc.org, and visit their internet site at www.geneticsforum.org.uk.




## IGF-I and health

Raised levels of IGF-I (Insulin-like Growth Factor I) have been linked to several human health conditions. IGF-I is a powerful naturally-occurring hormone found in human blood. Raised blood levels are linked to several diseases, but it is not known whether the raised levels cause an increased risk of a disease or are in response to other causative factors.

- Colon epithelial cells grow more rapidly in response to IGF-I and elevated serum IGF-I levels are associated with an increased risk of colon cancer and pre-cancerous colon polyps.
- Men with the highest levels of IGF-I in their blood showed a four-fold increased risk of prostate cancer.
- Women with the highest levels of IGF-I in their blood had a 7-fold increased risk of breast cancer compared with controls. The raised blood levels were found before breast cancer was diagnosed.

IGF-I in the diet is usually broken down in the gut, but the presence of casein in milk prevents such breakdown. This may provide a protective feature for breastfeeding babies but may lead to unnecessarily raised blood levels of IGF-I in adults.

*Sources: 'Potential Public Health Impacts of rBST in Dairy production', Mike Hansen, Consumer Policy Institute, New York, 1998; 'Breast Cancer, rBGH and Milk', Peter Montague, Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly, Maryland, 1998.*

Use of BST is banned in the EU but permitted in the USA. When we went shopping we found numerous American imports with dairy ingredients. Which ones may have been made with BST-boosted milk?

# CHECKOUT

**We are all encouraged to eat more fresh food — but just how fresh is fresh? Checkout investigates.**

# How fresh is fresh?


'Fresh Fruit' promises Marks & Spencer marmalade, with a year's shelf life.

Cut back on processed foods and go for fresh fruit and vegetables is today's mantra of dietary advice. The same mantra is repeated among green activists, too, encouraging us to buy local food and less over-packaged products transported over thousands of 'food miles'.

In centuries past, when food was stored to last the lean winter months, effective processing and preservation methods meant the difference between plenty and want. In our modern age of abundance and all-year-round supply there is less need for the processing and preservation technologies — except for one thing. These technologies make the companies more money. Processing adds to the profit margins, while preservation increases the shelf-life. There is less money to be made selling fresh, unprocessed foods with short shelf-lives.

There is a whole range of technologies which can help disguise the age of our food. Chemical preservatives enhance a product's shelf life, while colourings, flavourings and other cosmetic additives are legally employed to deceive us by making processed food seem as colourful and flavourful as fresh. Packaging, labelling and advertising finish off the process, exhorting us to pick up processed products rather than fresh ones.

Even chilling and freezing techniques — perhaps the least damaging nutritionally — are used increasingly to preserve processed products rather than freshly harvested food. Low-oxygen, low-temperature storage conditions can stop apples and other fruit from rotting for many months — but the vitamin levels will fall and many will say that the taste will decline, too.

Once upon a time, as food lost its nutrients it lost its youthful looks, too. Stale-looking food, food that smelled 'off', or food growing mould, were easily understood signs that the food was no longer of such good nutritional value. Nowadays, manufacturers can ensure that the food remains fresh-looking, doesn't smell bad and doesn't grow mould. They can even introduce a selection of extra factory-made nutrients into the recipe. Waxes on fruit keep up appearances and make fungicides difficult to wash off, while irradiation promises us food that 'doesn't go off'. And now genetic engineering is producing tomatoes that don't go squidgy and slower ripening fruit.

But when it comes to fresh, as consumers we want the genuine article, not mutton dressed as lamb. We'd like to see:

- Supermarkets offering more genuinely 'fresh' locally produced foods;
- More support for farmers' markets and the supply of fresh foods to food 'deserts' where access is currently poor;
- Rehabilitation of the local allotment schemes, and more use of communal land for crops, especially in city areas;
- Stricter controls on the use of food additive 'cosmetics' and other techniques for making old food look like fresh;
- A code of practice on the use of the word 'fresh' on food labels so that Trading Standards Officers can stop its misuse.

## What the date codes mean

Just for the record, the following rules apply:

- Most pre-packaged food should bear a 'best before' date. This is the date up to and including which the food will retain its optimum condition (e.g. it will not be stale).
- The 'best before' date must be replaced with a 'use by' date in the case of foods 'which, from the microbiological point of view, are highly perishable and are therefore likely after a short period to constitute an immediate danger to human health' (MAFF guidance notes). The decision about which sort of date to use is the responsibility of the company labelling the food.
- Shops may also use 'display until' for fresh produce which does not require a 'best before' or 'use by' date.

*OUR TIP: When selecting your food, check the dates carefully and buy the food with the 'best before' or 'use by' date furthest into the future, as that is the food most recently packed and therefore freshest.*

The Trading Standards co-ordinating body LACOTS has recently condemned the use of 'fresh' in the case of bread which has been part-baked some time prior to sale, and is then 'baked off' to be sold as freshly baked in the shop or supermarkets.

# Fresh – for two

**Manufacturers of processed and packaged foods will cash in on any vogue word they can. Currently we are urged to eat more fresh foods — so what do the manufacturers of processed foods want us to think? That their food is fresh, of course!**


Pasta: *'Fresh Egg Pasta' from Marks and Spencers, best before May 2000.*

The inappropriate use of the word 'fresh' on food labels has been repeatedly condemned by MAFF's main expert advisory committees, first in 1966, again in 1980 and again, if indirectly, in their 1990 report*. In 1966 the advisers recommended better controls over words including 'fresh' which were poorly defined and could easily mislead. In 1980 this recommendation was repeated, with the advisers stating that words such as 'fresh' should, if they could not be properly defined in regulations, at least be the subject of a Code of Practice. And again, in 1990, the reconstituted committee returned to the question of poorly defined and potentially misleading words, and said they should not be used unless accompanied by further explanation.

Nothing was done at the time, and nothing has been done since. Although manufacturers have improved their use of the words 'natural' and 'pure', the word 'fresh' — as we show on this page — is still subject to much abuse.

The dictionary defines the word 'fresh' as meaning 'newly made' and 'not preserved'. But we found foods that stretch this definition beyond credibility. We found processed foods such as margarine and ice cream with a shelf life of several months claiming to be 'fresh'. 'Fresh sandwiches' sold through some supermarkets may be up to 72 hours old and we even found 'fresh egg pasta' with a shelf life of two years!

It is clear from these examples that the word 'fresh' can easily mislead shoppers. It is time the government paid more attention to their advisers and started tightening up on rogue claims.

* MAFF Food Standards Committee, *Report on Claims and Misleading Descriptions,* HMSO, 1966; MAFF Food Standards Committee, *Second Report on Claims and Misleading Descriptions,* HMSO, 1980; MAFF Food Advisory Committee, *Report on its Review of Food Labelling and Advertising,* 1990, HMSO.


