

The FOOD MAGAZINE

Campaigning for safer, healthier food for all

BSE – further trouble?

When a 3-year-old cow developed BSE this May the government told us they were not worried. They should be.

In May this year over a hundred cattle developed BSE on UK farms. One of these, the youngest, was born on August 25, 1996.

The date is significant, for earlier this year the government had introduced stringent regulations banning the use of mammalian meat and bone meal in animal feed, and on August 1st declared that all farms should be clear of old feed stocks. From that date, no animal would eat BSE-tainted feed.

We were promised that the regulations would be strictly monitored – our government even convinced the European Commission that they could lift the ban on British beef.

How, then, has an animal born after that date developed BSE? And is the government doing enough to eradicate the disease?

Agricultural Minister Nick Brown stated that either the animal ate contaminated feed or it got the disease from its mother.

The first possibility is alarming. If feed caused the new case, then not only were sufficient quantities of mammalian meat getting into cattle feed, but that this included contaminated meat. It shouldn't. Since the early 1990s all high-risk parts of the animal must be separately disposed of and incinerated. If animal feed is responsible there has been a severe breakdown of feed controls. Tougher enforcement of these controls are therefore needed, with much stronger penalties for infringement.

If maternal transmission is possible – and the government accepts that a low level of transmission could be occurring – then how is the disease transmitted from cow to calf? During pregnancy through the placenta? At birth when

maternal blood may infect the calf? Or during suckling, through mother's milk? MAFF does not know, and is not doing the research to find out.

If transmission is through the blood or the milk then these must be infectious – and infectious before the mother cow shows symptoms of BSE.

Tests on milk have failed to find any evidence of infectivity. But tests on blood have shown that the rogue disease prions are present – on the surface of white cells, to a lesser extent on red cells and to a lesser extent still in the plasma.

Yet, in an extraordinary loophole in animal feed regulations, *cattle blood can still be used in cattle feed*. This loophole should have been closed a decade ago.

Suppose neither feed nor maternal transmission is responsible? Professor Alan Dickenson, former director of the Edinburgh Neuropathogenesis Unit, believes that dung may carry the infectious agent, especially if an animal has eaten infected cattle feed. Once on the ground, the agent may lie dormant – but infectious – for years. There is some evidence that, when sheep without scrapie are put onto pasture that previously had scrapie-infected sheep, they will themselves get the disease. Scrapie is a disease very similar to BSE.

There are other possibilities: scratching posts used by sheep are thought to be one means by which scrapie is passed from animal to animal. And scrapie infectivity has also been detected in blood-sucking insects such as hay mites. Yet MAFF has funded no serious research into these potential sources of BSE transmission.

Furthermore, there is accumulating evidence that animals subjected to organophosphates, and

which are also eating a diet with a copper-manganese imbalance, may be especially prone to develop BSE. Only recently has MAFF agreed to look a little deeper into this theory.

And it is only this year that MAFF agreed to fund a research unit to test whether sheep can pass BSE on to other sheep – and thence to humans.

With 70 cases of human CJD attributed to BSE, and the likelihood of dozens if not hundreds more to come, and with half a dozen new cases of BSE still being notified *every working day* in the UK, this is no time for complacency.

Burgers on the grill

Pure lean beef? Or fatty, salty, watery, starchy, artificially-flavoured pieces of beermat?

If you still have the stomach for beef, take a look at our brand-by-brand survey of beef burgers and beef grillsteaks on pages 11–13.



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: Susie Gordon
Office & Subscriptions Manager: Ian Tokelove
Office Assistant: Phil Wenban
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,
Prof Aubrey Sheiham, Iona Liddington
Simon Wright.

Cartoons: Ben Nash.

■ Issue 50 of *The Food Magazine* July/September 2000. ISSN 0953-5047
■ Typesetting and design by Ian Tokelove of the Food Commission.
■ 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 of The Food Commission (UK) Ltd 2000 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: 020 7837 2250

Fax: 020 7837 1141

email: foodcomm@compuserve.com
website: <http://www.foodcomm.org.uk>

The Food Standards Agency

Three months into its new job, and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is getting into its stride. It has published the results of a new survey of consumer attitudes to food safety and has pledged to address the concerns that people expressed. It has acknowledged action needs to be taken to improve children's diets and it has initiated dialogue with consumer organisations about how best to improve consumer consultation, communication and representation. It has also held a number of public events and its Board meetings in public. It is also consulting over its objectives and practices (see page 6).

'So far so good' seems to be the view from within the Agency. No doubt there is relief that it has not had to face a major food crisis, but its first few months have not all been plain sailing. The Agency's response when oil seed rape sold by Advanta was found to be contaminated with Monsanto's Roundup Ready GM rape seed has, in our view, raised questions over its commitment to robustness, independence and openness.

The agriculture ministry, MAFF, was the lead agency dealing with this serious problem and there is no doubt that MAFF behaved true to its past form and was secretive and indecisive. The FSA was asked for its advice when MAFF was first informed by Advanta that contamination had occurred. The FSA said that there was no direct health risk to consumers, but failed to address concerns over consumer choice, questions over the legality of allowing non-approved GM crops into the food chain, and did little to ensure that the situation was made publicly known. On this latter point the FSA left itself open to the criticism that it had colluded with MAFF's secrecy when it took a further month for the information to be made public by MAFF. We believe the FSA should have more robustly defended the full range of consumer concerns that arose from this case and the right for all those affected to have been informed immediately. The Food Commission has raised these concerns over the Agency's response to this particular issue with FSA officials.

While it is fair to say that the Agency is still finding its feet and has shown a commitment to putting consumers first, and to being open and transparent, ultimately it will be judged not only on its commitment but on its actions.

