

The FOOD MAGAZINE

Campaigning for safer, healthier food

Published by The Food Commission

Issue 43 ♦ Oct/Dec 1998 ♦ £3.95

Not again!

Food company MD Foods is in trouble again for their misleading adverts.

MD Foods has withdrawn adverts for its Pact range of 'functional foods' following a complaint by the Food Commission. The Advertising Standards Authority is to carry out an investigation into the advertisements.

This is the third time that MD Foods has been brought before the ASA. The company have already been condemned for claiming that their Pact spread was good for the heart, and for claiming that their Gaiyo soya-yogurt could reduce cholesterol.

In the present case, the Food Commission complained that the advertisements, which appeared in the September issue of magazines including *BBC Good Food* and *Good Housekeeping*, misled readers about the nutritional benefits of the products, made an illegal medicinal claim and contravened a previous ruling by the ASA.

Having initially denied that there was anything wrong with its advertisements, MD Foods contacted the ASA within days of the Food Commission's complaint, to say that it was withdrawing the adverts. The company may have hoped that this would be the end of the matter but both the Food Commission and the ASA agreed that the complaint should be fully investigated and the ASA's findings made public.

Among the complaints made by the Food Commission is our concern at MD Foods' claim that folic acid added to a yogurt 'may help reduce the risk of heart disease'. Although folic acid supplementation is recommended before and during

Great for your heart.
Even when you've got two.

Withdrawn – one of a series of controversial ads for Pact.

the early stages of pregnancy to prevent neural tube defects such as spina bifida, the link

between folic acid and the prevention of heart disease is as yet unsubstantiated. This year the European Heart Network stated 'There is as yet insufficient evidence to recommend folic acid supplementation for CVD [cardiovascular disease] prevention'.

MD Foods' advertisements also made the claim that omega-3 added to Pact spread can 'reduce the risk of heart disease' and is 'great for your heart'. In making such a claim the company appears to have ignored a ruling by the ASA in 1996 on a previous advertisement for the same company's Pact spread, in which the ASA stated that MD Foods should 'avoid giving the impression that Pact could impart a coronary care benefit'.

The Health Claims Initiative jointly being drawn up by the National Food Alliance, the Food and Drink Federation and trading standards officers aims to curb misleading health claims by self-regulation rather than statutory regulation. However the Food Commission is concerned that, without the backing of the law, unscrupulous companies will continue to overstep the mark.

What does 'No Added Sugar' orange squash have in common with its regular counterpart?

More than you think!

See page 9.



Get the facts with the Food Magazine

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

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

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

Co-directors: Sue Dibb and Tim Lobstein
Information Officer: Mary Whiting
Research Officers: Marjon Willers, Kate Godden, Rachel Sutton, Charlotte Beecham.

Office & Subscriptions Manager: Ian Tokelove
Food Irradiation Campaign Officer: Martine Drake.

Editorial Advisors:

Joanna Blythman, Dr Eric Brunner
Tracey Clunies-Ross, Prof Michael Crawford, Derek Cooper, Alan Gear
Robin Jenkins, Prof Tim Lang
Suzi Leather, Dr Alan Long, Jeanette Longfield, Dr Erik Millstone, Dr Melanie Miller, Charlotte Mitchell
Dr Mike Nelson, Dr Mike Rayner,
Dr Aubrey Sheiham, Iona Lidington
Simon Wright.

Cartoons: Ben Nash.

■ Issue 43 of The Food Magazine - Oct / Dec 1998. ISSN 0953-5047.
■ Typesetting and design by Ian Tokelove of the Food Commission and Sarah Dobinson of Axiom Design, 185 Wardour Street, London W1V.
■ Printed by Spider Web, 14-20 Sussex Way, London N7 6RS. ■ Printed on recycled paper.
■ Retail distribution by Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN. ■ Unless otherwise indicated all items are the copyright © The Food Commission (UK) Ltd 1998 and are not to be reproduced without written permission. ■ The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Food Commission

The Food Commission (UK) Ltd
94 White Lion Street
London N1 9PF
Telephone: 0171 837 2250
Fax: 0171 837 1141

Farmers protest — but where is the FSA?

While farmers block bridges and get violent outside the Labour Party Conference, the government is furiously back-peddling over the one manifesto commitment which might bring a glimmer of hope.

British food products cannot compete against world food prices. The strong pound makes other countries relatively cheap, and our dominant supermarkets have spent a decade finding cheap substitutes for British produce.

It means long distance travelling for our food, adding enormously to the pollution caused by 'food miles'. It means more use of storage and shelf-life technologies such as fumigants, pesticides, excessive packaging and refrigeration methods — again adding to environmental costs.

And it may mean food produced under conditions which are not permitted in the UK, including poorer animal welfare standards and poorly-regulated spraying of crops and plantations.

Will local farmers go the same way as the steel industry, coal mining and shipbuilding? Is this what is meant by globalised free trade (to say nothing of supermarket profiteering)?

The one hope of 1998 was to have a strong body setting high standards for food production, a body which took on board the needs of consumers for food produced safely, healthily and sustainably. Defining what consumers need is one step towards helping farmers regain their markets.

Instead, after a six month delay, we are told it is highly unlikely that the Bill for a Food Standards Agency will be included in the Queen's Speech this November.

MAFF now says that the draft Bill and a document on the funding of the Agency will be published for consultation this autumn, but it is now virtually impossible for the Agency to be up and running by its promised launch date of 1 January 2000. Suspensions are mounting that the Agency will be weakened or lost altogether.

It is now two years since Professor James was drafting the proposals for the Agency, and ten months since the government issued the Food Standards White Paper — itself six months late. With the recent news that the Freedom of Information Bill is to be delayed until 2001, there are fears that the initial impetus will be lost and the Agency lost with it.

We urge readers to use their 'People Power' and write to Tony Blair asking him not to backtrack on his commitment to an Agency which would be powerful, open and dedicated to the needs of consumers.

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

If you are not a regular subscriber to the Food Magazine why not take out your own subscription and help support the Food Commission's work? We have been campaigning for the right to safe, wholesome food since 1988 and are completely independent, taking no subsidy from the government, the food industry or advertising. The Food Magazine is published four times a year.

Turn to page 12 for subscription details.

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

News

MD Foods adverts withdrawn	1
Tooth Kind Ribena fails tests	3
Baby soya milks	3
Activists Vs company law	3
Anti-lindane campaign	4
Lindane in baby foods	4
Fruit miles labelling	4
Unilever Vs Olestra	4
Intensive fish go organic?	5
Anti-methyl bromide labels	5
Milk-miles	5
Gene food news	6-7
Gene food cannot 'feed all'	6
New GM agency?	6
Full GM labelling demanded	6
ASA gets Monsanto complaints	7
GM genes cross gut wall	7
Veg Soc bans GMOs	7
Tesco promises full GM facts	7
Baby milk phytoestrogen levels	8
ASA complaints upheld	8

Checkout

Sweeteners and sugar	9
9 companies ignore the law	10-11

Marketplace 12

Viewpoint

Do we want a Land Stewardship Council?	13
--	----

Farm news

Agrochemicals in beef	14
Meat and bonemeal for pigs	14
Beef irradiation in USA	14
BST scientists muzzled	14
Cattle blood	14

BSE news

It's not over yet	15
200 nvCJD cases missed?	15
Why 30 months?	15

Society

Schoolkid junkies	16
Free fruit at last	16
Free beef goes	16
Older people get few vitamins	17
Green adventures	17
CWT under 5's report	17

Books & feedback

McDonald's	18
Play food	18
Manual 2000	19
Sustainable agriculture	19
Letters	19

Backbites 20

'Tooth Kind' Ribena fails Toothfriendly tests

Ribena Tooth Kind drink, controversially endorsed by the British Dental Association, has failed independent tests for being kind to teeth.

Dental erosion tests run at the University of Glasgow, and dental caries tests run by the 'gold standard' laboratories of the University of Zurich both showed Ribena Tooth Kind to fail.

SmithKline Beecham launched their low-sugar drink six months ago, on the back of the first endorsement ever given to a food product by the British Dental Association (BDA), the dentists' professional body. The BDA faced a barrage of criticism from members, health education workers and the dental press for undermining healthy eating messages and potentially confusing shoppers between regular Ribena and the 'Tooth Kind' version.

The two problems with soft drinks are their ability to raise the acidity of the plaque on the tooth's surface, raising the risk of dental decay (caries) and the ability of the same acid to soften the enamel of teeth, leading to it easily being eroded. The BDA's accreditation committee, chaired by the eminent Professor of Dentistry at Newcastle University, Andrew Rugg-Gunn, was presented with a dossier prepared by SmithKline Beecham which apparently showed the product to have 'reduced erosive potential' and 'negligible cariogenic potential' and on this basis gave approval to have the BDA's name featured on the product.

But subsequent tests run at the University of Glasgow found Ribena Tooth Kind to raise the risk of dental erosion because of its acidity. Although less acid than regular Ribena, the University found it was still sufficiently acid to have enamel-eroding properties.

At the same time, the campaigning group Action and Information on Sugars sent a sample of Ribena Tooth Kind to the Swiss laboratories responsible for issuing Toothfriendly accreditation. The product failed the tests.

BDA spokesperson Diana Scarrott dismissed the Swiss tests as inappropriate to soft drinks. However, the director of the testing laboratory, Dr Albert Bär, told the Food Commission that the Toothfriendly tests can be applied to soft drinks as it can for many other food products. It also appears that in 1995 another UK soft drink company had asked the BDA for their comments on putting a Toothfriendly logo on a soft drink and the BDA raised no concerns over the method or the results.

Dr Bär said that in his opinion Ribena Tooth Kind could not be considered to be friendly to teeth, both as a ready-to-drink beverage and after standardised neutralisation of the acid content. In either case, he said, the dental plaque acidity remains high for at least 30 minutes.

**Toothfriendly logo –
not for Ribena**



Baby soya milks: companies fail to act

Two years ago, after a report from its Committee on Toxicity, the Department of Health advised that soya infant formula should only be given to babies on the advice of a health professional.

At the same time MAFF's Food Advisory Committee asked companies to investigate reducing levels of phytoestrogens in the formulas. But the Food Commission has found that companies are failing to respond and have blocked direct enquiries.

In a survey of UK soya formula brands, including SMA, Cow & Gate and Mead Johnson, the Food Commission asked what action the manufacturers had taken to reduce levels.

Despite repeated requests, none of the companies responded directly although their trade association, the Infant and Dietetic Foods Association did send us a statement. The statement said:

'It is our understanding that companies have investigated the possibility of reducing the levels of phytoestrogens in soya infant formulas with their suppliers of the soya isolates — the raw material used in the manufacture of soya-based infant formulas. The suppliers

have advised that in reducing the phytoestrogen levels of soya isolates the nutritional quality of the protein raw material is likely to be affected.'

But the Food Commission believes that extraction chemistry is now so sophisticated that it should be possible to significantly reduce levels without damage to the protein quality. Ethanol washing, for example, has been shown to be effective in reducing phytoestrogen levels in some forms of soya.

However, it is likely that factors other than the technical limits of chemistry are also influencing the companies' response. Such extra processing may incur additional costs.

Furthermore, by eliminating the phytoestrogens, they may not wish to be seen to be acknowledging that there are concerns about the safety of these potential toxicants.

**New soya baby milk tests –
see page 8.**

Activists get Chile reminder

'How should businesses react to a new phenomenon: the growing pressures imposed by "civil society" groups on intergovernmental organizations and on businesses?' asks a document introducing a workshop led by the global head of McDonald's, Ray Cesca, along with the head of Shell UK, Philip Watts, in a Swiss Chamber of Commerce conference organised by the ex-head of Nestlé, Helmut Maucher in September.