Ice cream: *The word 'fresh' is stated 16 times on this pack of ice cream with a two-year shelf life.*

## What are we teaching their tastebuds?

One of the most pervasive uses of old food is the feeding of babies. Although not described as fresh, we have seen packets of dehydrated food which are still considered at their best two years after manufacture, and tins and jars of baby food that are even older — some as old as three years. A baby born in the year 2000 may be given food that was packaged in 1997.

*Source: Food Commission and manufacturers' data*

| Product | Shelf-life |
|---|---|
| Cow & Gate jars | up to 3 years |
| Heinz jars and cans | up to 2 years |
| Milupa ready meals | up to 2 years |
| Organix packet meals | up to 2 years |
| Boots — all meals | up to 2 years |
| Cow & Gate packet meals | up to 21 months |
| Hipp jars | up to 13 months |
| Fresh Baby Food Co | 7 days |
| Homemade | fresh on demand |

# years!

Margarine: *Pact promised us 'Fresh & Delicious' spread when they relaunched their product last year.*


Copella Juice: *'Freshly pressed' claims this carton of juice with a one-year shelf life.*


Water carton: *'Fresh' is the largest word on this pack of water with a one-year shelf life.*


## How old is our food?

Listed below are some typical shelf-lives for a range of processed foods.

The real age of the food is likely to be much greater, however, as many of the ingredients which are assembled in to the final product may themselves have older shelf lives. A biscuit may have 3-month shelf-life, but it was made from fat with a six-month life, sugar with a year's life, and flour with a six-month life but made from grain stored in EU silos for a year or more before that.

| Product | Company | Typical shelf-life |
|---|---|---|
| Mixed leaf salad (bag) | Marks & Spencers | 3 days |
| Bread | Sainsbury's Longer life bread | 5 days |
| Milk | Sainsburys | 6 days |
| Organic Milk | Nature's Choice | 7 days |
| Sliced ham | Sainsbury's | 2 weeks |
| Eggs | Sainsbury's | 16 days |
| Yoghurt | Muller bio-yoghurt | 4 weeks |
| Crisps | Walkers | 8 weeks |
| Jam Tarts | Safeway Saver | 10 weeks |
| Jamaica Ginger Cake | McVities | 12 weeks |
| Margarine | Flora | 3 months |
| Fairy Cakes | Cottage Bakeries | 17 weeks |
| Digestive Biscuits | McVities | 6 months |
| Mayonnaise | Hellmans | 9 months |
| Mashed potatoes | Sainsbury's | 11 months |
| Orange juice | Del Monte | 11 months |
| Chocolate | Nestle milky Bar buttons | 1 year |
| Special K | Kellogg's | 1 year |
| Orange fruit barley drink | Robinsons | 1 year |
| Chicken Nuggets | Iceland | 1 year 1 month |
| Stoned prunes | Sunsweet | 1 year 2 months |
| Mustard | French America's favourite | 1 year 3 months |
| Fish Fingers | Birds Eye | 1 year 5 months |
| Frozen King Prawns | Ocean Pearl | 1 year 4 months |
| Marmite | Marmite | 1 year 5 months |
| Yeast pate with mushroom | Vessen | 1 year 5 months |
| Acacia honey | Sainsbury's | 1 year 5 months |
| Ketchup | Heinz | 1 year 6 months |
| Canadian spring water | Naya | 1 year 6 months |
| Frozen beans | Iceland | 1 year 6 months |
| Vol-au-vents | Jus-rol | 1 year 10 months |
| Chicken soup | Heinz | 2 years |
| Cream of tomato soup | Sainsbury's | 2 years |
| Raspberry jam | Duerrs | 2 years |
| Beef & Kidney Pie (can) | Smedleys | 2yrs 9 months |
| Chicken & Ham Paste | Princes | 3 years |
| Ice cream | Mars 4-pack | 3 years |
| Tahini | Mezap | 3 years |
| Processed peas | Farrow's | 3 years 8 months |
| Tuna in oil (can) | Princes | 4 years |
| Mixed bean salad (can) | Sainsbury's | 4 years |

■ Products, formulations and shelf-lives may change. Source: Food Commission and manufacturers' data.

# Loopy labels

**Our latest batch of batty buys and potty products — with thanks to eagle-eyed readers.**



## Branwise

'New Name More Nutritious' claims the latest pack of Kellogg's Bran Flakes, now to be known as Kellogg's Healthwise Bran Flakes.

You may not be impressed with the new name, but you will be even less impressed by the 'more nutritious' claim. Both the ingredients list and the nutritional declarations made on both packs are the same!

We asked Kellogg's what was going on. They referred us to their public relations company.

There we found someone called Louise who admitted that Kellogg's had goofed. The company *did* change the formulation of their product sometime in 1997, she said, but they hadn't introduced the new Healthwise packaging and its nutritional claims until this year. Hmmmm...

We looked back at old data and found that Kellogg's may have increased the vitamin fortification a bit, but the salt and sugar levels of Bran Flakes are virtually the same as they were two years ago. Furthermore, compared with both Tesco and Sainsbury bran flakes, Kellogg's version contains 12% more salt and nearly 30% more sugar! And the supermarket versions have even higher levels of most vitamins and minerals.

'Healthwise' means looking at the small print, not the big. Wealthwise, try the cheaper brands.

## Stuffed olive


Lots of olives featuring on the label of this bottle of oil from Greece, bought from a small delicatessen in North London in an area renowned for authentic Greek and Cypriot products.

Pity about the ingredients. The small print says there is some olive oil, but the main content is soya oil — 80% soya to 20% olive oil. It's a poor deal, we feel, especially as the Greeks have massive surpluses of olive oil and grow little if any soya. Perhaps that's why they couldn't find a picture of a soya bean for the label!

## Lemon-aid

Shandy is, of course, a blend of beer and lemonade, or so our dictionary says. The front of the can boasts that it contains real beer. Not much, mind, at 11%. But what about the real lemonade?


Sadly, brewers Bass, like many soft drinks companies, use the word 'lemonade' as an excuse for some disappointing ingredients. The small print admits to no real lemon but, besides the beer, we find only water, sugar and a list of additives: flavourings, acidifiers, colourings, a preservative (benzoate) and artificial sweetener saccharin.

Another worthy tradition loses the battle against the food vandals.

## Drink miles


We are used to buying water shipped all the way from France, even from Italy. These are special mineral waters, after all.

Even the meaningless phrase 'Spring Water' may be shipped from afar — Marks & Spencers' comes from Eire, for instance.