Sue Dibb and Tim Lobstein

VOLUNTEER REQUIRED

We are looking for a volunteer to assist us with publication orders and press enquiries. We need someone who can make a regular commitment, helping us for approximately six or seven hours each week during office hours. No particular skills are required, but you will need to be numerate and happy to take phone messages and process publication orders.

Our office is small, friendly, informal and often very busy. In return for your time we can offer basic expenses (travel and lunch) and lots of thanks! If you would like to know more, please give Ian a ring on 020 7837 2250. Please leave a message if we aren't able to answer the phone and we will get back to you.

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

BSE – no time to relax	1
Shredded Wheat claims 'illegal'	3
Ribena not tooth-kind	3
Erdic fails to muzzle us	3
Child nutrition disasters	4
Nuts in nut-free meals	4
School meals review	4
Co-op bans junk ads	5
TV ads undermine diets	5
Food Standards Agency	6
Vitamins pills regulated	6
Vitamins GM free?	7
GM animal feed	7
40% extra water in meat	8
Fruit and veg lose minerals	8
Shrimp alert	8
Mushrooms have no <i>E. Coli</i>	9
Organic targets	9
European trade policies	9

Checkout

Battle of the burgers	11-13
-----------------------	-------

Loopy labels

Our round-up of laughable labels	14
----------------------------------	----

Comment

Marketing to minors	15
---------------------	----

Phytoestrogens

Special report	16-17
----------------	-------

Books

Reviews of books and reports	18
------------------------------	----

Science

What the doctor reads	19
-----------------------	----

Society

Mapping your community	20
------------------------	----

Nutrition

New European guidelines	21
Breastfeeding row	21

Letters

	22
--	----

Marketplace

	23
--	----

Backbites

	24
--	----

OUR WEB SITE

The Food Commission can now be visited on the internet at <http://www.foodcomm.org.uk> and your comments and suggestions are, as always, welcome.

Ribena loses 'tooth kind' case

The manufacturers of Ribena Tooth Kind, multinational company SmithKline Beecham, have lost a case with the Advertising Standards Authority over their claims that the drink is safe for teeth.

In a complaint brought by Action and Information on Sugars, the coalition of health workers concerned with sugar and public health, SmithKline Beecham was accused of not taking all the evidence into account when making its claims. AIS commissioned independent research showing that the drink could raise the risk of tooth decay and should not be advertised as being kind to teeth. The ASA upheld this complaint, saying that SmithKline Beecham's claims were misleading.



This is the third time that SmithKline Beecham has been in trouble over its Ribena products. In 1994 it introduced a 'sugar-free' Ribena that turned out to contain sugars, and in 1995 it falsely claimed that Ribena Juice & Fibre could 'lower your cholesterol levels'. Both products have since been withdrawn.

The findings against Ribena Tooth Kind will embarrass the British Dental Association, who had chosen this product as the first to receive an official BDA endorsement. The move by the BDA caused some internal dispute, which deepened when it was found that two of the four members of the accreditation committee had benefited from SmithKline Beecham research contracts.

■ Action and Information on Sugars, P O Box 6629, London E17 7RR (contact J Winkler on 020 7226 1672).

■ Advertising Standards Authority, 2 Torrington Place, London WC1E 8HF (020 7580 5555).

Not kind to teeth:
claims and endorsements found to be 'misleading'

Shredded Wheat made illegal claims

Last summer's promotional campaign by Shredded Wheat, which implied that the cereal could help reduce the risk of heart disease, has been declared illegal and the company responsible, Nestlé, fined £7,500 plus £13,000 costs.

The promotional packets linked the cereal to the British Heart Foundation's (BHF) Healthy Heart Campaign.

The text on the packet described how the BHF recommended cutting down on fat and salt and increasing dietary fibre, and told readers that Shredded Wheat was 98% fat free, had no added salt and 'is a great source of fibre bran'. The magistrate was not concerned with the truth of the statements, only whether they implied that the food could affect a disease (in fact the type of fibre recommended for preventing heart disease is soluble fibre, not the insoluble form found in wheat bran.)

Nestlé denied that they were breaking the food regulations by implying that the product could 'prevent, treat or cure a disease', but the stipendiary magistrate disagreed, stating that to 'the ordinary shopper' the statements about the cereal 'invite an irresistible inference that eating Shredded Wheat will reduce the risk of coronary heart disease'.

Having found Nestlé guilty of infringing the regulations, the



Illegal:
Nestlé's 'healthy heart' labelling. Over 10.5 million packs were sold in five months.

magistrate then dealt with Nestlé's second line of defence, namely that they had exercised due diligence by seeking advice before running the promotional campaign. Nestlé claimed they had consulted nutritionist Professor D P Richardson they were absolved of responsibility. But the magistrate noted that Professor Richardson was actually a senior employee of Nestlé, and furthermore that the company had been warned before and during the campaign that they might be in breach of the regulations. Nestlé's defence was dismissed and the company found guilty.

Ironically, Professor Richardson sits on the newly-established Joint Health Claims Initiative – a body set up by industry, food inspectors and consumer groups to prevent misleading health claims on food products.

Breast pill warnings upheld

The Food Commission has always believed that it is right to speak out about products that might be unsafe or which are misleadingly advertised or labelled. But the companies on the receiving end of our criticism don't always agree!

In January this year (*Food Magazine* issue 48) we raised concerns about pills being sold which claim to increase breast size. These claims had already been criticised by the Advertising Standards Authority. We were concerned about the product's safety and the lack of evidence of effectiveness. Soon after our report appeared we received a

legal letter from the manufacturers of the pills, Erdic, challenging our article. This was followed by notification that the company had complained to the Press Complaints Commission. Responding to this took time and effort, but we were sure our criticisms were firmly grounded. After investigating the complaint, the Press Complaints Commission wrote to the *Food Magazine* in June stating that it 'recognised that your publication had investigated and reported on a matter of significant public interest, particularly with regard to the alleged possible health risks of the product, and had provided

sufficient evidence to justify making your claims'.