How annoying these civil activists are. Libellous leaflets. Boycotts. Environmental campaigns and subversive internet sites. It continues: *'This is of particular*

concern when companies are called on to assume responsibilities which are more properly the domain of government.' Like what? Repress dissent, presumably!

This is no fringe conference, but a massive event with satellite links involving the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, the World Trade Organization's head, Renato Ruggiero, a World Bank vice chairman, the heads of OECD and UNCTAD, the head of INTERPOL, the chairs of Unilever and ICI, the current head of Nestlé and fifty other global suits.

It reflects a move by the 'public' agencies of the UN to forge greater

links with commercial corporations, in the name of globalisation.

Must public institutions become servants of global trade?

Who remains to challenge the power of the multinationals?

No-one, they hope. The document asks *'how can governments convince their electorates that globalization needs to be managed, not resisted? What is the role of business in this process of coming to terms with reality?'*

The conference was held 25 years to the month after the democratically-elected government of Chile was overthrown by a US business-supported military junta, and several thousand 'civil society' members rounded up, tortured and shot.

Congratulations to the Food Commission's Sue Dibb who has received a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship. Sue will be travelling to New Zealand and Australia this autumn to look at food safety and consumer protection issues and the role of consumer organisations in developing food policies.

Each year the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust provides 100 awards to individuals to acquire knowledge and experience abroad. Categories for next year's awards include projects in the field of animal welfare, community health, low energy living, the countryside and the future of rural communities. Details from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 15 Queen's Gate Terrace, London SW7 5PR Tel: 0171-584 9315. The closing date for applications is 23 October 1998.

POLLUTION FACTOR

This imported produce has an excess fuel pollution factor of

7

Calculated by giving British produce a factor of 1; based on the estimated average amount of fuel used to transport 1 kg of British produce from place of production to point of sale.

Lindane under fire

European consumer and environmental organisations are calling on the European Commission to ban the insecticide lindane.

The Food Commission is supporting a call by Pesticide Action Network – Europe to have the insecticide lindane banned in Europe on the grounds that it poses a serious risk to health and the environment. PAN Europe, supported by consumer and environmental organisations across Europe, wants the European Commission to recommend an immediate ban on lindane's use and production throughout the European Union.

Lindane is the last of the 'organochlorine' pesticides to be used in Western Europe to any great extent. Lindane has been used since the 1940s when cheap and relatively hazardous chemicals were considered acceptable, before more stringent health and environmental criteria came into force. It is used as a seed treatment in oilseed rape, maize, cereals and brassicas to combat crop damage by beetles and other soil-dwelling pests; to control insects and other pests in glasshouse crops; to fumigate grain and for timber treatment.

Lindane is already banned or severely restricted in a number of countries including the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria as well as in New Zealand and Australia where alternative pest control measures are in use.

According to PAN Europe, lindane's environmental and health concerns include:

- Lindane is a persistent organic pollutant according to the UN Environment Programme. It has been found in increasing concentrations in the marine environment and particularly the North Sea. It is highly toxic to aquatic invertebrates and fish.
- Cases of human poisoning by lindane have been reported in Europe. Children are significantly more susceptible to its toxic effects. Exposure to lindane has been linked with blood disorders and with congenital abnormalities in children born to mothers exposed to lindane during early pregnancy.
- Lindane has been classified as a possible human carcinogen. It also disrupts endocrine function and evidence suggests that where lindane is used the incidence of breast cancer is higher.
- Lindane is fat soluble and can bioaccumulate through food chains. Recent data published by the joint Food and Agriculture Organisation/World Health Organisation Codex Committee suggests the acceptable daily intake for residues of lindane in the European diet may be exceeded by up to 12 times.

■ For more information about the PAN Europe campaign contact the Pesticides Trust. A factsheet, *The Facts about Lindane*, is available from the Pesticides Trust, Eurolink Centre, 49 Effra Road, London SW2 1BZ. Tel: 0171 274 9084.

Lindane in baby foods

The JMPR (Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues) has substantially reduced the ADI (Acceptable Daily Intake) of lindane from a maximum of 0.008 mg/kg body weight set in 1989 to 0.001 mg/kg body weight.

As a result the European Commission's Scientific Committee for Food has set a maximum level of lindane of 0.02 mg/kg in foods intended for infants and young children.

The most recent government statistics show that lindane residues of 0.02 mg/kg or more were found in a fifth of UK cheese samples tested in 1997 (7 samples out of 36). Milk did not show levels as high as 0.02 mg/kg, but one in seven litres (30 out of 216) showed traces of the pesticide. Baby formula milk showed some traces of lindane (one sample out of only two tested) below the 0.02 mg/kg level.

Scheme to measure fruit miles

The Independent Fruit Growers

Association are proposing to label their produce with an indication of the distance it has travelled.

The label would show a pollution factor ranging from 1 for English apples, 4 for Dutch tomatoes, 13 for Spanish plums, 50 for New Zealand apples and 200 for Zimbabwean green beans.

Spokesman John Breach admitted the figures needed refining, but

challenged the supermarkets: 'I am asking them to give the British public the chance to know where the produce comes from and how much fuel is being used to get it here. Shoppers could see at a glance whether a product has a pollution factor and can then make their choice.'

■ Details from J R Breach: tel 01580 891756, fax 01580 892905.

Fat attack!

The world's largest detergent companies are Unilever (Lever Brothers) and Procter & Gamble. They are bitter rivals in the detergent market, and both have food and food additive interests.

Both companies developed forms of sucrose polyester, a fat-like substance which cannot be digested. Unilever decided it had no role in human food, but Procter & Gamble have invested millions of dollars developing and promoting their version, known to us all as Olestra.

While P&G are busily marketing their product in the USA, where it is permitted in snack foods, they have put off their European application for marketing approval until they have collected better data to support Olestra's safety and effectiveness.

They may have problems. A new research study on the effects of eating diets with sucrose polyester over three months shows that the product had no effect on overall calorie consumption and no effect on bodyweight.

Are snacks with Olestra coming here? Not if Unilever can stop them!

It did lower blood cholesterol levels but at the expense of markedly lower levels of vitamin E and six carotenoids measured. At the same time there were significant increases in the experiences of loose stools, faecal urgency, flatulence, abdominal pain and anal leakage. None of this is good news for Procter & Gamble, who may find they will never get access to the lucrative slimming market they hoped for in Europe.

And who paid for the research which may finally nail P&G's Olestra? The folk at Unilever.

■ S M Kelley et al, A 3-month, double-blind, controlled trial of feeding with sucrose polyester in human volunteers, *British Journal of Nutrition*, 80, 1998.



Mite fright

One in five shop bought cereal-based products, including baby foods, breakfast cereals and cakes, were infested with storage mites, according to Dr Ken Willey of the government's Central Research Laboratories at York.

The contamination is much more widespread than expected, and may cause more cases of food intolerance, asthma and other allergies than previously thought. One jar of baby food contained 400 mites. Although most of

the insects were found dead, some were still alive when the packaging was opened.

Unlike the USA, the UK does not set maximum permissible levels of contamination. Dr Willey said that providing cool, dry storage conditions was a more effective means of reducing mite populations than using organophosphate pesticides, to which mites are, he said, resilient. The implication is that the food industry is failing to store cereal grains, flour and flour products in appropriate conditions.

'Intensive' fish farms may get organic label

Newly-approved organic fish farming standards are leading to concerns that intensively-reared fish with high mortality and disease rates may gain a Soil Association symbol.

Certain wild, harvested fish are already getting organic certification, but the extension of this to farmed fish has been held up for several years. In 1989 the Soil Association drew up draft Standards for Organic Aquaculture and the next few years saw organic fish farming initiatives being tried in Norway and Ireland, but not in the UK. Only in 1996 was an approach made by commercial fish farmers to gain organic certification, leading to a round of negotiations with the British Trout Association, the Scottish Salmon Growers Association, research institutes, retailers and environmental groups.

A one-time advisor to the Soil Association, Lawrence Hutchinson, had shown in trials in the mid-1980s that fish could be produced from low-density farming methods. 'Fish such as trout and salmon do not normally form shoals, preferring to live in ones

and twos in normal river courses,' he told the Food Commission. 'My concern was to ensure that organic standards reflected the needs of fish, because if you contain them in large numbers they show diseases and high death rates, indicating to me that their environment is stressful and wrong.' His trials produced fish with good growth rates and low disease and mortality rates.

Several draft organic fish standards have been produced and a final, sixth draft was accepted by the Soil Association in September 1998, and similar standards will be proposed to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement's General Assembly in November.

In principle, the standards appear to meet Mr Hutchinson's concerns. In particular, standard 11.603 states 'The design and operation of the holding facilities must be such as to promote good stock health and low stress.' Standard 11.801 requires the management of the fish to be governed by their physiological and

ethological (behavioural) needs, including freedom from fear and distress, and freedom from unnecessary restrictions of behaviour. This is repeated in 11.802, which states 'Management practices must ensure a low stress environment and allow the stock as far as possible to act according to their basic behavioural patterns.'

But the small print in the standards allows densities of 60-70 trout (at 10-12 ounces each) per cubic metre of running water, a stocking density which Mr Hutchinson believes is far too high for a species like trout. 'This is battery fish farming,' he said. 'It is bound to lead to highly stressed fish.'

Three fish farming enterprises are reported to be seeking organic accreditation and are currently in conversion. One, based in the Orkneys, plans to sell through selected Sainsbury outlets.

~ Ozone friendly ~
Flour, nuts and fruit in this product have not been treated with Methyl Bromide ~
* A toxic pesticide that attacks the ozone layer

Methyl bromide choices.

Australian campaigners are developing methyl-bromide-free labelling schemes for fruit and other products (above and below). Friends of the Earth in Washington has launched a label campaign on tomatoes. Consumer groups in other countries, including the Food Commission, are calling for similar labels to help shoppers make environmentally safer food choices.