But this water surely takes the award for 'Bottle Miles 1998'. It claims to be pure glacial spring water, and comes across the Atlantic from Canada. Not just Canada, but the far mountains of British Columbia. That's a good six thousand miles, and an awful long way for a glass of water.

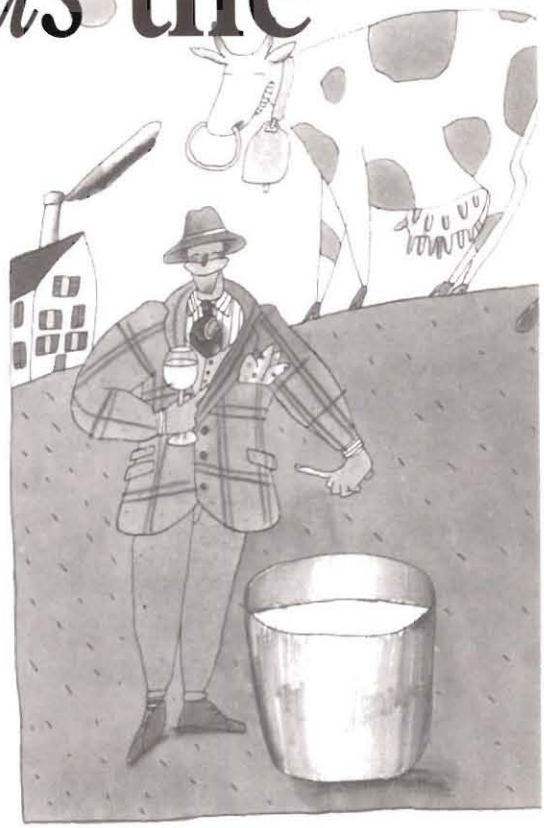
## Slimming water

Another drink of water — this one flavoured with mandarin.

This one is special – and it is certainly great news for slimmers. It's not just any old spring water but *Low Calorie* spring water!

# The farmer *versus* the middlemen

It isn't easy to be the first link of the food chain, with giant companies coming between you and the final consumer. Farmer Mike Hart bared his soul to us.



When the Food Commission invited me to write something from the 'other side' so to speak, panic set in — how do you explain farming with its diverse and many interconnected sides in terms that the consumer of its produce can understand the hows, whys and whats of farming at the present time?

First I better explain who or what I am. I am a small farmer [100 acres] farming in Cornwall near Mevagissy producing milk, lamb and beef. I am also called by the media a farming activist which really means I have a big mouth and am prepared to talk to others about farming which is why I am sitting here writing this.

So where do I start? Probably the best place would be on the problems facing the type of farm I believe most people would like to see their food come from — the smaller family farm rather than the large agri-business. However that agri-business is where your food is going to come from unless there is a considerable pressure brought to bear from both farmers and more importantly from consumers to help the smaller family farm survive the current problems.

The biggest of these is the value of the pound which has two affects: first it enables the supermarkets to buy more imported produce [regardless of welfare, environmental and food safety standards] for their pound and second to then use that to force down the price paid for British farm produce to be 'competitive' in the market place.

As a business I accept that I have to compete and farmers also accept that they have no control over the value of the pound and that we have in the past benefited from the pound being lower in value. However what I cannot accept is that the lower prices we farmers are receiving are not being reflected in lower prices for consumers whether that food is cheaper imports or cheaper British produce. Jointly, both of us, farmers and you as consumers, are increasing the profits of the supermarkets and others.

As an example I produce milk which 15 months ago I was getting 15 pence a pint for. I now get 9 pence for a pint but you are paying as much as you were 15 months ago. The 6 pence difference is going where?

This applies to all farm produce: beef, lamb, pork and vegetables. How does this lead to an increase in agri-businesses? Well, the lower the price paid to us as farmers and the nearer that gets to the cost of producing that product the more 'units' of the product we need to produce to make even a living, let alone a profit, to invest back into the farm or even my pension fund. But a point will be reached when you can no longer make a living on a smaller farm and so the larger farms will take over. As they will be profit-driven the number of 'units' sold will have to be at a maxim and given that the supermarkets only buy the perfect 'unit' it will of course mean pesticides to produce them.

For example, here in Cornwall we produce cauliflower. If Mr Caterpillar has had a mouthful, that cauliflower will be rejected along with the whole consignment even if all the rest are perfect. So what do you do? You spray to make sure Mr C does not get a look in and at the same time you provide the supermarket with what it wants — the perfect class one cauliflower which they in turn tell us you consumers demand of them. The smaller the difference between cost to produce and the sale price the bigger the number of units that farm will need to produce, so the larger the farm will need to be and the less labour it can afford. You will have one man looking after more and more animals and the conditions these animals will have to be kept in will need to be controlled and managed like we have abroad in the large beeflots, dairy farms with 1,000's of cows, and pigs units with 100,000's of pigs.

So before blaming us as farmers for the way we farm at the moment, look at the way we are forced into doing so by what you as consumers are prepared to pay for food and the way the middlemen demand only the perfect product on your behalf. I am not saying you should pay a high price for poor quality goods, but if you want food produced to high standards of welfare, in an environmentally friendly way and to high food safety standards then we can do it to those standards. But those standards have a cost and that has to be reflected in the price we receive. And I believe the farmers best placed to reach those standards are the smaller family farms.

How do we do this? By doing what I am doing here — explaining my side and then hopefully you can reply. Only by farmers talking direct to consumer groups rather than the people in the middle can we hopefully really produce food in the way you want us to.

I don't think for one minute we will always agree but we have to communicate or the only people to profit will be the supermarket groups.

■ *Michael Hart farms Lanuah Farm, St Ewe, St Austell, Cornwall.*

## Ben & Michael's summer roadshow

Michael Hart and his brother Ben are touring the South West region 'from the New Forest to Land's End' during the summer with a mobile exhibition promoting food, farming and nutrition to any member of the public they can attract.

'It is not a whinge wagon or a moan mobile,' said local NFU spokesman Ian Johnson. 'It's about farmers talking direct to their customers.'

'I know from my own experience talking to visitors in Cornwall that most don't have the faintest idea of what we do or how we do it,' added Mike Hart.

Details from Mike Hart on 01726 843210, mobile 07771 594237.

# Marketing messages shape p

**Price alone does not determine purchasing patterns. Other factors, including marketing strategies and health messages, are increasingly shaping the way we shop. Tim Lobstein reports.**

In the last issue of the *Food Magazine* ('Fats fail the test of theory', issue 41, pages 14-15) we looked at the influences on the purchase of fats and oils in the household food basket over the last few decades. Economics theory might have predicted that the fall in prices that occurred during the period would have led to a rise in consumption levels, but the facts told a different story: prices did not have a predictable impact upon purchases.