Erdic is not the only company that has been making unacceptable claims for 'breast enhancement' pills. In May the Advertising Standards Authority upheld a complaint against another product, known as Natural Push Up, sold by Scanda Care. The ASA ruled that the advertiser did not have evidence to support claims that the product could firm or enlarge breasts. Scanda Care told us that its Natural Push Up pills are the same as those sold by Erdic.

We advise women to steer well clear of these and other 'breast



enhancement' products. And we are not alone. In June the Hong Kong Consumer Council advised women in search of Pamela Anderson style figures not to be taken in by expensive lotions and tablets that promise bigger breasts. Many contain soya, placenta or Chinese herbs, the effect of which on humans is largely unknown, the Council warned.

Survey shows children's nutrition a disaster zone

The government's long-awaited survey on the diets of British school-aged children¹ shows a litany of dietary disasters:

- many more children aged over 15 smoke than eat citrus fruit;
- 20% of children ate no fruit at all during the week of the survey;
- for every ounce of green leafy vegetables, boys eat a quarter pound of sweet biscuits and girls eat a quarter pound of confectionery;
- salt intake is about double the maximum recommended amount;
- one in every five older girls eat diets grossly deficient (below LRNI levels) in vitamins A and B2;
- half of all older girls eat diets grossly deficient in iron and in magnesium;
- 9% of older girls suffer iron-deficiency anaemia.

The nutritional deficiencies tended to be worse for children in families with lower income levels. Commenting on the report, Food Standards Agency (FSA) deputy Suzi Leather noted that for some deprived families it was likely that the children had better access to, and more choice of, street drugs than fresh fruit and vegetables.

For all children, fat intakes accounted for 35-36% of energy, and sugar intakes accounted for 16-17% of energy. For some children sugar accounted for over 30% of their

energy intake. On average, older children were typically eating over 80g of sugar in various foods and drinks each day – over a pound and quarter in weight of sugar each week.

A look at the children's teeth found that more than half of children aged 7-10 had tooth decay², and this rose to 67% among those aged 15-18. Over half of all children had evidence of dental erosion – the thinning of the enamel surface most commonly caused by acidic soft drinks.

By the age of 16, at least a quarter of children are overweight, and more than one in twenty children are medically obese (BMI over 30). A separate study of 20,000 children aged 5-14 in the Plymouth area³ found obesity rates of around 5% of the children, with increased obesity among older children (6% boys, 7% girls aged 11-14) and increased obesity among children in lower income families.

A UNICEF study⁴ showed Britain to have among the highest rates of child poverty in 18 European countries including several in Eastern Europe. The UK ranked 17th with only Italy rating a worse score.



"But Mum, wheat and sugar are vegetables!"

Household poverty is defined as households with incomes below 50% of the national median income.

Responding to the nutrition survey, the Health Minister Yvette Cooper promised to step up moves to increase fruit and vegetable consumption among children and to build on the Healthy Schools Programme. Suzi Leather for the FSA also suggested that attention might need to be paid to advertising of food to children.

¹ *National Diet and Nutrition Survey of Young People Aged 4-18*, Volumes 1 and 2, The Stationery Office, June 2000. Previous surveys have looked at people aged over 65 (1998), infants aged under 5 (1995) and adults aged 18-65 (1990). A new survey of adults is due to commence later this year.

² Kinra et al, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 54, p456-460, 2000.

³ A League table of Child Poverty in Rich Nations, *Innocenti Report Card*, Issue 1, June 2000, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence.

Shock for nut allergy sufferers

Two-out-of-five meals bought from fast food outlets and restaurants in a survey by Hull Trading Standards officers turned out to contain traces of peanuts, even though all five had been sold as being free of nuts.

The survey formed part of a Yorkshire and Humberside survey of 40 meals, of which 5% were found to be described as not containing nuts when in fact they did.

With over one in every 100 children showing allergic reactions to nuts, in some cases life-

threatening anaphylactic shock, the mis-labelling of food products is taken seriously. It takes peanut proteins at levels of only 10mg per kilogram of food to set off a reaction in some individuals, and caterers are warned to take extra care before describing any food as nut-free.

■ For survey details contact 01482 615002, www.open.gov.uk/hullcc.

School meals standards to be reviewed

Even before she has announced the forthcoming government regulations on school meals, Education Minister Jacqui Smith acknowledged that the implementation of the new rules would be reviewed by the Food Standards Authority.

With an announcement due as we went to press, Ms Smith is expected to outline the government's proposals for improving the nutritional quality of school meals, with a view to issuing guidance in September, and enacting legislation by next April, which schools must comply with. But she has already admitted to MPs

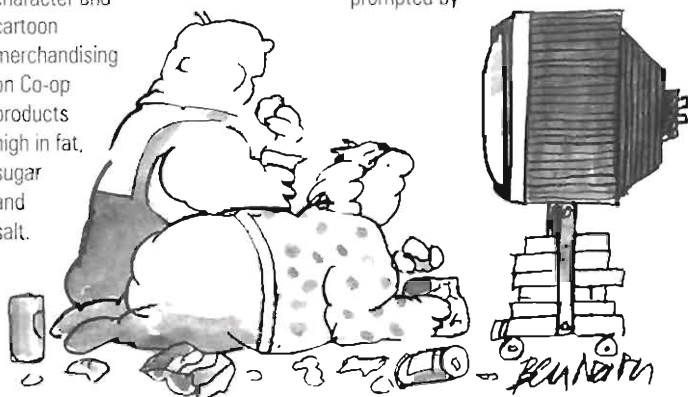
that the proposals may not work well in practice and will need to be re-assessed.