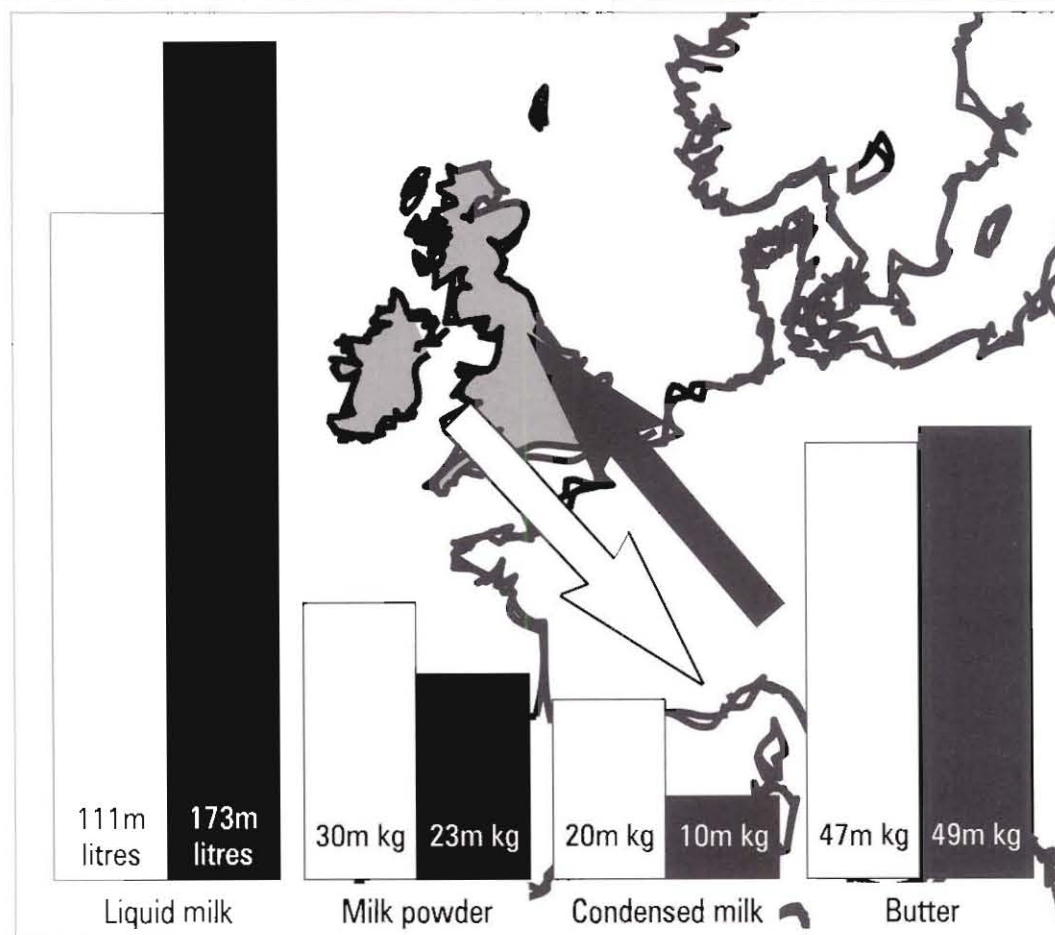


A pint too far?

A forthcoming report from the Sustainable Agriculture, Food and the Environment (SAFE) Alliance highlights the environmental and social problems caused by the modern dairy industry. Among the many issues dealt with, the figures concerning excessive transportation of food over long 'food miles' show that large quantities of milk and milk products are crossing the channel in both directions!

Our trade with other European member states — all of whom now have well-developed dairy industries of their own — shows incredible quantities of liquid milk, milk powder and butter being exported, and similar large volumes being imported (see map).

Assuming all this food goes by the shortest route across the channel, these products alone account for more than 10 billion kilogram-miles moving from one port to the other.



■ Food Facts 2: Dairy Farming. £4 from SAFE Alliance, 0171 837 8980.

New GM agency in pipeline?

As consumer and environmental concerns over genetically modified (GM) foods continue to grow, the government is contemplating setting up a new watchdog to look into the moral and practical issues surrounding genetic modification. The unofficial announcement reported in the press, follows calls by the prestigious Royal Society for the government to set up an independent regulatory body to supervise and monitor the enforcement of regulations covering the growing of GM crops.

But with government plans for one agency — the Food Standards Agency — already facing a 'go slow' (see page 2), it is likely to take more than another promise to assuage consumers' genuine concerns about gene foods.

The government is facing increasing pressure over GMO foods. On the one hand, Blair's 'People's Party' cannot afford to ignore the growing public disquiet about the

labelling, regulation and environmental safety of gene crops. On the other hand, it is facing pressure from the biotechnology industry and its proponents and also from the US government. According to a report in the *Independent on Sunday* (6/9/1998) Bill Clinton personally asked Tony Blair to stop Britain from introducing a moratorium on the growing of crops in the UK, as recommended by the government's wildlife advisory body, English Nature. Monsanto is reported to have close links to the US government as one of five companies spearheading Clinton's welfare to work programme and the President singled out the biotech company for praise during his State of the Nation address last year. During the 1996 election, the report says, Monsanto was among those donating thousands of dollars in 'soft money' (legal funds which are not included in the ban on corporate donations) to the Clinton camp.

Can gene food feed the world?

One of Monsanto's claims is that only gene food can feed the world, with phrases like 'Worrying about starving future generations won't feed them. Food biotechnology will.' But do such claims stand up to scrutiny?

Not according to a new briefing from GeneWatch. Its new pamphlet, *Genetic Engineering: Can it Feed the World?* critically assesses such claims and concludes that rather than solving world food problems, 'Genetic engineering looks set to perpetuate and intensify many of the problems which have led to present day food insecurity. Corporate control, products designed for a developed world market, packages of expensive seed and inputs coupled with the potential for further environmental harm as a result of genetic pollution mean any benefits will remain concentrated in developed nations....



The promotion of genetic engineering as an essential prerequisite to feed the world of the future is a smokescreen to drive acceptance of the technology in the developed world and the global aspirations of the companies involved.

■ **Genetic Engineering: Can it Feed the World?** GeneWatch Briefing Number 3, August 1998. Tel: 01298 871898 E-mail: gene.watch@diapipex.com

We tell MAFF: full GM labelling

MAFF's consultation on new regulations which will require the labelling of some, but not all, genetically modified soya and maize ingredients in foods has now closed.

In the Food Commission's response we said:

'We support the proposal not to exempt catering establishments (and other suppliers of food which might be exempt from labelling regulations) from the general need to label GM foods and ingredients. The principle was established under the food irradiation legislation which required catering establishments to declare the presence of irradiated foods/ingredients. We strongly supported that move, and we support the present proposal, on the grounds of providing consumers with the information they need in order to make informed choices.

'In regard to the proposed Regulations, we would like to add that we believe there are good grounds for going beyond the EC Directive in various respects:

'(a) We believe the obligation to label the presence of GM material in food should extend beyond the labelling of one type of soya and one type of maize and should be applicable to all foods and ingredients made of or with genetically modified organisms. Selecting just a few is irrational, confusing and unfairly discriminatory.

'(b) We believe the principle of basing GM labelling on the presence of a certain amount of DNA or protein to be incorrect and unhelpful to consumers as it does not allow consumers to make choices based on reasons other than the purchase of modified proteins. We believe that GM labelling should be based on the principle of tracing the sources of modified products through the production chain, much as is done for foods labelled 'organic' or which have been irradiated. As a result, all foods made of or with a modified organism can be properly declared as such and consumers can select or avoid them if they wish. This would obviate the need to set a *de minimus* level of protein or to base legislation on the detection of modified proteins.'

Quote of the month

"We have got to use new technology to provide food for the rising population — otherwise we have got to take out of existence the present rainforests and golf

courses and produce crops on those areas of land..."
Professor John Pickett, Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and formerly of the prestigious Rothamsted Research Station, Harpenden, on BBC Radio 4 *Farming Today*, 3/8/98.

Genetix Snowball injunction

The organisation Genetix Snowball has been served with an injunction by the multinational giant Monsanto, in a bid by the company to protect its crop trial sites. Ironically, prior to the injunction, the group had been having trouble finding exactly where the trial sites were located. The injunction names the sites.

Schools reject GMOs

The Food Commission understands that several local education authorities, including Camden and Lambeth in London, are asking their school catering services to exclude foods that have been genetically modified from school meals. Contracts for school meals services will specify that the food must not contain GM ingredients. We hope to have more on this story in the next issue.

Genes can 'escape' into the wild

Writing in *Nature* (3-9-98) scientists at the University of Chicago say that it may be easier for genes for herbicide resistance to 'escape' from genetically engineered crops than previously thought.

■ For details, email: jbergels@midway.uchicago.edu

Genetic Engineering?

What is Genetic Engineering? is a briefing paper researched and written by Dr Ricarda Steinbrecher for the Women's Environmental Network. It is a useful background briefing on the science of genetic engineering, covering the role of chromosomes in living organisms, the regulation of gene expression and how this can be affected by genetic engineering.
■ Details from WEN Tel: 0171-247 3327, e-mail: WENUK@gn.apc.org



Monsanto ad complaints

The Advertising Standards Authority has told the *Food Magazine* that it is investigating over 70 complaints about seven different adverts and a leaflet published as part of Monsanto's high profile advertising campaign this summer.

In one advertisement under investigation for making misleading claims (left) Monsanto say that 'vaccinations and developments in medicine' have been responsible for the increase in life expectancy achieved this century. Dr Mike Joffe, Chair of the Food Commission and Reader in Epidemiology and Public Health at Imperial College School of Medicine, says this is misleading as

the increase has been 'mainly due to a larger and more secure food supply, clean water and better housing. By far the largest fall in mortality happened before any effective medical treatments, including immunisations, had become available.' The ASA is expected to rule later this autumn on the controversial ads.

Modified genes cross gut wall

One of the tenets of GM food safety is that modified genes will be broken down by digestive action and cannot cross the gut wall. But research published last year and barely reported at the time, found that intact, recognisable portions of modified DNA could pass across the gut wall and be detected in spleen, liver and white blood cells.

A group at the University of Cologne showed that modified bacterial DNA fragments which were not normally part of a mouse's DNA structure could be fed to mice and then traced in the gut wall, the blood stream and in various other cells. The bacterial DNA fragments became bound into mouse DNA in some cells.

Although it was not possible to detect the foreign DNA fragments

after 24 hours, the implications for immunology and evolution may be considerable. The ability to absorb DNA from foreign organisms and use it in white blood cells may help explain why we do not become allergic to most of the foreign organisms we consume. But it also raises questions about the wisdom of consuming manipulated protein and DNA fragments that would never normally be ingested.

■ R Shubert et al, Foreign (M13) DNA ingested by mice reaches peripheral leukocytes, spleen and liver via the intestinal wall mucosa and can be covalently linked to mouse DNA, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, 94, 1997.

Vegetarian Society bans gene soya

The Vegetarian Society has outlawed the use of genetically modified ingredients, such as soya, from foods bearing the Society's V 'approved by the Vegetarian Society' symbol. The Society says that producers who pay a royalty to use the Society's symbol will need to sign a declaration that all their ingredients are from non-genetically engineered sources.

The Society's decision means that Bachelor's Beanfeast will either have to reformulate its product or remove its Vegetarian Society approval. Beanfeast - the first product in the UK to declare that it contained genetically modified soya - became the focus of anti-GMO campaigners who put warning stickers on packets.



Beanfeast: to lose its veggie-symbol?

The Society's new policy will come into effect from next August.

■ For more information: Vegetarian Society 0161 928 0793



"... and, darling, doctor says he's resistant to Round-Up!"

Tesco gene food labelling

Tesco has announced that it will be the first British retailer to introduce labelling of all genetically modified (GM) soya ingredients in its own-label products, including soya oil and lecithin, currently excluded from new EU regulations on GM labelling. Tesco says 'Customers have a right to know more about the products that they buy - including the origins of the ingredients.' The company also says it will continue to lobby for GM soya to be segregated from non-GM soya at source.

The Co-op was the first to label some GM ingredients in its own products, including GM ingredients used in making the product, before labelling was legally required. And Iceland should not need to label their products as they say the products are all GM-free.

■ For more information on Tesco's move, contact Alan McLaughlin on 01992 646763. For the Co-op contact Martin Henderson on 0161 834 1212. For Iceland, contact 0181 951 1313.