Prices have been consistently falling for over forty years, and so have the amounts purchased. Butter has given way to soft margarines, in a steady trend year on year even though the price advantage of margarines showed no year on year improvement. When lower fat spreads arrived they rapidly replaced margarine despite their higher price levels. And there has been a rapid shift from full fat milk to lower-fat milk despite no significant difference in price.

But if price has not dictated these changes, then what has? Two factors, among the many that shape our individual preferences and cultural needs, are *health messages* and *marketing messages*. When both forms of message are broadly acting together — as might be said for the promotion of low-fat spreads — then shoppers are likely to respond, even when this means they pay higher prices.

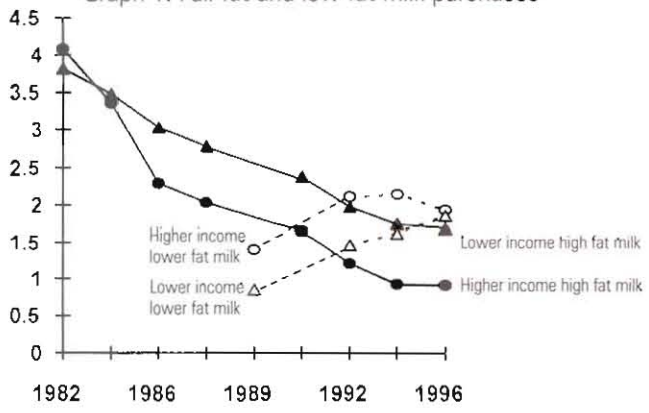
When the health message acts alone and without a significant contradiction from marketing messages — as might be said for the encouragement to drink reduced-fat milk — then the message appears to work, especially for those in higher-income brackets. A shift from full-fat to lower-fat milk has occurred for both higher and lower income groups, though perhaps more rapidly for higher income groups (see **graph 1**).

A similar pattern can be shown for fresh fruit, which is encouraged as part of healthy eating guidelines, and which has seen increasing purchases, but more pronounced for higher income households than for lower ones (see **graph 2**).

When marketing messages are not supported by health messages, and may even be contradicted by health messages, then the outcome is less certain, although the health message appears to maintain predominance. Attempts were made by the Butter Information Council in the early 1990s to promote butter and somewhat confuse the health messages (by focusing on the calorie levels in butter being the same as marge) in a campaign partly funded by tax payers through European Commission grants. The message was of questionable effect — as we showed in the last issue of the *Food Magazine*, there was an easing of the rapid decline in butter purchases that had been seen in the 1980s, but there was no reversal of the overall trend of falling butter purchasing.

Health messages have also played a part in changing our meat purchasing patterns. Red meat has given way to poultry, due both to the general message to avoid fattier meats and meat products and the specific health threat posed by BSE contamination of beef. The trend has continued for several decades for red meats generally, and especially for beef after the start of the BSE epidemic in the late 1980s (see

Graph 1: Full-fat and low-fat milk purchases




Source: MAFF National Food Surveys, HMSO

## Top-selling 25 food brands 1996/7

| | sales | advertising spend |
|---|---|---|
| Coca-Cola | £542m+ | £26.2m |
| Walkers crisps | £385m | £7.0m |
| Pepsi | £180m | £8.6m |
| Robinsons drinks | £160m | £3.3m |
| Kit Kat chocolate | £140m | £4.7m |
| Muller yoghurt | £135m | £5.0m |
| Ribena | £130m | £0.9m |
| Flora | £125m | £5.2m |
| Mars Bar | £120m | £1.4m |
| Heinz soup | £115m | £0.3m |
| Anchor butter | £115m | £5.3m |
| Lucozade | £105m | £7.0m |
| Tango | £100m | £6.6m |
| Cadbury's Dairy Milk | £100m | £0.3m |
| Kellogg's Corn Flakes | £95m | £11.7m |
| Heinz baked beans | £95m | £3.1m |
| Mr Kipling Cakes | £95m | £2.5m |
| Galaxy | £90m | £0.1m |
| Birds Eye Chicken | £90m | £8.2m |
| McCain frozen chips | £80m | £6.5m |
| Cadbury's Roses | £70m | £2.2m |
| Weetabix cereal | £70m | £11.2m |
| Hula Hoops | £70m | £3.4m |
| Pringles | £65m | £2.7m |
| Twix | £65m | £3.2m |

NB This list is derived from an analysis of the 50 top branded grocery products, which also includes 15 non-food products, 6 alcoholic drinks, two brands of tea and two of instant coffee.
*Source : Marketing, 03.07.1997*

# urchasing patterns

graph 3). Price alone cannot explain this shift, as the relative advantage of poultry over beef has not consistently improved year on year, and yet the change in consumption patterns has been consistently in one direction.

In the case of meat and butter, the impact of health messages appear to have overridden the attempts by the meat and dairy industries to promote their products. A strong health message (especially the BSE message) appears to be able to influence purchasing more effectively than a contrary, if relatively mild, marketing message can hope to do. On the other hand, we might expect that a strong marketing message backed by TV advertising and point of sale promotions, might be expected to override a health message, especially if the health message is relatively mild.

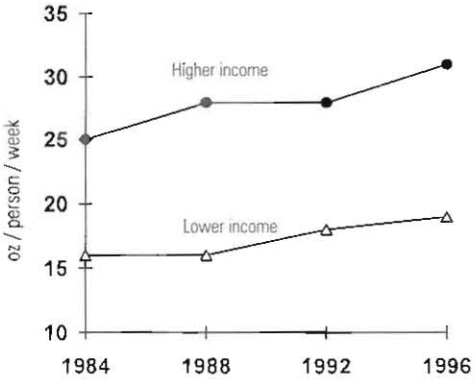
Of the 25 branded food products with the highest sales in the UK in 1996/7, six were soft drinks, six were chocolate brands and three were crisps (see table). These fifteen brands of drinks, chocolates and crisps were promoted with advertising budgets exceeding £77m, compared with a budget in the Health Education Authority for promoting better diets of less than one hundredth the amount (£0.5m for nutrition projects, £0.25m for campaigns such as folic acid awareness).

Strong promotion may be accompanied by increasing sales, even if the products are not ones encouraged in healthy eating campaigns. Chocolate, for example, has been heavily promoted throughout the 1980s and 1990s despite a contrary health message, albeit a mild one. As graph 4 shows, the result has been an increase in purchases of chocolate from a level that was already considered high by European standards (only the Swiss eat more than us). Soft drinks have also seen massive marketing budgets promoting their consumption, and their sales, too, have risen dramatically despite a mild negative health message. The same can be said for snacks such as crisps and other bag snacks.