Early versions of the standards have been criticised for being overly prescriptive on what children can eat – such as baked beans twice a week, no chips three times a week – and for failing to ensure that they would deliver the nutritional improvements needed. Catering companies, however, are reported to prefer food-based rather than nutrition-based standards, in order to avoid having to assess the nutritional value of the food they provide.

Co-op bans junk food advertising to kids

The Co-op has launched a campaign to outlaw advertising of 'unhealthy' food and drink to children. The retailer says it will not advertise foods high in fat, salt or sugar during children's TV hours. It is calling on the rest of the food industry to follow its lead and for the Independent Television Commission to impose restrictions on 'junk' food advertising to kids.

The Co-op is also pledging to use its own TV advertising to target 'healthy' products at children in the autumn. It is also banning the use of character and cartoon merchandising on Co-op products high in fat, sugar and salt.



"Mum says we'll get square eyes if we watch too much telly."

Wendy Wrigley for the Co-op says: 'Our customers – parents in particular – are crying out for action to be taken against the mass advertising of these products to children, which is why we were campaigning for an all out ban. Our findings clearly demonstrate that the combined impact of food and drink advertising during children's TV viewing hours runs counter to both the government's healthy eating guidelines and the spirit of the ITC Code.'

The Co-op says its action is prompted by

repeated warnings from the government that British children face serious illness and even early death because their diets and lifestyles are so unhealthy. It commissioned its 'Blackmail' inquiry – the first in a series of inquiries examining the evidence behind public concern about the ethics of modern food production and advertising – following the publication of its Food Crimes report in May this year.

The Co-op's Blackmail report reveals:

- The extent of food and drink advertising targeted at children;
- How this advertising exploits children's vulnerabilities;
- How parents feel powerless against the marketing muscle that 'blackmails' them into buying;
- The stark contrast between government healthy eating guidelines and the fatty, sugary and salty products advertised.

Food advertised to children

	What we should eat	Food advertised to children on TV **
Bread, other cereals potatoes	34%	16%
Fruit & vegetables	33%	0%
Milk & dairy foods	15%	10%
Meat, fish & alternatives	12%	4%
Fatty & sugary foods	7%	70%

* according to the Government's National Food Guide

** Sustain's survey of TV food advertising for the Co-op

TV advertisements serve up a junk food diet

A survey commissioned by the Co-op has found virtually all TV food and drink advertisements to children are for products that are high in fat, sugar or salt – 99% in the case of adverts during Saturday morning TV.

While government healthy eating guidelines recommend that 'fatty and sugary' foods should make up no more than 7% of our diet, the research found that 70% of the products advertised to children are 'fatty and sugary' foods such as biscuits, cakes, confectionery and soft drinks. Of the 272 adverts examined by Sustain (the alliance for better food and farming), none were for fresh fruit and vegetables and only a handful were for healthier products that were not high in either fat, sugar or salt.

The Co-op's report also presents evidence of the way in which commercials target children's vulnerabilities and exploit them. Child psychologist, Dr Aric Sigman, identifies the techniques advertisers use and the way in which he believes advertising disrupts the normal process of child rearing, intervening and subverting a child's needs and desires when they are most vulnerable and pliable.

Children acknowledge that advertising encourages them to pester their parents for products. Research commissioned by the Co-op found that 73% of children say they ask parents to buy what they see on TV and 52% admit they don't take 'no' for an answer.

Parents also expressed their anger with food and drink advertisers who target their

children with sugary and fatty products, fanning the flames of pester power and setting child against parent. Over three-quarters of parents (77%) surveyed said they wanted to see a ban on the advertising of such foods to their children.

Parents told the Co-op:

'My kids are being teased about what I give them. I give them ordinary things like a ham sandwich.'

'If you have a two-year-old lying on the ground and a five-year-old screaming, I just give in, I just want to get out of the shop.'

'If we don't get it for them we are bad, we are cruel, we are the misers.'

'I don't want them to hassle me in the supermarkets... I want my children to grow up sensibly and not be led by the advertisers.'

■ For copies of the Co-op's Blackmail report: 0800 068 6727

Eat your greens

The government is to spend £2m to encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables. Public Health minister, Yvette Cooper says the initiative, launched at the beginning of July, will build on the success of projects such as healthy tuck shops in schools and schemes which use 'Food Dude' characters to make healthy food more appealing and which have already been shown to increase children's consumption of fruit and veg.

Vitamin supplements face tighter controls

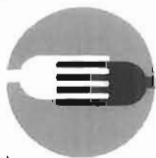
New European rules will require bottles of vitamin pills to state the recommended daily dose, carry warnings about possible health risks from excessive use and include a statement that the pills should not be used as a substitute for a varied diet. The Food Commission has called the proposals for the regulation of vitamin and mineral supplements a 'welcome step'.

The European Commission is also proposing to set minimum and maximum levels for the use of vitamins and minerals in supplements and is drawing up a positive list of vitamin and mineral substances which can be used in the manufacture of food supplements. It has also proposed that Member States should introduce a procedure of notification that would require manufacturers or importers of

supplements to inform the competent authorities when food supplements are placed on the market in their territories.