Phytoestrogen levels in baby milk to be published

The long awaited results of MAFF's analyses of phytoestrogen levels in infant soya formulas is due for publication at the beginning of November. In 1992 the Department of Health's Committee on Toxicity recommended that levels of phytoestrogens in soya baby milks and other soya foods for children should be analysed. Six years later, and after a long delay, it is anticipated that the results will be broadly similar to those found for soya formulas in New Zealand and the US. In 1997, Prof Ken Setchell found that infants fed soya baby milks get 6 to 11 times greater amounts of phytoestrogens on a body weight basis than the dose that has hormonal effects in adults consuming soya foods.¹

The UK researchers, from Reading University, have also measured the level of isoflavones (the type of phytoestrogen found in soya) in breastmilk of mothers and the urine of infants. It is expected that this will confirm that infants that are breastfed or bottle fed using cows milk based formula receive negligible amounts of isoflavones, even when the mothers own diet may be rich in isoflavones, whereas infants consuming soya formula will be exposed to isoflavones

several thousand times higher. Professor Setchell found blood levels of 13,000 to 22,000 times higher than normal in babies fed soya formula between birth and four months, and has said these levels may be sufficient to exert biological effects.

However the question remains as to what effects such levels of isoflavones may have on developing infants. MAFF is currently funding some research in this area but Dr Daniel Sheehan, of the US Food and Drug Administration's National Center for Toxicological Research has said that infants fed soya formula have been placed at risk in a 'large, uncontrolled and basically unmonitored human infant experiment.'²

Phytoestrogens are endocrine disrupters which can act as oestrogen mimics and/or to block oestrogen depending on the dose level, on the age of exposure and the sex. Beneficial health effects are claimed for phytoestrogens in the relief of menopausal symptoms and more controversially for prevention of hormone related cancers such as breast and prostate cancer. However such claims cannot be adequately substantiated although research is

continuing, much with the encouragement of the soya and supplement industries. Animal studies examined by the Committee on Toxicity found reproductive effects, infertility, thyroid or liver disease due to dietary intake of isoflavones in

several animal species including cheetah, mice, rats and sheep.

¹ Setchell, K et al, Exposure of infants to phyto-estrogens from soy-based infant formula, *The Lancet*, 350, 23-27, July 5, 1997.

² Sheehan, DM Isoflavone content of breast milk and soy formulas; benefits and risks (letter) *Clin Chem* 43, 850 (1997).

■ A new briefing paper on phytoestrogens in soya infant formula is available from the Food Commission.

Who pays the piper calls the tune?

In support of its argument that 'soya based infant formulas are safe', the Infant and Dietetic Foods Association has referred the Food Commission to a paper published in the journal *Nutrition Reviews* by Karen Oerter Klein from the duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, USA. She concludes 'soy-based infant formulas continue to be a safe, nutritionally complete feeding option for most infants'. And who helped pay for this research? The author acknowledges 'the Infant Formula Council for its technical and financial support in the preparation of this publication.' The Infant Formula Council is the US equivalent of the UK's Infant and Dietetic Foods Association.

The paper also concludes that 'the literature offers no evidence of

endocrine effects in humans from infant consumption of modern soy-based formulas'. Klein appears to have redefined the endocrine system to exclude the thyroid gland. There are several published papers³ reporting thyroid disorders in infants fed soy-formulas and that are now able to be linked to isoflavone toxicity.

³ See Fort P et al. Breast and soy-formula feedings in early infancy and prevalence of autoimmune thyroid disease in children, *J Am Coll Nutr*, 9, 164-167 (1990); Jabber MA et al. Abnormal thyroid function tests in infants with congenital hypothyroidism: the influence of soy-based formula. *J Am Coll Nutr*, 16, 280-282 (1997); Divi et al. Anti-Thyroid Isoflavones from Soybean, *Chemical Pathology*, 54, 1087-1096 (1997).

'Complaints upheld'

We report some recent decisions by the Advertising Standards Authority on complaints about food ads.

Complaint against Efamol Ltd for claiming their supplement EfaProst provided a 'powerful triple action formulation ... important in maintaining a healthy prostate' and was 'one of the most powerful supplements available to keep your prostate healthy'.

Complaint upheld by the ASA which took the view that 'any claim that a healthy prostate could be maintained was likely to imply that prostate problems could be treated or prevented by the supplement' and that 'health maintenance claims could discourage people from having essential treatment for a serious condition.' (ASA, July 1998).

The Food Commission says: *This marks a departure from previous ASA rulings that a claim for maintaining health was generally*

acceptable while treating or preventing a disease was not. It puts supplement companies under further pressure to be able to substantiate their claims with acceptable — and usually expensive — evidence.

Complaint against Healthway Products Ltd and Nutri-Health Ltd for a direct mail leaflet claiming that their Lipolean and Lipo-Ade products implied a treatment for obesity and could also reduce the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, promote the healing of ulcers, reduce problems for gout sufferers and stimulate the immune system.

Complaint upheld by the ASA who found the claims to be medicinal in nature, for products with no

medicines license. The ASA was disappointed by the company which said it normally relied on word of mouth rather than mailshots, and that the leaflet had been an old one. The company failed to send any substantiation for the claims and failed to send a copy of a promised revised brochure. (ASA, July 1998).

Lucozade

Following 22 complaints to the Independent Television Commission, the ITC has ruled that Lucozade's use of the word 'bollocks' in a television advertisement was not acceptable. (ITC June 1998)

CHECKOUT

Dear Food Magazine

I was in Sainsbury's last week and my grandson asked me to get some orange squash.

We went to look at their drinks shelf and I was surprised by what I found. First I saw a bottle of 'low sugar' squash, and I thought this must be good. Then I saw that the ingredients list said there were artificial sweeteners in the drink.

I don't like giving these suspicious chemicals to my grandson so I put that bottle back on the shelf and took the company's regular version instead. After all, a sugary drink taken with a meal is considered acceptable, even by dentists.

Imagine my surprise when I read the label of the regular version of the orange squash. It contains sugar and artificial sweeteners!

That is surely the worst of both worlds?

Mrs Joan Lancerton, London EC1

Sweeteners take over from sugar

Mrs Lancerton's letter prompted us to take a closer look at the orange drinks shelves in our local shops. We went shopping to see what the manufacturers have been selling this summer and found that, indeed, if you don't want artificial sweeteners in your orangeade you will have to read an awful lot of small print.

Manufacturers have been falling over themselves in the rush to replace sugar with cheaper sweetening chemicals, not only in their lower calorie, no-sugar and 'diet' products but in their regular versions as well.

Of nine popular products where there are both low-sugar and regular versions on sale side by side, we found that all of the regular versions included artificial sweeteners in their formulation. So did all of the low-sugar versions.

In 1992 the government first acknowledged that children may be consuming particularly large amounts of the artificial sweetener saccharin. Survey figures showed that a significant proportion of children under five years old were exceeding the recommended safe levels.

That survey was conducted before a change in the legislation allowed the drinks companies to add artificial sweeteners to regular as well as low-calorie versions of their products. We suspect that if a new survey was conducted now it would show children's consumption levels to be even higher than they were in 1992.

We believe that lower permissible levels of these chemicals should be set for soft drinks than are presently allowed, and that the declaration 'With sweeteners' should be made clearly on the front of the product as the law intended (see pages 10-11).



TIP If you want to avoid artificial sweeteners then go for squashes made with higher juice content, such as Sainsbury Hi-Juice and Waitrose 40% and 60% juice squashes or, of course, buy 100% orange juice and dilute it. Among carbonated drinks, Orangina regular is free of artificial sweeteners, or make your own with juice and sparkling water.

How the orange drinks line up

This table shows how both versions of concentrated orange drinks commonly contain artificial sweeteners. Similar observations were made of ready-to-drink carbonated orangeade: both Fanta and Fanta Diet contain artificial sweeteners, so do Tango and Tango Diet, Safeway's Select and Select Diet, Sainsbury's Cool Crush and Diet Cool Crush.

product	sweetened with
Kia-Ora Orange No Added Sugar	Aspartame, Saccharin
Kia-Ora Orange	Glucose syrup, Aspartame, Saccharin
Robinsons Orange No Added Sugar	Aspartame, Saccharin
Robinsons Orange	Fructose, Glucose, Aspartame, Saccharin

product	sweetened with
Tesco Orange No Added Sugar	Aspartame, Saccharin
Tesco Orange	Sugar, Aspartame, Saccharin
Waitrose Orange No Added Sugar	Acesulfame, Aspartame
Waitrose Orange	Sugar, Acesulfame
Safeway Orange No Sugar Added	Aspartame, Saccharin
Safeway Orange	Sugar, Aspartame, Saccharin
Sainsbury Orange Low Sugar	Aspartame, Saccharin
Sainsbury Orange	Sugar, Aspartame, Saccharin

product	sweetened with
Iceland Orange No Added Sugar	Aspartame, Saccharin
Iceland Orange	Sugar, Aspartame, Saccharin
KwikSava Orange Sugar free	Aspartame, Saccharin
KwikSave Orange	Sugar, Aspartame, Saccharin
Nisa Orange No Added Sugar	Aspartame, Saccharin
Nisa Orange	Sugar, Aspartame, Saccharin

Source: Food Commission from manufacturers' data, September 1998.

Note: formulations may change.

CHECKOUT

Ignoring the Law?

The rules on declaring sweeteners are weak enough, but even that isn't good enough for some companies who appear to be ignoring the law completely.

In July 1997 the *Sweeteners in Food Regulations* became law in the UK. It followed an EU Directive which was designed to ensure that the use of artificial sweeteners — especially in place of sugar — would be quickly and easily apparent to the consumer. From that date any products containing artificial sweeteners must state, alongside the name of the product, the phrase 'with sweeteners'.

Over a year later we find some manufacturers appear to be completely ignoring the law.

The rules were introduced into the rest of Europe in January 1997, with Britain trailing six months behind. But even so, our survey found that over a year after the rules were introduced into the UK *they are still being ignored*.

We waited a year before we went shopping, to allow old stocks of food labelled before July 1997 to be cleared from the shelves. We waited another two months to be doubly sure. We find it hard to believe that the products we found were all made and labelled and waiting to be sold over a year ago. We believe that, instead, manufacturers are simply ignoring the spirit and the letter of the law by selling their products without giving consumers their rightful information.

We are calling on trading standards bodies to prosecute the people behind these illegally-traded products, and on magistrates to take a tough line against any found guilty of denying consumers their rights.



Aspartame and Acesulfame



Saccharin

Aspartame

A weak law is being undermined

The rules about labelling products as being 'with sweeteners' was supposed to ensure that consumers did not mistakenly pick up a product containing artificial sweeteners, when they might think the product was sweetened with sugar or not sweetened at all.

The EU Directive clearly states that '...the prime consideration for any rules on sweeteners and their conditions of use should be the need to protect and inform the consumer.'

It was widely assumed that manufacturers would declare the information on the front of their packs, where they normally put the name of the product. But manufacturers were unwilling to display the 'with sweeteners' phrase too prominently and have taken to various tricks to avoid doing so.

Firstly, they may simply not put the proper name of the product on the front of the pack. They may put a brand name — say 'Power Cola' — on the

front, and then put the official name in very small print on the back — 'Soft drink with sweetener'.

Secondly, they may put the name of the product on the pack twice. If they do this, MAFF has issued guidance saying that the manufacturers only have to declare 'with sweeteners' once. So we may find 'High Juice Drink' in big print on the front and 'High Juice Drink with sweeteners' in small print on the back.