The implication is that marketing messages and health messages can influence purchasing behaviour as effectively as can price, and that marketing messages may overcome health messages if the former are strongly presented and the latter are not.

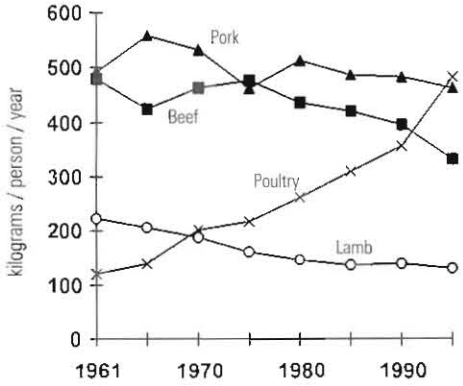
In order to ensure that health takes higher priority, health messages need to be strengthened relative to contrary marketing messages — either by increasing the budget for health education or restricting the activities of the relevant commercial interests.

Graph 2: Fresh fruit purchases



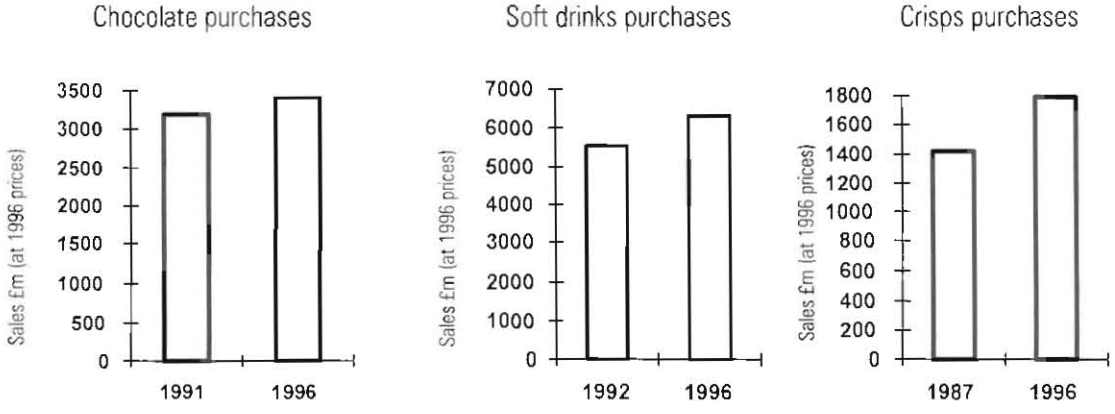

Source: MAFF National Food Surveys, HMSO

Graph 3: Meat consumption




Source: FAO Food Balance database

Graph 4: Rising sales of highly advertised foods




Source: Leatherhead Research Association and Key Note Market Reports 1997 &1998

# Nutrition starts young

Britain has the worst figures for underweight babies in Western Europe, and according to nutritionist Wendy Doyle the resulting disease and disability could be prevented. Marjon Willers reports.

Britain's record in reducing the incidence of underweight babies is not good. We have the highest rate among EU member states and rank alongside Albania and Romania in having one out of every 14 babies born with a weight below 2.5 kilograms. Our figures have remained unchanged for over 40 years.

Furthermore there is good evidence that low birthweight is linked to a greater risk of infant mortality, ill health in childhood, and increased risk of adult degenerative diseases. Low birthweight children need more hospital care, have higher rates of neurological problems, disability, poor attention span, lower academic achievement and more behavioural difficulties. They have more days off school because of illness and are greater users of the family doctor services.

As adults, babies born with lower birthweights are more likely to suffer cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and strokes, are more likely to become obese and to develop diabetes.

The nutritionist Wendy Doyle, researcher at the Mother and Child Foundation in East London, has spent over 15 years showing that these high costs of low birthweights are closely linked to the mother's nutritional status and her diet during pregnancy. In addition, there are clear class differences, shown in Doyle's exemplary studies[1] of the differences between the birth outcomes for mothers in Hampstead and mothers in Hackney.

'If there is a social class difference then we are dealing with an environmental variable,' says Doyle. 'And if it is an environmental variable — such as nutrition — then it is potentially preventable.'

Class and diet are closely linked: mothers on low incomes living in impoverished circumstances are less likely to be eating a healthy diet. But what can be done to intervene? Studies of dietary supplementation and nutrition counselling during pregnancy have shown that even by the end of the first trimester, just three months after conception, there may be little that can be done to influence outcome. The determinants of low birthweight are laid down prior to conception and in the first critical few weeks.

In one recent study[2] looking at the feasibility of pre-conceptual nutritional improvement among mothers in East London, women who had recently given birth to a low birthweight baby and who were planning a second baby were given intensive counselling over a period of six months including cookery demonstrations, menu planning, shopping advice, food label reading and discussions about family meals.

The results were disappointing. Some of those most in need of improved nutrition — teenage mothers, unemployed mothers — dropped out of the study. Of those that remained, there was some evidence that the nutrient density of the foods being chosen was better, but overall it was concluded that while the nutritional knowledge of the mothers had improved, the nutritional intake had not sufficiently improved. 'It is unlikely that we have influenced the biochemical measures,' says Doyle, 'and that would be essential if we expect to have an impact on birth outcome.'

The answer, she feels, is to look at the other factors that shape food choices, besides nutritional knowledge. 'I know East End mothers are more worried about paying their gas bills and not being evicted,' she says. 'They only eat because they are hungry.' The cost of food is one factor — nutrient-dense foods tend to cost more, she agrees — but there are also the dietary habits set up in childhood. Doyle's own study of schoolchildren in Hackney[3] found poor nutritional status among both boys and girls aged 12-13, and the girls in less affluent areas fared worst of all. It is these girls who are most likely to become poorly nourished mothers-to-be.

Even at the age of 12, she feels, it may be too late to make the changes needed. 'It is possible that eating habits are set by the age of six,' says Doyle. 'We must start good eating habits at nursery or primary school levels — and continually reinforce them throughout the educational years.'

1 W Doyle et al, Dietary survey during pregnancy in a low socio-economic group, *Journal of Human Nutrition, 36A*, 1982; and M Crawford, W Doyle *et al*, A comparison of food intakes during pregnancy and birthweight in high and low socio-economic groups, *Progress in Lipid Research, 25*, 1986.
2 W Doyle, 'Nutrition Intervention and Pregnancy Outcomes' lecture to the University of North London's Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition, 22 April 1998.
3 W Doyle *et al*, Nutritional status of schoolchildren in an inner city area, *Archives of Diseases in Childhood, 70*, 1994.

## Diet-free Green Paper


Despite the frequent references to inequalities in health and to the widening gaps between rich and poor in illness and death rates, the government's green paper makes few references to food or nutrition in its 90 pages.