Initially the European Commission intends that these requirements apply only to vitamin and mineral supplements. The Food Commission would like to see them apply, as soon as possible, to supplements containing other ingredients such as amino acids, essential fatty acids, various phytonutrients and herbal extracts. Arguably the safety or efficacy of many of these ingredients is less well understood than for vitamins and minerals

■ **Further information:** Corinne Vaughan, Food Standards Agency. Tel: 0207 238 5982, Email: corinne.vaughan@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk



FSA looks at BSE

The Food Standards Agency held the first meeting of its BSE review panel in May, involving over two dozen nominated stakeholders and an open gallery for public observers. The review is meant to consider only those aspects of BSE regulations concerning the food supply (the FSA does not cover farming, or the medical or cosmetic use of animal products). The panel was told that it will not look backwards – the BSE Inquiry is doing that – unless it indicates a need for action in the present.

Stakeholders invited onto the panel were: 11 from the meat industry, 9 from government departments, 4 from science and 3 from consumer groups. Local authorities responsible for food control, and representatives of

families of CJD victims were not invited.

The panel's remit is to look at the present legislation on protecting the safety of consumers, and ask whether the measures taken are proportionate – that is, whether the measures can be justified given their economic costs. The results of the review, due by October but likely to be delayed when the BSE Inquiry report is published, will be presented as the FSA's findings to the relevant Ministries.

There are fears that the review is the first step towards removing safety controls, despite continuing consumer anxiety about beef and continuing BSE cases – around 30 every week – on UK farms. The next open meeting is scheduled for July 18.

FSA consults on its objectives

If you have thoughts on what the Food Standards Agency should do, and how it should operate, you now have the opportunity to comment on its Statement of General Objectives and Practices. This embodies, among other things, the Agency's commitment to:

- Put the consumer first, by developing effective and well-targeted policies on food safety and other food issues, by promoting the interests of UK consumers in Europe, and by providing clear advice and information;
- Build and maintain a reputation for expertise, excellence and independence;
- Work closely with all stakeholders, other public bodies and Government Departments with an interest in food safety, and other consumer interests in relation to food;
- Be accountable, open, consistent and proportionate and adopt best practice in the way it works.

The Agency plans to consult at a later date on more detailed policy statements and procedures, covering its approach to openness, consultation, enforcement and risk

■ **Deadline for comments is July 21. The consultation package is available from the Agency's website at www.foodstandards.gov.uk/consultations.htm.**

Comments can be sent to Judicaelle Hammond at the Food Standards Agency, Room 5/21 Hannibal House, PO Box 30080, London SE1 6YA, tel: 020 7972 2391, fax: 020 7972 2391, email: judicaelle.hammond@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Open Board meetings

If you want to see the FSA in action, its Board meetings are held in public. The first two meetings were held in London and Glasgow. Future meetings are:

29 July 2000	London
21 September 2000	N Ireland
12 October 2000	London
9 November 2000	Wales
14 December 2000	London
11 January 2001	York
8 February 2001	London
8 March 2001	Exeter

■ **Details of venues will be available closer to each meeting, from:** www.foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk, or call the press office on 020 7972 2444.

Better labels

The FSA has published a summary of the responses received to the Better Labelling Initiative. Over 1,000 responses were received, 93% of them from individuals.

The key areas identified for action are:

- Improved ingredients listings including GM and clearer identification of additives
- Country of labelling origin, particularly for meat and poultry
- More information on how food is produced
- Labels that are easier to read and understand
- Better date marking
- Fuller and mandatory nutritional labelling
- An end to misleading claims and information

The FSA will discuss the findings in October and will examine the options for taking action.

■ **Copies of the summary report of written responses to the 'Better Food Labelling' Initiative can be found at www.foodstandards.gov.uk or by telephoning Janet McKenzie on 020 7238 6463, e-mail: www.labelling@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk**

Are your vitamin pills GM-free?

Some statements by nutrition supplement companies that their products are GM-free may be unintentionally misleading, the industry's trade association – the Health Food Manufacturers Association – believes. Their view is based on concerns that the written guarantees that many companies require from suppliers, that ingredients are from non-GM sources, may not be accurate.

To gauge how the supplements industry is responding to consumers who wish to know the GM status of products, the Food Commission sent a detailed questionnaire to over 150 companies whose products are sold in the UK. We asked companies to indicate whether their products were free of GM ingredients and derivatives, or used GM enzymes or micro-organisms in the production of ingredients. We also asked

companies what assurances they received about the GM status of the ingredients used.

Only a minority of companies responded and these were typically smaller suppliers. However their responses indicate that the majority would like to be able to guarantee that their products are completely non-GM to agreed standards – a view shared by the HFMA itself. Yet, while some companies believe that their product range is already non-GM, others are unsure.

This uncertainty is partly because there is little agreement on what GM-free, or non-GM should mean in practice. But it also reflects the particular problems companies selling supplements face in getting accurate information on the sources and production methods of all ingredients. The complexity of the supply chain

can mean that it is impossible to trace the source of all ingredients.

Our survey found that companies tend to rely for their 'non-GM' status on written guarantees from their suppliers. But the Health Food Manufacturers' Association has warned that in some cases such guarantees may be misleading as suppliers themselves may not have full knowledge of the sources of ingredients.

The HFMA is seeking to assist its members by providing a guide to those ingredients for which non-GM forms are available, and those which currently are not. We would also like to encourage the HFMA to play a positive role in drawing up acceptable criteria for non-GM status and to assist those of its members who wish to sell genuinely non-GM products to communicate this.

In brief

GMs and trade unions

The leading UK public sector trade union UNISON has produced a 50-page report on concerns about genetically modified crops and the problems they may cause, and are calling for a moratorium on any further commercial development of GM food until more research has been done.



■ **Details**
from UNISON Communications
Unit, 1 Mabledon Place, London
WC1H 9AJ (www.unison.org.uk).

Patenting

Privatising Knowledge, Patenting Genes: The Race to Control Genetic Information is a new Briefing from GeneWatch which examines the issues behind the control of genetic information and considers how the public interest should be protected.