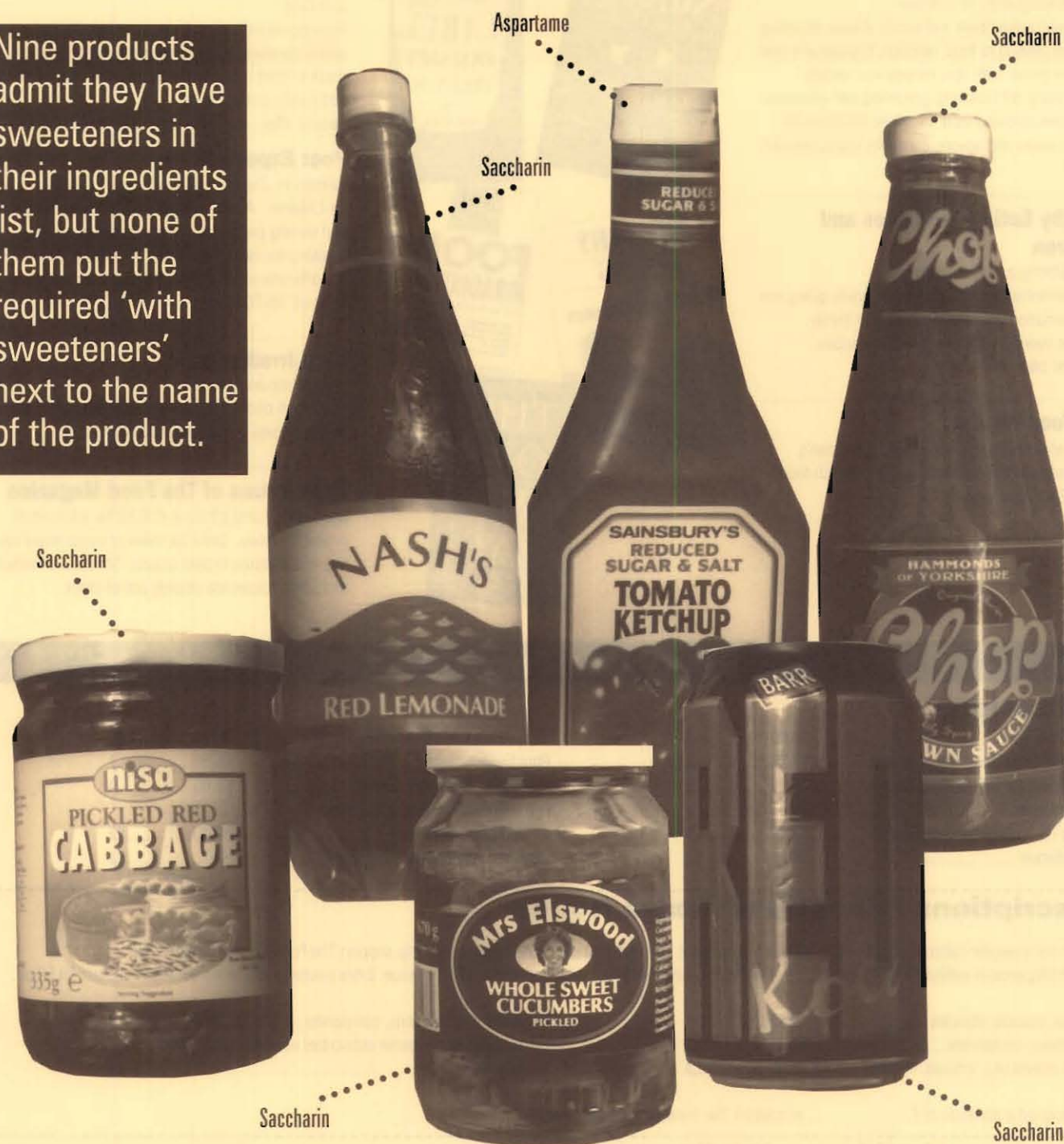
Thirdly, as we show on this page, some companies are ignoring the law altogether, either by failing to name the product properly on the pack, or failing to add the sweetener declaration when they do. To our knowledge, none have been prosecuted.

Despite guidance from the trading standards body LACOTS that companies should make the sweetener declaration conspicuous, many companies are doing the opposite, using the smallest print they can get away with or no print at all.



CHECKOUT

Nine products admit they have sweeteners in their ingredients list, but none of them put the required 'with sweeteners' next to the name of the product.



How the sweeteners stack up

All sweeteners have been approved as safe, but some questions still remain.

Saccharin (E954).	Aspartame (E951).	Acesulfame (E950).	Cyclamate (E952).	Sugar (eg: sucrose, glucose, fructose).
Still under a cloud over its links with increased bladder cancer in rats and other forms of cancer in monkeys. Costs under 0.2 pence per litre of drink.	Still under a cloud over reports that it is linked to neurological problems such as headaches and migraines. Known to cause problems for the UK's 2500 sufferers of the enzyme disorder phenylketonuria. Costs around 2 pence per litre of drink.	Tests showing links to cancer were discounted in the 1970s when it was given approval for use. There are calls for re-testing under stricter controls. Costs around 3 pence per litre of drink.	Known links to testicular atrophy in rats and monkeys led to its banning in the UK, but it is now provisionally permitted under EU legislation. Costs not known.	Known links to dental caries have led to warnings to keep consumption low and preferably with meals. Costs around 6 pence per litre of drink.

marketplace

The Nursery Food Book 2nd edition

Mary Whiting and Tim Lobstein

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. £13.99.

Healthy Eating for Babies and Children

Mary Whiting and Tim Lobstein

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.



What the Label Doesn't Tell You

Sue Dibb

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.

Food Irradiation

Tony Webb and Tim Lang

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

order form

publications

The Food We Eat	£8.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Nursery Food Book 2nd edition	£13.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Healthy Eating for Babies & Children	£6.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fast Food Facts	£5.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additives - Complete Survival Guide	£3.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food Irradiation	£6.50	<input type="checkbox"/>

What the Label Doesn't Tell You	£6.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor Expectations	£5.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additives - Shoppers Guide	£2.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full set of available back issues of The Food Magazine	£30.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Index of available back issues	free	<input type="checkbox"/>

subscriptions / donations / extra issues

If you are not a regular subscriber to the *Food Magazine* why not take out your own subscription and help support The Food Commission's work? The *Food Magazine* is published four times a year. Your subscription will start with our next published issue. Extra issues to the same address cost just £9.50 pa.

Individuals, schools, libraries	£18.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisations, companies	£37.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overseas individuals, schools, libraries	£25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overseas organisations, companies	£40.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extra issues to the same subscriber address @ £9.50pa.		
No. required		<input type="checkbox"/>

I have enclosed a donation of £..... to support The Food Commission's work

payment and address details

Overseas purchasers should send payment in £ sterling, and add £2.00 per book for airmail delivery.

cheque payments

I have enclosed a cheque or postal order made payable to The Food Commission for £.....

Overseas payments: Eurocheque written in £UK, International postal-money order or Bankers draft payable through a UK bank

credit card payments

We can accept Visa, Access, Mastercard and Eurocard for book orders over £5.00 and for subscriptions to The Food Magazine.

Please charge my account to the amount of £..... My credit card number is:
Card expiry date: Card type: Signature:

Please send your order to Publications Dept, The Food Commission, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.
Tel: 0171 837 2250. Fax: 0171 837 1141. Delivery will usually take place within 14 days.

Credit card hotline 0171 837 2250

Land Stewardship Council

How can farmers be persuaded to farm with more care for wildlife and the environment? Oliver Tickell argues that a Land Stewardship Council food labelling scheme could identify produce from farmers who maintain and improve wildlife habitats and promote animal welfare.

Organic farming is thought of as the ideal 'wildlife friendly' farming system, and this is not, in broad terms, under dispute. However only a very small number of farmers are certified as organic, and their farms cover under one percent of UK farmland.

There are, meanwhile, enormous variations among 'conventional', non-organic, farmers. One might be ripping up hedgerows, ploughing ancient herb-rich grasslands, blocking up footpaths and spraying crops heavily with toxic agrochemicals. The farmer next door might be replanting hedgerows and woodlands, leaving managed grass buffer strips along water and rights of way, recreating flower-rich meadows, and using only minimal doses of agrochemicals.

However there is no way, at present, for a consumer to know from which their food derives, so they cannot reward the second farmer through their choice of food purchase. The intention of the Land Stewardship Council (LSC) would be to change this by providing a single label that would tell consumers when their food had been produced in a wildlife-friendly way.

CONFERENCE

Green College in Oxford will be holding a seminar on 20 January 1999 on the possibility of establishing a Land Stewardship Council following the model of the Forestry and Marine Stewardship Councils. For more information contact Fiona Donaldson, The Green College Centre, 11 Bevington Road, Oxford OX2 6NB. Tel: 01865 274717.

The LSC could also offer a number of other benefits. For example, LSC certificates would provide an independent assurance to consumers that produce is of British origin, and could also provide a regional, county or local origin label. It is also envisaged that LSC farmers might form into local groups or co-operatives, sharing expertise and experience of environmental farming techniques.

It is hoped that the organic movement would welcome the LSC rather than see it as promoting a lower rival standard. The aim would be not to displace organic standards but to provide a 'stepping stone' between conventional and organic standards by addressing issues of on-farm wildlife and habitat creation and maintenance which do not form part of existing official organic standards, although the Soil Association has higher requirements. And far from intending to displace organic goods as the highest quality level, the intention would be to set a minimum acceptable standard for consumers and reputable retailers, and thus ratchet upwards the environmental quality of food production on a broad scale.

A number of labelling schemes already exist which are able to deliver at least some of what would be required by the LSC. The RSPCA's 'Freedom Food' scheme promotes animal welfare, the agri-environmental group LEAF is promoting the principles of 'Integrated Farm Management' while Sainsbury's has developed a Farm Biodiversity Action Plan to protect farmland wildlife. There are also a range of 'Farm Assurance' schemes.

These schemes individually deliver much of what LSC would want to aim for, especially in the vital areas of food safety, hygiene and traceability. However they enjoy limited public recognition and understanding. The large number of schemes is one reason and this could be solved by integrating them into a single label.

However public support will depend on the credibility of the label, which means that it must be seen to be at arm's length from farmers and the food industry with the backing of respected NGO's such as

WWF, the Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, CPRE, Friends of the Earth and the Ramblers Association.

For the LSC to succeed, it must be acceptable to consumers, retailers, food processors and the farming community. At the consumer level, the name and logo must be readily recognised and the purpose of LSC easily understood. In order to be accepted by the food industry, retailers and processors, the scheme must be able to deliver LSC-certified produce in large volumes, at reasonable cost and with minimal bureaucratic overhead. To do this, the industry must give the LSC its clear backing, making it clear to producers that they will be advantaged if they go with it. Farmers, in the same way, must feel assured of preferential or added-value markets for LSC produce before going to the trouble and expense of obtaining certification.

The need for such a system is emphasised by the disappointing progress of the 'Agenda 2000' process of reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy. Agri-environment measures have long been a marginal add-on to the main subsidy streams, and require extra funding at the national level. While extra support for agri-environment packages is promised, the mainstream of farm support will continue to have weak or no environmental conditionalities. There are, therefore, no grounds to expect Agenda 2000 to deliver any dramatic changes towards a more environment-friendly agriculture.

By contrast, a Land Stewardship Council based on a strategic alliance between producer, retailer, consumer, environmental and animal welfare interests, and utilising market mechanisms, offers far better prospects for delivering the required environmental and economic goods.

■ Oliver Tickell is an environmental journalist who is promoting the concept of a Land Stewardship Council.

Let us know what you think?

Could such a scheme offer genuine benefits to shoppers and food producers or would it provide yet more label confusion? Tell us what you think and we will pass on your views.

Agrochemicals in beef

A report on beef production being produced by the SAFE Alliance includes a look at the residues being found in samples of cattle meat. The results of sampling of cattle organs and tissue are shown in the table below.

The pesticide results show detectable levels in cattle kidneys, although none of them were above the maximum residue level (MRL) which triggers a further investigation.