The paper outlines only four targets for improving health: to reduce cardiovascular diseases among those aged under 65 by a third, to reduce accidents by a fifth, to reduce cancer rates in people aged under 65 by a fifth and to reduce suicide rates by a sixth. Diet is described briefly in a paragraph on 'lifestyle'.

As for nutrition during pregnancy (see report, left) the Food Commission noted how, in the early 1990s, a government discussion paper on *The Health of the Nation* referred to the importance of nutrition during and even before pregnancy, and how 'fetal and infant health is one of the main determinants of health in childhood and later in life.' This was to be welcomed, but a year later the final version of *The Health of the Nation* had dropped this key statement on health, and set no targets for improving pregnancy outcome.

Now it appears that the government has again avoided tackling a major cause of ill health. Apart from the HEA's folic acid campaign, now being wound up, there appear to be no plans for national projects aimed at improving pregnancy outcome.

■ *Our Healthier Nation - A Contract for Health.* ISBN 0-10-138522-6. Call 0171 873 0011 for details.

*"My government is proud of the many millions of pounds invested in ensuring British cattle receive the best nutrition during their reproduction and lactation cycles..."*



*"My government cannot possibly divert scarce resources to look at the food eaten by pregnant women..."*

# Is fruit for charities being dumped illegally?

Following the Food Commission's revelation that thousands of tons of fruit were being pulped for animal feed or ploughed into the ground rather than being offered to schools or to other eligible bodies (see *Food Magazine 39* and *40*), we have found that such actions may be illegal.

Under EC Regulation 2200/96, which became law from the beginning of 1997, fruit grower organisations are responsible for ensuring that withdrawn fruit is offered free to eligible charities and institutions (see box right) and to overseas countries as food aid. Free distribution of fruit should also be offered to schools.

In 1996, 18 million kilograms of apples, pears and cauliflowers were withdrawn from the market, but none of this was given to charities or schools for human consumption. The 1997 figures for withdrawn produce are even higher (see table below).

According to the UK Intervention Board, most of the 1997 produce went '50-50' to animal feed and for dumping. Yet the EC Regulation states that distribution for animal feed should apply 'secondarily', i.e. after attempts have been made to distribute the produce for human use. The Regulation also states that only when distribution for human, animal or industrial purposes *is impossible* should authorization be given for dumping.

Under the EC Regulation, Member States shall 'help to establish contacts between producer organizations and charitable organizations and other bodies which may be interested in using products withdrawn from the market...' This is the role of the UK Intervention Board. In December 1997 the Board told the Food Commission that they were preparing a leaflet and application form. When we rang them again at the end of June 1998 they said the leaflet and application form were still in preparation but should be ready 'in the next two weeks'.

If applications are not made soon, another year's-worth of fruit will be lost to charities and schools, and will be fed to pigs or ploughed into the ground instead.

## UK fruit and vegetables withdrawn in 1997

| | amount | to charities etc | remainder |
|---|---|---|---|
| apples | 40,000 kg | 3,000 kg | animal feed |
| pears | 2,260,000 kg | 0 kg | animal feed/dumped |
| cauliflowers | 19,809,000 kg | 0 kg | animal feed/dumped |
| stick beans | 60,000 kg | 0 kg | dumped |

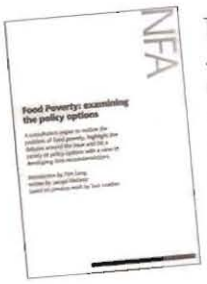
## Eligible for free fruit and veg?

According to EC Regulation 2200/96, the following are eligible to receive fruit and vegetables withdrawn from the market:

(a) charities assisting people on low incomes;
(b) penal institutions, children's holiday camps, hospitals and old people's homes, as long as the fruit and veg are in addition to their normal purchases;
(c) schools (fruit only) as long as the fruit is in addition to the regular meals services.

■ To be added to the Intervention Board's list of interested recipients of fruit and veg, contact the Board on (tel) 0118 958 3626 or (fax) 0118 959 7736.

# NFA outlines food poverty options




The National Food Alliance, an umbrella body for some 70 food and health-interested statutory and voluntary bodies, has published a 50-page discussion paper reviewing the problems faced by people with low incomes, and the policy options available for tackling these.

The core of the document is a 13-page table listing the strategies available at local and national level, the non-governmental organisations involved, and the authorities ultimately responsible.

The paper also considers the next steps that need to be taken. New techniques for enhancing participation in local projects are being explored (see Community Mapping right). A conference with the Local Government Association exploring strategic food poverty issues is planned for late 1998 or early 1999.

The document finishes with a listing of the key organisations involved and the contact people in each one, along with their particular interests.

■ Copies are avialiable price £4 (free to NFA members) from Jaqui Webster, NFA Food Poverty Project, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF, tel 0171 837 1228.

## Community Mapping

Based on participatory learning and action techniques developed by Oxfam overseas, community mapping is a technique for enhancing community involvment in local projects.

The purpose is to enable people to assess their own needs in relation to a range of issues, including health and food supplies. The method is to bring people together to create a physical representation — a map or series of maps, diagrams, models etc — of the local food economy. These might show shops, transport arrangements, markets, delivery schemes and the related food availability and choice through these different outlets. It might include meals-on-wheels, school meals services, cafes and pubs. And it might identify the needs of the community including their current dietary patterns, their needs and wishes, the special needs of older people, disabled people, those needing special diets or favouring particular cuisines.

The process of accumulating information is designed to lead to a greater awareness of local food security (or insecurity) and unmet needs. It should, too, provide greater confidence and skills for taking action to address the situation.

Several pilot studies are being tried in Leicester, Coventry and Brighton, and the World Health Organisation is considering initiating projects in two other European cities. Further details from the NFA Food Poverty Project, address above.

# Citizens demand their say

A novel experiment in citizens' democracy has been taking place with twelve citizens from the Brighton area deliberating the future of food. Over ten weekly meetings members of the 'Citizens' Jury' interrogated expert witnesses from academia, government and the food industry about the way our food is grown, processed, regulated and sold to consumers.

In their final verdict the Jury concluded that farming should move away from intensive methods towards low or zero use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers; that genetically modified foods are unnecessary and may have irreversible consequences; consumer groups should be represented on food regulatory authorities and supermarkets have too much control over the way food is distributed and sold. The project was co-ordinated by the University of East London with the support of the Consumers' Association, Sainsburys and the Genetics Forum

■ Copies of the Panel's report are available from the Genetics Forum Tel: 0171-837 9229.

# marketplace

### The Nursery Food Book 2nd edition

The newly revised 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.
Special offer – postage and packing free!
£12.99.