■ **Available from GeneWatch UK.**
Tel: 01298 871898 E-mail:
gene.watch@diapipex.com
Website:
<http://www.genewatch.org>

GM animal feed update

The government's Advisory Committee on Animal Feedstuffs (ACAF) is rethinking its provisional view on the labelling of GM animal feed following public consultation.

As we reported in our last issue (FM49), ACAF asked for comments on its view that GM animal feed labelling should concentrate on the absence of GM material. As we pointed out, this would be at odds with the anticipated EU proposals on positive GM labelling of animal feed expected this autumn – a point acknowledged by the Chair of ACAF, Professor Phillip Thomas, in a letter to the Food Commission. The rethink also reflects a majority of those responding to ACAF's consultation who, we have been told, favour positive labelling of GM in animal feed.

Professor Thomas has told the Food Commission that his

committee's recommendation is still under consideration and that it will consider 'positive' labelling in reaching its final view. The Committee hopes to make its final recommendations in October.

Meanwhile, at its meeting in June, the Committee discussed the need for guidance to ensure

consistency in the use of non-GM claims relating to animal feed, as many supermarkets are demanding assurances that meat and animal products are not produced from animals fed GM feed.

Lib Dems question legality of GM animal feed

Liberal Democrat GM spokesman, David Heath MP, has written to Professor Phillip Thomas, the Chair of ACAF, seeking clarification on the legality of using GM crops in animal feed. 'As no risk assessments have ever been conducted into the safety of these products for animals there has been a failure to comply with European law on this matter,' he writes.

The Lib Dems are calling for an urgent rethink on policy towards the continued use of GM in animal feed. 'We do not know the long-term implications for human and animal health. With 2 million tonnes of GM animal feed imported into this country every year, consumers are entitled to know whether the meat on their barbecue has been pumped full of modified soya.'

Reprieve for Neem tree

In a victory for environmentalists and farmers, the patent for the Indian Neem tree has been revoked by the European Patents Office. This marks a symbolic shift in attitude towards the patenting of plants from developing countries by multinational companies.

Dutch chicken was 40% water

Imported frozen chicken breasts have been found with so much added water that is nearly outweighs the actual meat. Tests by trading standards officers have found added water levels as high as 40% in chicken meat imported by L & M Food Group from sources in the Netherlands. The company has been fined £3000 plus £2400 costs.

The early results of the tests had been sent to MAFF as part of a call to implement European-wide regulations restricting the amount of water that could be added to meat products. MAFF officials replied that they thought it was possible to achieve

this level of added water only through deliberate action, for example by tumbling the meat in brine or injecting brine directly. They added 'Primarily water at this level is added as an economic measure (not necessarily fraudulently) and is often accompanied by the use of chicken flavouring.'

MAFF added that the product would not easily grill or fry as the water would cause it to steam. It might, however, be used in casseroles and other catering dishes.

European standards for frozen meat and the labelling of added water are currently under discussion,

and a draft Directive on marketing standards for poultrymeat is being circulated for comment

■ **Contact Mark Woolfe, Food Labelling and Standards Division, Food Standards Agency, 020 7238 6480 www.foodstandards.gov.uk.**



"It's naturally wet madam.
Free range chickens love the rain."

Veg have lost their minerals

A comparison of the mineral content of fruits and vegetables appears to show a dramatic decline in a period of 50 years.

Comparing the first edition of the UK nutrition bible, *The Composition of Foods* published in 1940 with the most recent edition published in 1991, researcher David Thomas has shown that key trace elements, such as iron, copper and magnesium, have declined – in some cases to less than

20% their previous levels. Care must be taken in interpreting the figures, though, as changing plant varieties (usually towards higher yields), changing sources (e.g. imported instead of home-grown) and changing analytical techniques may make it hard to compare like with like.

Nonetheless, it would appear that the UK diet is getting fewer nutrients from its fruit and vegetables than previously, and this should concern

nutrition policy-makers. The individual solution is to take mineral supplements, as proposed by the author of the report (who also sells supplements).

But for the population in general it is time to reconsider modern agricultural practices and how these affect the nutrients in food, and put this at the top of the public health agenda.

Cheap shrimp has its price

The Industrial Shrimp Action Network is urging consumers and importers to say 'no' to tropical shrimp until more sustainable and just methods of farming shrimp are introduced.

As world demand for tropical shrimp – also called giant prawns, tiger shrimp, king prawns and scampi – increases, industrial trawling and intensive aquaculture are damaging coral reefs and degrading mangrove forests in Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Shrimp farming also contributes to over-fishing in the oceans, since more than four kilos of fish, used as feed, is needed to produce one kilo of shrimp. The largest importers of shrimp are Japan, USA, UK and the rest of Europe.

■ **For more information: Industrial Shrimp Action Network (ISA Net) - UK Branch, c/o PO Box 3137, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10, IVJ. Email: cornerhouse@gn.apc.org**

Changing mineral content 1940-1991

mg per 100 grams

	Magnesium		Calcium		Iron		Copper	
	1940	1991	1940	1991	1940	1991	1940	1991
Berry fruit	20.9	17.3	42	25	0.9	0.6	0.15	0.09
Cherry + damson	10.5	10.0	20	18	0.4	0.3	0.08	0.07
Apple	4.3	5.0	4	4	0.3	0.1	0.07	0.20
Rhubarb	13.6	13.0	103	93	0.4	0.3	0.13	0.07
Brassicas	55.8	54.0	349	204	4.5	4.0	0.41	0.11
Other leaf vegetables	113.2	67.0	909	393	10.9	5.5	0.67	0.09
Onions etc	31.0	18.0	227	84	3.5	2.9	0.30	0.13
Root vegetables	105.1	81.0	299	220	5.2	3.0	0.72	0.21
Total	354.4	265.3	1953	1041	26.1	16.7	2.53	0.97
% change	-25%		-47%		-36%		-62%	

David Thomas *A study on the mineral depletion of the foods available to us as a nation over the period 1940 to 1991, c/o Trace Minerals Ltd, East Sussex (tel 01342 824684).*



Magic mushrooms: the disappearing *E coli*!