One sample of the test for cadmium levels exceeded the MRL, triggering further action. All the mercury and arsenic findings came above the MRL. The tetracycline levels were all below the MRL. The cattle blood, fat and muscle results did not indicate whether they exceeded the MRL or not.

■ Food Facts 1: Beef Farming. £4 from SAFE Alliance, 0171 837 8980.

sample	found
60 cattle kidneys	8% with organochlorine pesticides 2% with organophosphate pesticides
62 cattle kidneys	53% with heavy metal cadmium
41 cattle kidneys	78% with arsenic 12% with heavy metal mercury
36 calf kidneys	50% with tetracycline antibiotic
182 cattle blood samples	12% with progesterone hormone
7 cattle fat samples	29% with organochlorine pesticides
38 cattle muscle samples	58% with sulphamethazine antibiotic

■ Source: **Annual Report on Surveillance for Veterinary Residues in 1996**, Veterinary Medicines Directorate, MAFF 1997.

MBM for pigs?

The row among British pig producers about cheap European imports undercutting their market has extended to an attack on the current UK regulations which ban mammalian meat and bone meal (MBM) from pig feed. British Pig Association chairman John Godfrey wants the UK ban on feeding bonemeal to pigs lifted, claiming that Dutch and Danish producers enjoy a price advantage with pigs fed on bonemeal. Alternatively, he called for a UK ban on the import of pigmeat produced using bonemeal.

UK rules on the feeding of MBM to livestock are tighter than those applied generally in the EU. The differences are shown in the table below.

The situation is especially ironic as all British MBM must be incinerated or used as landfill, but British pig bones, as well as cattle and sheep carcasses and meat, can be exported to other member states, where they can be legitimately turned into MBM and fed to pigs whose meat is then exported to the UK. 'MBM cannot be exported even though the bones for making it can be,' said Alan Lawrence of the UK Renderers' Association. 'This is clearly an anomaly, with MBM used extensively in Continental rations.'



UK rules	EU rules
Mammalian MBM cannot be fed to cattle, sheep, pigs or poultry. Poultry MBM can be fed to all animals.	All types of MBM can be fed to pigs and poultry. Non-ruminant MBM (i.e. excluding sheep, cattle, goats) can be fed to all animals.
Source: BSE Enforcement Bulletin 24 , MAFF July 1998.	

The US Food and Drug Administration is busily promoting the benefits of irradiating beef as a cure for their *E coli* contamination. With the US food industry claiming that labelling is a barrier to

consumer resistance they are pressing the FDA to drop the requirement to label food as being irradiated.

In the meantime, the European Parliament has attempted to block moves by the Commission to draft a set of directives easing the path for food irradiation to take off in Europe.



In particular, it wants clauses which recognise consumer concerns about nutrition and toxicology to be included in the texts, and for there to be detection methods specified for all classes of irradiated foods. The EC draft directives only refer to herbs and spices but other foodstuffs may follow.

BST scientists muzzled

Canadian health authority scientists who expressed doubts about the safety of the milk-boosting genetically engineered hormone Bovine Somatotropin (BST) say they have been ordered not to speak about it.

In April, a confidential report circulating in Health Canada, the country's health service, criticised senior officers for dismissing the need for long-term toxicology testing of the cattle drug. The report, dated April 1998, also criticised 'procedural and data gaps' for falling short of the human safety tests required under Canadian food regulations.

The report was the work of five Health Canada scientists and was ordered when a member of the veterinary residues section expressed human safety concerns. This September, six Health Canada scientists, including two of the

authors of the critical report, told an internal tribunal that they were being pushed to approve the hormone despite their concerns that it was not safe. They said they had been ordered by their superiors not to speak publicly on the matter.

Meanwhile the international standards-setting body Codex has been circulated with a critique of its procedures for evaluating BST. Veteran campaigner John Verrall is concerned that the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), an advisory body to Codex, had kept its discussions on BST secretive, had left out relevant information on BST safety issues and omitted to discuss the absence of long-term toxicity data. He adds that JECFA's claim that the hormone IGF-1, found in BST-produced milk, is broken down in the gut is simply wrong.

■ Shawn McCarthy *Canadian Globe and Mail*, Ottawa, 19.9.1998.

Blood on the tracks

The spillage of thousands of gallons of cattle blood on the M6 motorway in September raises an interesting question. Where was it going?

A government spokesman was reported as saying it was going to the Intervention Board, which is nonsense. The blood was from cattle over 30 months old, and could not enter the food chain.

Not directly, that is. Under the regulations banning meat and bone meal from animal feed, blood products are excluded. *It is still legal for cows to be fed blood from other cows.* It was perfectly possible for the blood to be going to a feedmill. Given the precautions to prevent human blood from possible CJD sufferers being given to other humans, the loophole in the law is extraordinary.

BSE — It's not over yet

Despite government reassurances that we can put BSE in the past, the figures show over 300 cases of BSE are still being confirmed every month in the UK.

These figures are similar to the levels being reported ten years ago, in late 1988. One main difference is that the trend is now downwards, a fact which MAFF and the meat industry is making much of.

But another difference is that over 90% of current cases were born after the ban on feeding cattle with the meat and bone meal derived from other cattle, sheep and any other ruminant.

Nearly 37,000 cases of BSE have occurred in cattle born after the ban, raising questions about whether the source of infection has been effectively removed from the feed chain.

One reason why infection may still be present is the sloppy implementation of the banning regulations by feed manufacturers. MAFF did not start sampling animal feed until 1996, when first results found 40 'possibly or probably' contaminated samples out of some 3500. Not a high proportion, but with only one gram of infectious material able to transmit BSE, any sample containing potential infection is bad news. The results for the most recent year show 64 out of 16,000 samples

possibly contaminated.

There is a second reason why infection may still be present in animal feed. The original ban left a number of loopholes which are still wide open. It is still perfectly legal to feed cattle with blood products and plasma (e.g. from other cattle or sheep), gelatin (from treated skin and bones), amino acids (proteins from any part of the carcass) and dicalcium phosphate (from treated bones).

The blood products may be of concern, given the Department of Health's measures to ensure that patients receiving human blood products are not exposed to blood from CJD victims. No case of transmission of CJD via blood has been proven although two cases of CJD developing in patients who received albumin transfusion from a donor with CJD have been recorded.¹

Dicalcium phosphate is under suspicion, too. It is used as an additive to enrich cattle feed, but the EU Scientific Steering Committee stated last May that, because protein residues can be found in dicalcium phosphate, the raw materials (cattle bones) should not be sourced from high risk countries, and that sourcing from low risk countries should only be from animals fit for human consumption and there should be no other risk material present.² This is

only a recommendation and the committee acknowledged there would be a need to ensure adequate implementation and policing of any legislation that might follow.

A further source of continuing infection is the transmission of BSE from cow to calf. A paper in the *Veterinary Record* suggests that transmission rates may be as high as 17% for at least a year before the mother cow shows symptoms.³

If maternal transmission is the reason for the large numbers of BSE cases still apparent, then it follows that calves must be carrying the disease without showing symptoms for several years.

For reasons that were unclear, MAFF did not ban calves' brains or other calf offal from the human food chain when the Specified Offal Ban was introduced in 1989.

¹ D Patry *et al*, *Neurology*, 50, 1872-1873, 1998.

² Scientific Steering Committee *The Safety of Dicalcium Phosphate Precipitated from Ruminant Bones and Used as an Animal Feed* Preliminary report and opinion adopted 14-15 May 1998, EC DG24, Brussels, May 1998.

³ C A Donnelly, *Veterinary Record*, 142, 579-580, 1998.

200 human BSE cases missed?

A report in the *British Medical Journal* has suggested that a substantial number of cases of the new variant version of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (nvCJD), attributed to infection from BSE, may have been missed.¹

The authors suggest that a long-term trend of declining numbers of patients suffering from other dementias or neurodegenerative disorders showed an unexpected upturn in the early 1990s, which they suggest might be due to misdiagnosed cases of nvCJD. The numbers of people aged under 65 who died from dementias and neural disorders remained constant or declined slightly over the period 1979-1992, but a significant rise in numbers occurred in the period 1993-1996. The authors, all staff in the government Office for National Statistics, conclude that even if some of the rise is attributable to missed nvCJD cases, the figures are still too low to make sensible estimates of the prevalence of nvCJD in the future.

The authors do not estimate how many cases may have been misdiagnosed. From the data published, and taking the 1993 figure as a base-line, we calculate that the higher figures in 1994, 1995 and 1996 represent an extra 47, 95 and 65 cases respectively, making over 200 possible nvCJD cases in all.

¹ A Majeed *et al*, *British Medical Journal*, 317, Aug 1, 1998.

Why 30 months?

One of the biggest costs of the whole sorry saga of BSE is the removal from the food chain of all cattle aged over thirty months.

These are mostly dairy cows several years old, who have passed their peak milking yield and would in past years have been processed into hamburgers, sausages and pies. The cows' removal from the food chain means compensating farmers for their lost income from the carcasses, and paying slaughterers and incinerator operators to dispose of the carcasses which have no commercial value. Over 2.4 million

carcasses have been processed under this scheme since April 1996.

But the advice that, as a result, beef is perfectly safe has to be questioned. Not only may younger cattle be infected without showing symptoms — for example if they are carrying the disease following maternal transmission (see opposite) — but MAFF figures show that throughout the 1980s, cattle younger than 30 months had been confirmed as having BSE. The youngest confirmed case was in an animal just 20 months old (see table).

BSE under 30 months

	Youngest confirmed case (age in months)	Second youngest (age in months)
1986	30	33
1987	30	31
1988	24	25
1989	21	24 (4 cases)
1990	24 (2 cases)	26
1991	24	26 (3 cases)
1992	20	26
1993	29	30 (3 cases)
1994	30 (2 cases)	31 (2 cases)
1995	25	34 (2 cases)
1996	29	30 (2 cases)

Source: MAFF BSE statistics (www.maff.gov.uk/animalh/bse)

School junkies

A whopping 42 per cent of schoolchildren aged 8-16 buy sweets on the way to school each day — and 45 per cent buy sweets on their way home.

According to the latest Gardener Merchant survey of children's eating habits, six per cent of children leave home every morning with nothing to eat, up from four per cent in 1986. The figure rises to 12 per cent among 15-16 year olds, and 18 per cent among girls of that age group.

The catering company's survey studied over 1,500 children across Britain last March. On average



children spent 52 pence on the way to school, and 44 pence on the way home. When they arrive home,

Most popular items eaten	on the way to school	on the way home	on arrival at home
Sweets.....	42%	45%	} 14%
Chocolate.....	39%	28%	
Crisps/bag snacks.....	24%	20%	33%
Fizzy drinks.....	23%	25%	25%
Other soft drinks.....	4%	6%	18%
Chewing gum.....	14%	5%	0%
Biscuits.....	2%	0%	29%

crisps, biscuits and fizzy drinks top the list of foods consumed.

■ **What are today's children eating?** Gardner Merchant, 1998, £75. Contact Gardener Merchant's Corporate Affairs on 0171 353 6211.

Withdrawn fruit and veg available

Following the Food Commission's reports on fruit for schools being fed to pigs, the UK Intervention Board has issued guidance on how schools and charities may gain access to stocks of surplus fruit and vegetables.