### Healthy Eating for Babies and Children

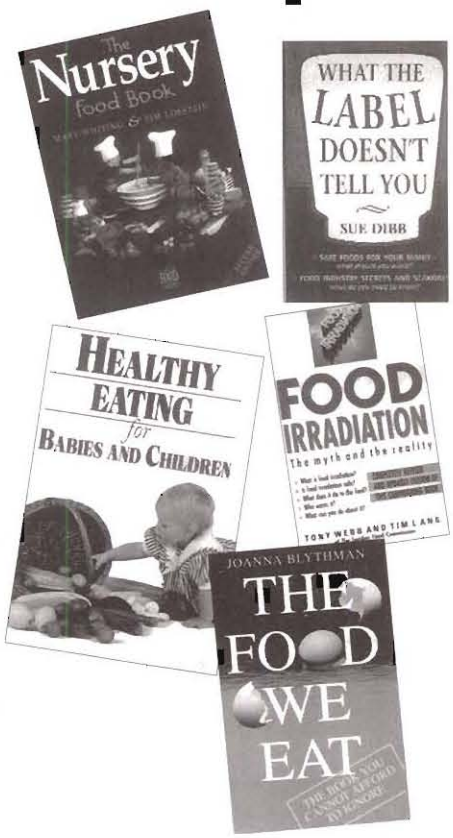
An authoritative yet down-to-earth guide giving you the information you need to feed your family. Includes over 60 pages of excellent recipes.
£6.99 inc p&p.

### 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.

### Food Irradiation

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




### What the Label Doesn't Tell You

Food labels will only tell you so much. This no-nonsense consumer's guide will help you through the maze of food marketing hype, government hush-ups and media scare stories.
Special offer – postage and packing free!
£6.99.

### 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.

### 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.

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# books/feedback

Keep on writing but please keep your letters short! You can fax us on 0171 837 1141


## The Shopper's Guide to Organic Food

Lynda Brown, Fourth Estate, 6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU, ISBN 1 85702 840 6, 1998, £7.99

A labour of love by the author who, with the support of Triodos Bank, has compiled a mass of information about types, brands, sources, suppliers and directories of organic foods and how to get them. Ms Brown can happily fill 22 pages with all you need to know on organic sugar, spices, tea and coffee, 9 pages on organic babyfood, and 32 pages on organic dairy products.

A 9-page list of local box schemes looks useful, though it misses out schemes in inner London, despite several currently running.

Lastly, the book generously points the reader towards other guides such as those from the Soil Association and Green Earth Books. Nice one, Lynda!

## Eat Your Genes


How genetically modified food is entering our diet. S Nottingham, Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, ISBN 1 85649 578 7, 1998, £11.95.

Full marks to Zed Books for a rapid production schedule, as this book was available in early June yet includes references to scientific papers as late as last November. And full marks, too, for as good an overview of the multiple problems that the new technology is spawning as one is likely to read all year. We found only one element missing from this excellent summary of the current state of play: the issue of terminator genes, i.e. the deliberate creation of seeds that will produce a crop that is infertile, preventing farmers from saving the next generation of seeds for their own use. Otherwise Farmers' Rights issues are well covered, including patenting and the risk to farmers of increasing dependence on single suppliers.

The author, Stephen Nottingham, is that useful combination of ex-research biologist and freelance writer, a mixture which should protect the reader from poorly-understood science on one hand and badly explained technology on the other. The only gripe we have is the price, expensive for a paperback of barely 200 pages.

## Food and Drink Statistics 1998


Euro PA & Associates, 11 Church Street, Northborough, Cambs PE6 9BN, ISBN 1 900017 05 9, 1998, £30 (UK) mail order (details tel: 01733 253006).

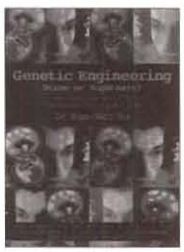
If you can't resist a tasty pie-chart, and love to linger over histograms, then you will salivate over the statistics in this book, an update to the publisher's 1995 guide to the food industry.

There are 223 pages, with usually two figures to the page. Most give information to 1996 and many to 1997. Sources are mostly from trade bodies and companies, which makes this book a good complement to data from government surveys.

There are occasional unnerving faults. The total number of chickens slaughtered in 1996 was 812 it says. Chickens Lib would be delighted if this were true!

## Genetic Engineering - Dream or Nightmare?

The brave new world of bad science and big business.
Dr Mae-Wan Ho, Gateway Books, The Hollies, Wellow, Bath BA2 8QJ, ISBN 1 85860 051 0, 1988, £9.95.




Mae-Wan Ho is an Open University research biologist with a mission. She is determined to warn all who will hear that we are tampering with a technology about which we know too little.

She offers abundant evidence for the ability of genes to replicate, spread and recombine, to be incorporated into bacteria and viruses and then transfer themselves to other organisms, and for artificially generated transgenes to work in unpredictable ways. Big business, in its search for quick returns, is hastily polluting the genetic environment in a way that is poorly controlled, little understood and utterly irreversible.

Even if you cannot follow all the science you will learn a lot about the nature of genes and their extraordinary urge to survive and adapt, and perhaps will join with the author in treating these molecules with the awe and respect they deserve.

Presumably the unit is millions of birds. Such errors aside, the book is a treasure-chest of information.

## The Grip of Death


A study of modern money, debt slavery and destructive economics. Michael Rowbotham, Jon Carpenter Publishing, 2 The Spendlove Centre, Charlbury, Oxon OX7 3PQ, ISBN 1 897766 40 8, 1998, £15 (details tel: 01689 870437).

Not a food book, but a wonderful rant against modern economic systems, taking a different route to the New Economics theories by focusing largely on the all-pervasive phenomenon of debt. With well over 90% of our money supply loaned into existence by commercial banks, we are forced to generate growth at least large enough to pay the interest. We must all dance to this tune of debt-servicing even if we are rich enough to own a bank ourselves.

If we are ever to enter the realm of New Economics where growth is not the imperative, then we must first socialise our credit systems, a process that may start with local non-growth credit arrangements and finish with nationalising the banks. A global challenge indeed!

## Fats and theories

Your correspondent Tim Lobstein needs to re-read his economic textbooks. 'Professors of classical economics will tell you ... if you put up your prices then people will buy less of a product...' I hope most would add the phrase *ceteris paribus* — all things being equal. Classical economics, contrary to Mr Lobstein's assertion, is perfectly capable of predicting consumer demand for food products. Other factors that are influencing the demand for fats include changes in people's tastes (fats are now considered 'bad foods') and the increased availability of substitutes which would go some way to explaining the fall in demand.

The aims of the Food Commission are very laudable. For too long we are being sold rubbish as food and I am pleased that a campaign for real food is gathering momentum. However, such misinformed nonsense helps the cause not at all.