Newspaper headlines claimed that organic food was contaminated with *E coli* 0157. But, reports Catherine Fookes, the story was quite untrue.

On 12 May the Food Standards Agency (FSA) issued a joint statement with Tesco, saying 'limited testing has shown possible presence of *E coli* 0157 in Tesco's organic mushrooms.' The same day Tesco withdrew all organic mushrooms on sale in their stores.

The *Daily Mail* ran a front page article casting doubt on all organic foods and the practice of using animal manure to fertilise food crops.

On 13 May the FSA issued a second joint statement with Tesco, stating that further tests conducted by the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) have confirmed 'that the presence of *E coli* 0157 is not as serious as was initially suspected ... the *E coli* detected was a non-toxic variety ... Consumers who are concerned ... can be reassured by these findings.'

But even that turned out to be wrong. Amazingly for such a reputable organisation, the PHLS admitted that the error had been completely their own fault.

It took them four days to do it, but on 17 May the PHLS admitted that there was an error in laboratory testing of the mushrooms. 'The bacteria were not present in the mushrooms ... It is possible that the sample from the mushrooms was contaminated by what is called the 'control' strain which had been in use in the laboratory. There is absolutely no risk to public health from this incident.'

Unfortunately, the *Daily Mail* never reported the climbdown. Still, let's hope the magic 'control' strain is not as contagious as the misleading story!

ORGANIC FOOD IN E-COLI SAFETY ALERT

The story that never was.
The *Daily Mail*'s front page on
May 12.

Organic standards under review

UKROFS (The UK Register of Organic Food Standards) is reviewing its food processing standards. UKROFS standards are the UK interpretation of EU organic regulations. The aim of the current review is to make the standards more explicit and detailed, to avoid

differing interpretations and to deal with the expansion in the range of processed organic products.

■ Details from: Anna Ashmole, Forrethill Cottage, Broughton, Biggar, ML12 6QH.

Government confused over organic targets

The UK Government has stated that it is reluctant to set targets for organic production or consumption because targets will distort the market, and would be 'creating a market that couldn't sustain itself.'

However, the Prime Minister put just such a target on the record in February at the National Farmers Union Conference when he stated 'we envisage a trebling of the area under organic farming by 2006.'

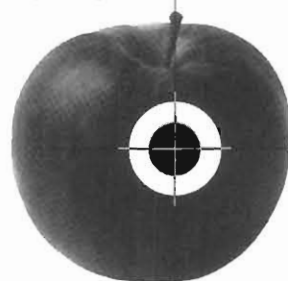
A trebling of area would take the organic sector up to 9% of UK farmland by 2006. But the current Government support levels for organic farming are failing to support even this modest target, let alone the target adopted by MPs in a Private Members Bill – the Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill – which has a target of 30% by 2010.

It is no coincidence that the four countries in Europe with the highest percentage of agricultural land in organic production have set targets, and developed and implemented action plans to ensure the targets are met.

Last February, Tony Blair suggested a UK target of 9% organic by 2006. MPs are pressing for a target of 30% organic in the UK by 2010, and their bill – the Organic Targets Bill – is aiming for a Second Reading on 21 July. The Bill is supported by 221 MPs and 70 organisations.

But even with a Second Reading, the Bill will not become law without further support from MPs and the public.

AIM FOR ORGANIC



For more details about the campaign please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: The Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill Campaign, c/o Sustain: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF (tel 020 7837 1228, www.sustainweb.org).

Countries in Europe which have set targets

Country	Target	% agriculture area organic when target set	% agricultural area organic 1999/2000
Sweden	10% by 2000 20% by 2005	1.6%* (1994)	7.6%* #
Austria	10% by 2000 (NGO target)	9.7% (1995)	8.7%~
Denmark	7% by 2000	1.5% (1995)	5.89%
Finland	5% by 1999	3.25% (1996)	5.26%
Norway	5% by 2000	0.57% (1995)	1.87%
France	3-5% by 2005	0.55 (1997)	0.83%

Source: Nic Lampkin, Welsh Institute of Rural Studies, Aberystwyth.

* This figure is for combined certified and non-certified land

The Swedish organic certification body, CRAV, estimates that this figure is now 11.2%

~ IFOAM estimates that the true figure for 2000 will be 10.09%.

Europe versus the World

Consumer concerns are rarely at the top of big business agendas, yet they may prove the most effective way to protect the lucrative European market. Tim Lobstein reports.

Europe has the richest food market in the world, according to EU agriculture commissioner Franz Fischler. With nearly 400 million relatively affluent consumers, and more as the Union expands, the stalls, shops, supermarkets and caterers are a highly profitable outlet for farmers and food processors alike.

Today, some four-fifths of that valuable market is supplied by European farmers, a marked change from the scene of 50 years ago. Then, the post-war food market was weak, and suppliers came largely from overseas – from the USA, Canada and Australia particularly.

Now the battle between agricultural economies reaches a new stage with the World Trade Organisation's determination to liberalise agricultural trade and declare illegal any direct subsidies to farmers. The Common Agricultural Policy which has built a hugely successful production machine must be altered to comply with the WTO's pronouncements. The EU's markets must be opened to the USA and its free-trading, cheap-food allies – which now include Brazil, Argentina, South Africa and other large producers.