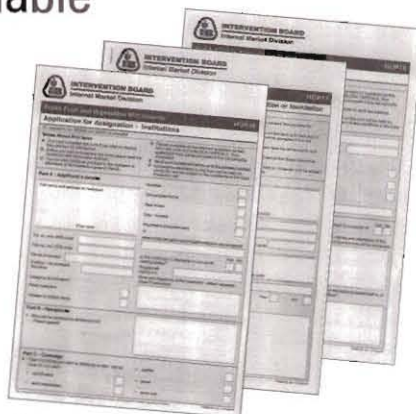
Eligible organisations include

- Registered charities: produce may only be for people receiving government benefits, and may be distributed to recipients or used in meals prepared for recipients.
- Schools: Only fruit can be given to schools, and this must be in addition to normal supplies and

not used as part of a canteen meal.

- Other institutions: this includes children's holiday camps, nurseries, rest homes, prisons, hospitals and other such institutions. Produce must be used in addition to normal supplies.

The Board warns that apples and pears may be available only between September and April, and other types of fruit only on irregular occasions. Cauliflowers will probably be available most of the year, but produce will be most frequently available in the major



fruit and vegetable growing areas of the UK, principally in Lincolnshire, East Anglia, Kent and the West Midlands.

The normal minimum amount that a charity, school etc must be willing to accept is a pallet weighing about 750 kilograms. In the case of fruit, a pallet is 50 boxes and typically contains 5,000 to 6,000 pieces of fruit. Schools may join together to make an application as a group. Under fluctuating market conditions, it is probable that only a day or two's warning will be given that fruit will be available.

■ For more information contact the Intervention Board's Fruit and Vegetable Withdrawals Section on 0118 953 1694 or 0118 953 1913 or fax 0118 953 1261. Ask for the Information Sheet **Free Distribution of Withdrawn Fruit and Vegetables**, and for form HOR 17 (charities), HOR 18 (schools) or HOR 19 (institutions).

Withdrawn beef withdrawn

The distribution of cans of free beef to charities is to be axed, following a decision by MAFF as part of the Treasury's spending review.

The distribution of free cans of beef has accounted for some 3,000 tonnes of surplus beef annually, mostly to hostels for the homeless, night shelters, day centres, hospices and homes for older people. The EU meets most of the costs but the UK is required to bear some of the cost.

Surplus UK beef is withdrawn from the market and bought by the UK Intervention Board and held in storage. Because of the BSE crisis, the beef cannot be exported. According to one meat manufacturer the axing of the charity scheme will lead to higher storage costs: 'They have already filled every deep freeze in the country with this beef.'

From a public health view, the beef offers valuable nutrients to elderly people who might be short of iron (see opposite) but is also a source of saturated fat, and Department of Health expert committees have warned against excessive red meat consumption as raising the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.



"They've got 4,376 apples, 2,813 pears and 57.6kg of damsons, and if we can find the square root we can have them!"

Low vitamin intakes in older people

First rumblings from the long-awaited government study of the diets of older people have started to emerge. The results show that some people over 65 years old are eating diets short of several essential nutrients.

Although average intakes of most nutrients were above the Reference Nutrient Intake (RNI) level — considered the level which would provide sufficient of the nutrient for 97 per cent of the population — a substantial minority fell below the RNI level.

More significantly, for several vitamins, between three per cent and seven per cent of older people were eating less than the Lower Reference Nutrient Intake (LRNI)

level — the level which would be insufficient for 97 per cent of the population. In other words as many as one in 14 in the sample were suffering serious deficiency in one or more vitamins, notably vitamins A, B2, B6 and folic acid.

Even larger number were eating below the LRNI levels for some essential minerals. Intakes of magnesium and potassium were seriously deficient for between 17 per cent and 39 per cent of the sample. Up to nine per cent were seriously deficient in zinc, iron, calcium and iodine.

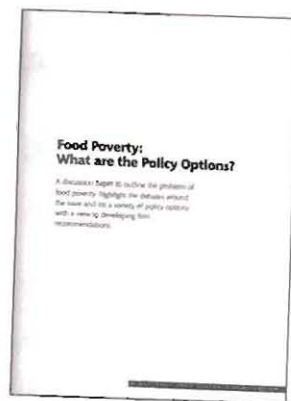
Examination of blood samples showed deficiencies in several vitamins for between ten per cent and 40 per cent of the group. Around ten per cent had iron levels that fell below the World Health Organisation's definition of anaemia.

Older people living in institutions tended to have worse nutrient status levels, with 40 per cent showing low levels of vitamins B2, C and folate, and over 50 per cent having anaemic levels of iron.

Those people with lowest socio-economic status had significantly lower levels of energy intake, along with lower levels of protein, carbohydrate, fibre and several vitamins and minerals.

The survey studied 1,275 people living independently and 412 people living in institutions. Full results are expected to be published later this year.*

* Preliminary results are given in G Smithers et al, *Nutrition and Food Science*, 3, 1998, pp 133-137. The full results will be published as S Finch et al, *National Diet and Nutrition Survey: People aged 65 years and over*, The Stationery Office, 1998.



Anti-poverty policies

As anticipated in the last Food Magazine, the National Food Alliance's paper on policies on food poverty has now been published. It covers a broad range of policy areas, including education, eating out, shopping, community support and even farming. 40 pages, price £12 including postage, from the NFA (tel 0171 837 1228).

Green adventures

South London is buzzing with green projects organised by Green Adventure, a community group promoting sustainable development and emphasising the empowerment of those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

Activities include the development of Brockwell Park's greenhouses, the running of a weekly box scheme distributing organic produce by bicycle to people's homes, the running of community gardens and Camberwell Green orchard.

The project includes training and employment aspects, educational work and a recycling scheme.

■ Details from Green Adventure, 59 Camberwell Business Centre, 99-103 Lomond Grove, London SE5 7HN, tel 0171 277 2529.

Dear Green Adventure

I watched the evening news. It was unsurprisingly filled with the usual aspects. However something caught my eye. A scheme was allowing people who didn't have access to a garden to be given the opportunity to learn how to cultivate a piece of land to call their own. I was very impressed because the project encourages community spirit including ethnic minorities from all divisions...

Under-fives guidelines

The report of the expert committee on under-fives co-ordinated by the Caroline Walker Trust published their guidelines for child carers in September.

The recommendations bring together the consensus of opinions on nutrition and feeding practices for children in nurseries, playgroups and with-child carers.

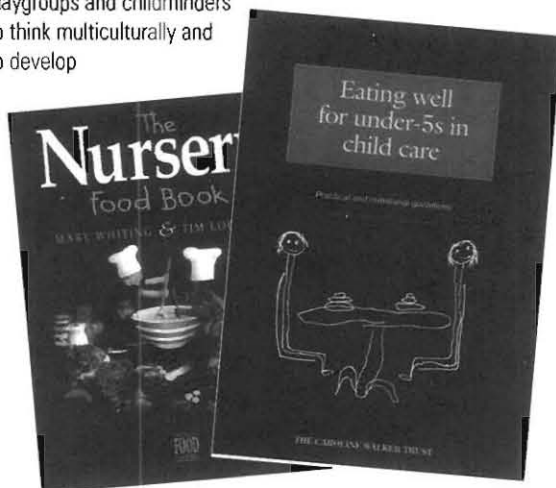
The document is exactly in line with the guidelines given in the Food Commission's highly recommended book *The Nursery Food Book* and the report's encouragement to nurseries, playgroups and childminders to think multiculturally and to develop

food as a learning resource are fully supported by us.

Those organisations needing to develop an under-fives food policy will find the new report a good stimulus for change.

■ *Eating well for under-5s in child care* £12.95 from P O Box 5, Manchester M60 3GE.

■ For details of The Food Commission's *Nursery Food Book* see Marketplace on page 12 or the green flyer enclosed with this issue.



Golden Arches East — McDonald's in East Asia

James L. Watson (Ed), Stanford University Press, c/o Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, 1997, ISBN 0-8047-3207-8, £10.95.

Would six anthropologists studying five national cultures come to a single conclusion?

No, of course not. But the combined effect of these studies of the hamburgerisation of Japan, Korea, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan certainly leads to a singular impression: McDonald's has achieved a miracle of marketing.

In much of the region, especially where Buddhism is established, the diet has for centuries been largely meat-free. Rice, vegetables and fish predominate. For the Japanese, meat-eating was long linked to Western, and hence barbaric, habits. To encourage the consumption of meat and bread has meant the projection of these foods — especially meat — as the providers of the benefits of Western barbarism, namely greater size and power. Implicit in the

argument is the Second World War defeat of the Japanese by the US, and the US economic domination of the region. Rice equals weakness, beef is strength.

In Japan the first two McDonald's opened in Minza, the most fashionable street, and in Mitsukoshi, the oldest and most prestigious Japanese department store. The fashionable locations helped convince younger people that eating while standing — an act that violates Japanese table manners — was chic. Recipe developments have also helped, such as the popular Japanese teriyaki-burger.

In Korea, McDonald's is denounced by nationalists as a vehicle of US imperialism, but its branches in Seoul are attracting increasing numbers of children celebrating their birthdays. Older children are attracted

to American cultural images, perhaps in defiance of their elders. In Taiwan, McDonald's attracts school students who gather every afternoon between three and six, as a home from home. Stores also act as points of social focus, with street markets developing on the surrounding pavements (a 'temple bazaar', comments the author).

Eating food in the street is common in Hong Kong, but the food must be hot. Cold food is associated with offerings to the dead, says the author. To gain custom from street vendors, fast food stores have to get customers to push open the doors by making the interior bright, clean, informal and unthreatening. They have to generate a cultural allegiance, largely from the young-and-affluent who were happy to reject their parents' eating habits. Only later do McDonald's managers start steering the cultural image from the fashionable to the ordinary (or reliable), as they start to woo families and urban workers.

In Beijing, McDonald's is still a novelty. 'In every respect (including the absence of chopsticks) McDonald's represents the unfamiliar, extraordinary, non-routine and unhomelike.' People come not for a casual lunch but for a formal meal or even a celebration. With childbearing

restricted to one child per family in China, children are given so much attention that they are known as 'Little Emperor/Empress' in the family. McDonald's employs older female staff to work as receptionists, each known as 'Aunt McDonald'. Her main job is to befriend the children, write their names in her 'Book of Little Honorary Guests' and establish personal links — to the extent that 'Aunts' send letters to the children before their birthdays and even pay them visits at home and in their kindergartens and primary schools.

As with much anthropology, the emphasis is on form rather than content, on cultural significance rather than political economy. Little is said about workers' conditions or the cost to the global environment, and a lot is said about what makes people into customers.

Even the question of what makes McDonald's so popular isn't fully answered. Probably the greatest attraction — more than friendly service, more than speed or low price, more than long opening hours or a reliable menu — is something recognised early on by the company's founder, Ray Kroc: *clean toilets*.

After all, when asked why they like McDonald's, most customers reply 'It's the convenience'!

Play with your Food

Joost Elffers, Stewart, Tabori and Chang, c/o Grantham Book Services, Isaac Newton Way, Alma Park Estate, Grantham, Lincs NG31 9SD, 1997, ISBN 1-55670-830-8, £13.99.

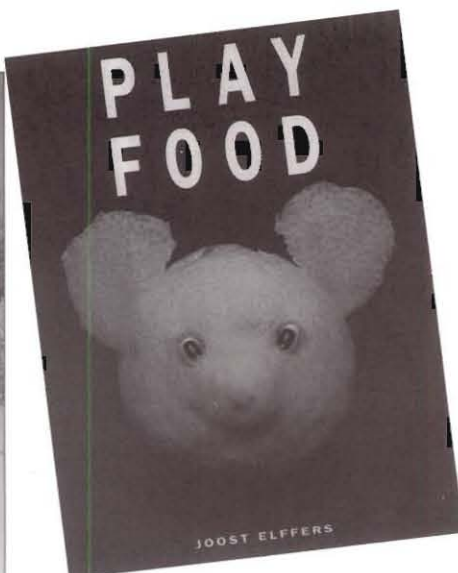
Not exactly high art, but an inspiring book all the same for those seeking an antidote to the glossy creations found in coffee table recipe books.