J W Andrews, Southminster, Essex.

*Tim Lobstein replies: The thrust of the article is how other factors are affecting our choices, just as you say. My use of the word 'classical' was perhaps mistaken, but I would challenge any economist to make predictions about the outcome of the three competing forces — price, advertising and health concerns.*

## Apple appeal

What are the current government guidelines about eating apples — is it still recommended that non-organic apples should be peeled before eating?

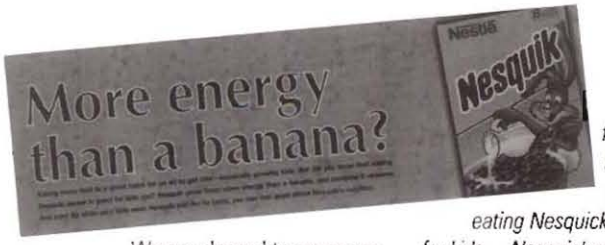
I think it would be a good idea to exert pressure on supermarkets to provide more information on these matters — ha, ha!

GD Bates, Totnes, Devon

*Editors reply: After finding pesticide residues on some individual apples (and peaches) the government recommended in 1997 that such fruit should be peeled before eating, especially for children. This advice has not been withdrawn.*

*Would supermarkets display 'Warning — Possible Insecticide Contamination — Peel Before Eating' on their non-organic produce? Never! There is also the problem of putting people off eating fruit and veg, setting back the cause of 'Five a Day' and increasing the risks of dietary disease.*

# backbites




We are pleased to announce the winner of the most outrageous food ad award for 1998, though the year is far from over.

Despite many thousands of taxpayer pounds being devoted to encouraging us all — and especially children — to increase our fruit intake, Nestlé's ad happily tells us that:

*'Eating more fruit is a great habit ... But did you know that eating Nesquick cereal is good for kids ... Nesquick gives them more energy than a banana, and contains 8 vitamins and iron! ... you can feel good about Nesquick's nutrition.'*

Not that good, thank you. Apart from the vitamin pill, the product is largely refined rice flour, corn flour, starch and sugar — 39% sugar! Plus a little hydrogenated fat for good measure.

## Caulifibre

**Problem 1:** As we report on page 17, some 30-40 million cauliflowers are grown in the UK simply to be withdrawn from the market and dumped or sent for animal feed. A regrettable waste of good food.
**Problem 2:** The daily diet of UK residents tends to be too rich in fats and lacking in vegetables and dietary fibre.
**Solution:** Put dried cauliflower in sausages and salami instead of fat!

The Institute of Food Research has been creating 'meat products, sauces and delicatessen foods ... prepared by substituting dehydrated cauliflower for food gums or fats during processing.' Tests showed that several meat products could benefit, but the best use was a bechamel sauce made extra thick and creamy thanks to the cauliflower, despite 'a retained cauliflower taste' which the taste panel rather liked.

## The origin of oranges

Certification of food products, as we show with our front page item on nuts, can be problematic as a means of ensuring reliable quality.

It can also be problematic for quantity. Take the case of the magic orange juice.

If you import orange juice from Brazil you have to pay 19% duty to the Customs and Excise. The same with Florida orange juice. But in the case of Israel we have a special deal to permit their orange juice entry to the EU duty-free.

It has gradually dawned on EC officials that a greater quantity of juice has been coming out of Israel than the country has fruit with which to make it. The problem has been publicised in the EU *Official Journal*, and UK Customs officers have warned that certificates of origin issued in Israel should not be taken at face value.


## Fish paste

Boasting 'fish oil without the after-taste' Coromar's Omega-3 'oral paste' comes in orange and choc-mint flavours. It says it will give us a daily ration of essential marine oils in a new and tasty form, without the risks of heavy metals, toxins and pollutants, it says in bold italics.

Only in the small print do we find what it actually does contain. After marine oil comes water, egg, vitamins, flavourings, two preservatives (sorbate, sodium benzoate), three artificial sweeteners (acesulfame K, cyclamate, saccharin) along with various gums and a colouring.

The benzoate and the sweeteners, especially cyclamate, are still the cause of some health concerns. Accordingly, we rather liked the last bit of small print: *'Keep out of reach of children'*.


Sharp-eyed readers may well spot the Radura symbol which is supposed to feature on irradiated food products on the logo of this worthy-sounding newsletter. Of course we all want to protect food, and the environment too, but do we really want to use food irradiation as a means of doing it?

The Newsletter comes from the 'Joint Food and Agriculture Organisation/International Atomic Energy Agency Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture' from the IAEA's address in Vienna. It marks another attempt by these global bodies to get us to swallow their quick-fix technology.

## Summer hazard

Hayfever sufferers may be offered terfenadine, a prescription-only medication which is considered safe when taken as recommended but 'serious disturbances of heart rhythm can occur when it is taken incorrectly'. Among other restrictions, terfenadine should not be taken with grapefruit juice.

Readers may recall our story in the last issue of the *Food Magazine* concerning the 'Enriched Citrus Beverage' Sunny Delight, a 'California Style' drink sold in containers like fresh juice, but containing remarkably little real fruit.

One of the fruit juices in the product, though, was grapefruit. Only the small print on the back would tell you this, so we asked the UK distributors Procter & Gamble whether they felt more warning should be given about the link to terfenadine.

'No,' they said. 'There's so little grapefruit in the product it couldn't be a danger.' We don't know how much grapefruit may set off heart arrhythmia, and we doubt if P&G do either, but it's nice they admit there's so little fruit in their sugar-laden drink.

## Ad complaints upheld

**Complaint** against Boots the chemist, for promoting Chroma Slim Weight Loss Plan which 'will help you lose weight while promoting a trimmer, firmer, leaner body...'
**Upheld** by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) which found that the evidence was not good enough to support the claims

**Complaint** against Goldshield Healthcare for promoting Prostate Plus, an 'everyday supplement for men'.
**Upheld** by the ASA. The company denied that the product explicitly claimed to treat prostate problems, but the ASA considered that the reference to the prostate in the advert and in the name of the product implied that the product could prevent or treat prostate problems.

**Complaint** against the New Covent Garden Soup Company for saying that their soup contained 'no preservatives or any other nasties'. The complaint was made by the additives manufacturers who did not like the phrase 'nasties'.
**Not upheld** by the ASA who considered the term acceptable as an opinion about additives held by the company.

**Complaint** against Van den Berghs, makers of Olivio spread, for their suggestion in an advert featuring Mediterranean diets, that eating Olivio instead of butter 'may add a few years to your life'.
**Upheld** by the ASA who told the company that they had not demonstrated that eating Olivio, even in place of butter, could extend life, and certainly not by years.