Here is food treated with the pleasure it deserves. Peel back the delicate skin of a lemon and add two

black-eye beans: you have a teddy bear's face (see below). Press peppercorn seeds into leeks, add a smudge of beetroot juice for lipstick: you have a wild party (see left). How do we know? Because the author thoughtfully adds a twenty-page

section showing what he did and how to try your own tricks.

There are several pages devoted to pumpkins for the forthcoming Halloween. Buy it, learn the tricks, then give it away as a Christmas present.



Manual 2000

John Elkington and Julia Hailes, Hodder & Stoughton, 338

Euston Road, London

NW1 3BH, 1998, ISBN 0-340-69679-6, £9.99.

And quite a manual it is, covering most everyday aspects of life, and a few pages dealing with death as well. There are some 2400 entries in the index from Abattoirs (concerning food hygiene) to Zurich Airport (concerning pollution control measures).

Food issues take up about 60 of the 400 pages and cover much of the ground familiar to *Food Magazine* readers: additives, irradiation, GMOs, packaging, BST, BSE, pesticides and all. It could have been written by the Food Commission — and, indeed, we must admit we provided comments on early drafts of the section.

The book could be more colourful (it is purely black and white) and it could have more space on some pages (there's barely an inch of white space in the book) but it does make good use of cross-headings, bold and regular type, tables, checklists and cartoons. It is all very busy, but so it should be.

And it is eminently update-able. *Manual 2001* could follow next year, and *Manual 2002* a year after. Nice one, J & J!

Toward Sustainable Communities — Resources for citizens and their governments

Mark Roseland, New Society Publishers, c/o Jon Carpenter Publishing, The Spendlove Centre, Charlebury, OX7 3PQ, 1998, ISBN 0-86571-374-X, £15.

A revised edition of a valuable book of resources, jam packed with ideas for more sustainable

ways of living. Much of the text centres on planning and community development issues, land use and housing, transport and energy, but urban agriculture gets a couple of pages, topped with community gardens, farmers' markets and a nod towards community kitchens and school breakfast campaigns.

The main drawback to the book is its North American identity: there are very few European or UK addresses among the ten pages of organisations listed in the further resources. The redeeming feature, however, and a particularly valuable addition in this new version, is that many of the US and Canadian organisations have web sites, and their web addresses are given with their postal addresses.



The Living Land — Agriculture, food and community regeneration in rural Europe

Jules Pretty, Earthscan Publications, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, 1998, ISBN 1-85383-516-1, £16.99.

This is a fine book for confronting conventional agribusiness and challenging its assertion that we need pesticide-laced, genetically modified, high-input farming methods to feed the next two billion mouths arriving by 2025. We don't.

The book opens with an appealing description of the nature of capital when applied to farming. Capital usually means the amount of land and property, and it is crudely valued on the amount of marketable goods it produces. What is missing from the sums done by bank managers is the 'capital' incorporated into the natural and social environment: the value of hedgerows, the value of micro-organisms in the soil, the value of the air and wind, for example, and the value of human co-operation, exchange and trust.

We greatly undervalue, for example, the millions of pounds worth of pollination that insects undertake. Imagine if had to do it ourselves! Equally, we undervalue the trust between humans which reduces the cost of transactions. We don't need solicitors or contracts for a neighbour to pick up our child from school. Ecological and social capital are taken for granted but may be more fragile than we realise.

Sustainable farming means reducing a farm's reliance on external high-energy inputs and developing instead the natural and social capital. Swap fuel and chemicals for sunshine, air, soil and all the organisms adapted to that ecological niche. Swap technical support from agribusiness suppliers and researchers for local sources and experience.

Nice in theory but what about practice? This is where the book shines through, being largely a discussion of the possibilities and the practicalities of developing sustainable, low-input farming in the European region, with example after example of initiatives being undertaken in Europe and elsewhere to develop more sustainable food production — and in the case of less 'developed' countries, to retain and protect the sustainable farming that they have.

The trouble is that farmers' box schemes are not a serious threat to Sainsbury's, nor are credit unions a threat to NatWest. The adoption of greener policies by the EU is leading to painfully slow change in practice, giving agribusiness plenty of time to develop new high-input technologies: higher-yield varieties, new formulation pesticides, genetically modified crops...

The book leaves one hoping that change will happen because it should happen, or because enough people will want it to happen. It acknowledges that there may be a problem: '...vested interests in maintaining the status quo will clearly resist any change.' But this recognition comes in the last paragraph in the last chapter of the book, just five lines from the end. The next sentence urges us all to seize opportunities and set in motion the changes needed. We will, of course, but it may not prove so easy.

Letters

Getting fresh

We loved your challenge to the companies who sell their food with the word 'Fresh' on the pack (see *Food Magazine* 42). Keep it up!

But we are a bit confused about whether it is illegal to sell food after its 'use by' or 'best before' date. What is the situation?

C and R Willson, Brentford.

If a food package states a 'use by' date then it is illegal to sell that food after the date on the packet. On the other hand, if the food has a 'best before' date then it is legally permitted to sell the food after that date, as long as the food remains fit for consumption.

The only exception is with eggs. Egg boxes have a 'best before' date on them, but this should be treated by the shop as a 'use by' date, as it is illegal to sell the eggs after their 'best before' date. Some shops use a 'display until' date, but this has no legal status.

Positively critical

I sometimes think that the *Food Magazine* is a bit too negative, and if we listened to what you say we would end up being unable to eat anything.

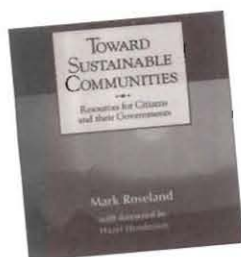
We should be able to congratulate the companies who do things better than the rest, and encourage those farmers who want to grow food as it should be grown. Isn't there room in your magazine for a bit more of the positive side of food?

Mrs M Playce, London NW12

Yes, we may sometimes sound overly negative. We take the view that an awful lot of product promotion goes on already — companies are very good at telling us how wonderful they are — and we see our role as putting an alternative viewpoint. But when we do see good practices we will say so, such as eco-labelling and fair trade schemes, and for measures to improve food quality and safety.

We have to be careful about endorsing products. We once said that baked potatoes and pizzas were good take away snacks, and the next week a pizza company issued a press release saying that the Food Commission had said their pizzas were healthy.

So we must be careful how we distribute our praise — but we take your comments on board and will do what we can to celebrate as well as to criticise.



Business schools

You would think the recent criticism of companies getting into the classroom that they would keep their heads down for a bit. Wrong. Try this:

'With marketers increasingly keen to target children at an early age and shape them into the consumers of the future, what better place to start than the

classroom! Schools marketing is now flourishing as a vehicle to target both children and parents and is one where profit potential is huge... Shouldn't you be utilising schools marketing to reach this amazingly captive audience?' asks the blurb for a forthcoming conference, Marketing to Children and Parents through Schools. There's even a discussion on how to appeal to 'the ethical consumer'.

Pity there's no mention of the 'ethical marketer'.



11.45 **HOW DO YOU SELL PRODUCTS THROUGH SCHOOLS?**
CASE STUDY: Friends Provident & BodyForm
 ✓ Putting the controversial into practice
 ✓ Getting your message across
 ✓ Making the most of a captive audience
 ✓ Achieving maximum impact for your product
 ✓ Opportunities within and outside the curriculum
 ✓ Enhancing your community image - utilising CRM to the full
William Anderson, Business Director, POISE MARKETING

Suck the other one

There's not much money to be made out of breast milk, but there's an awful lot to be made from commercial baby milks. Some of it finds its way to interesting places.

The latest research on breast feeding shows Britain to have one of the lowest rates in Europe, even the world. In England and Wales a third of mothers don't even try, and of those that do, a third give up in the first six weeks. In Scotland the figures are worse, and in Northern Ireland worse still: less than a half start breast feeding, and of those that do, nearly half again give up within six weeks. In the UK overall, some 80% of babies are bottle-fed by around two months.

These figures have just been published in the latest Annual Report of COMA, the influential expert committee on food and nutrition in the Department of Health.

The chair of COMA is one Professor P Agett, once of the government-funded Institute for Food Research and now at the University of Central Lancashire.

His department has received research support from Wyeth (makers of SMA baby milk), Milupa (baby milk) and Nutricia (Cow & Gate baby milk). He himself has received fees for helping both Wyeth and Nestec, the technical service of baby milk giant Nestlé.

Also on COMA is Professor A A Jackson, of Southampton University, whose department benefits from support given by Nestlé, Cow & Gate and Abbot Laboratories (Similac baby milk). And on COMA's panel looking specifically at child nutrition sits a Professor J A Walker-Smith of London's Royal Free Hospital, who has received research money and conference support from Wyeth, Nestlé and Cow & Gate.

What do these companies gain by spending their money like this? We should be told!

PS One other member of the main COMA committee is a Professor DP Richardson, a senior executive at Nestlé's UK headquarters. No other member of COMA is an employee of a food company.

We couldn't resist this tribute to the late John Lennon — a sparkling alcopop imported from Barcelona.

Apart from its cheeky name — John Lemon — we found among its ingredients the oddly-termed 'anti-sparkling E900'.

And we liked the warning against selling to under 18s even though no-one younger than 30 would surely remember Lennon anyway.

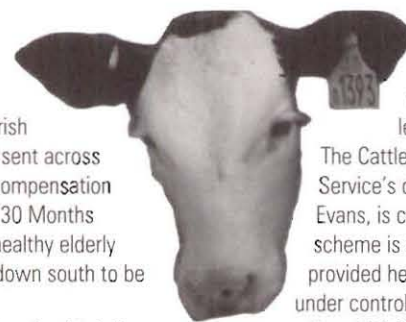


Ruminant rumours!

Are sickly cows in Eire being tagged with Northern Irish cattle tags and sent across the border for compensation under the Over 30 Months scheme? Are healthy elderly cattle brought down south to be sold as beef?

MAFF is determined to bring the full cattle passport scheme to the rest of Britain and have it up and running to fulfil its promises to the European Commission.

The passport scheme requires farmers to inform MAFF's computers



every time a calf is born or a cow joins or leaves the herd.

The Cattle Movement Service's director, David Evans, is convinced the scheme is workable, provided he can keep it under control.

Over 100,000 calves will have to be registered on the computer every week. And that's to say nothing of the number of cattle moving herds, which will require 100,000 registrations every day.



Digital Communication

On message

'Marketing is an important part of the future, both of the Ministry and for the industrial sector,' said Nick Brown, newly-appointed as Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Quite what he means about marketing MAFF we will have to wait to see.

He went on: 'I'm going to spend the summer talking to the big players in the industry — not just producers but retailers as well — to see what the Ministry can properly do to help.'

So can we expect a thorough reform of the food industry and the Ministry — or a massaging of their image. Will they generate consumer confidence, or confidence tricks? The latter, we fear, particularly as Nick Brown is a professional when it comes to marketing.

Not because he's New Labour but because, before he became a politician, he was a senior man in the marketing department at Procter & Gamble, makers of soap, dyspepsia treatments — and Olestra.