Cheap chickens from Thailand, cheap chicken-feed from Brazil, cheap fruit from India, cheap juice from South Africa, potatoes from Egypt, beans from Zimbabwe – the advantages of cheap labour and intensive prairie farming can give overseas competitors the edge when it comes to supplying our needs.

How is EU agriculture to fight back? The answer appears to be the classic approach – compete and protect – with a new twist.

The competing will be as it always has been, with investment in our own version of prairie farming in East Anglia and the plains of northern France and southern Germany, and new plains in Eastern Europe as the community enlarges.

But the forms of protection may well be about to change. With direct subsidies for farm production becoming illegal under the WTO trade rules, Europe's agricultural strategists have to find new ways to support what Europe's farmers do, and new ways to declare that an overseas product cannot be sold in Europe.

The new forms of farm subsidy are already being discussed, and the green and environmentally friendly themes are much to the fore, along with support for non-food agricultural activities and farming diversification. But these do not necessarily help farmers to compete in the food market in Europe, and other measures will need to be explored.

Slowly, a pattern is becoming recognisable. We have already seen a few running battles between the EU and the USA on agricultural imports, notably the use of hormones in beef production. Now other moves are emerging, and gradually their significance for trade, and trade protection, may begin to emerge.

These include:

- banning the use of antibiotics as routine growth promoters;

- adopting tight regulations on the definitions of organic production;
- increasing animal welfare standards required at farm and slaughter;
- limiting or even banning the use of GM material in the food supply;
- requiring the removal of specified bovine offal at slaughter, even in non-BSE countries;
- requiring country-of-origin labelling.

The huge advantages for policy-makers is that nearly all these ideas can be spun as consumer-friendly, environment-friendly proposals. The arguments for sustainable and healthier production methods – so long dismissed by agribusiness – could become the key to economic survival.

It is possible to imagine strategists going even further. One excellent measure would be to require food to declare its 'food miles' – the distance that the product and its ingredients and packaging have travelled – as an indicator of the environmental damage done by excessive transportation.

In the name of consumers, health or the environment, it is possible to see a form of trade protection being developed in Europe. Free-traders and free-market supporters may be unhappy with this, but it could mark a significant shift in European politics – with the EU simultaneously defending popular pro-consumer policies, increasing support for non-intensive farming, and keeping the market well protected.

It is surely not a coincidence that the European Commission Directorate on Trade has opened a 'dialogue with civil society' looking specifically at health, agriculture and sustainable development.

Children's food and food labelling

New posters!

The Food Commission Guide to *Food Labelling*

- Food labels and the law
- Making sense of small print
- Can you trust the claims?
- What's its origin?
- Avoiding allergies
- How healthy is it?
- Avoiding additives
- What's it really made of?

Our new labelling poster will help you find out what's really in the food you buy. The poster lists the possible problem additives and explains how to understand and use nutrition labelling.

£2.50

The Food Commission Guide to *Children's food*

- The tricks of the trade
- Judging the junk
- Spotting the hidden sugars
- Additives
- How healthy is children's food?
- Parent power – how to fight back!

Best of all, the poster has lots of proven tips which will encourage your children to eat healthier food, plus some quick-and-easy, delicious recipe suggestions.

£2.50

To get a copy of either poster, please post a cheque or postal order for £2.50 (made out to The Food Commission) to:
The Food Commission, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.

We can also take credit card payments on 020 7837 2250, but please note that the minimum order when ordering by credit card is two posters for £5.00. Price includes postage and packing.

CHECKOUT

Battle of the burgers

Judging the quality of meat products is tricky, with very little help from the label. So we bought some burgers and gave them a grilling.

Children love burgers, it seems. The latest survey of teenagers shows that a third of girls and half of boys are eating around four burgers each, every week. But what exactly are they eating?

We took a look at the popular products on sale in supermarkets, especially the small print. We found confusing labels (some gave details for uncooked burgers, some only for cooked burgers), sneaky claims (e.g. "Includes 100% beef") and loads of non-meat ingredients padding out the product (including starches, rusk, soya and rice, boosted with cheap flavouring and loads of salt).

But it isn't easy to make a decision as you scurry around the aisles. The label will not tell you the amount of prime lean meat, nor the amount of added water, added starches, proteins or bulking agents. And although the additives are listed, it isn't clear why they are needed – if indeed they really are.

Fatty meat

We surveyed 41 popular frozen beef burgers and grillsteaks, and found every single one was using meat that was fatter than average beef mince. The majority used starchy fillers to stretch out the fatty meat, and flavour-boosting ingredients to boost taste.

Compared with regular minced beef, which rates 16% fat, we found that every frozen burger we studied had used fattier meat – ranging from 18% to over 50%. The figures are impossible for a shopper to find, because the amount of fat in the product, the proportion of the product that is meat and whether or not the figures are for grilled or raw meat, have to be taken into account.

Two-thirds of the products we examined were less than 90% pure meat, with some as little as 60% meat – and the ones with lowest meat content had used the fattiest meat.

■ See our full survey on pages 12-13

Big burger rip-off

Several burger manufacturers are charging a hefty premium – just by changing the shape! They charge much more for one 4-oz burger than two 2-oz burgers even though they add up to the same weight of burger and are made from the same recipe.

A one-pound weight pack of prime beef burgers from Asda will cost you £1.25 for eight small burgers or £1.59 for four quarterpounders, even though the contents are identical.

And Safeways will charge you £1.49 for eight burgers weighing a pound, but a whopping £1.89 for four same-recipe quarterpounders.

A burger made by you

Choose your beef mince – or ask for cuts of meat to be minced for you at the butcher's – and add a small amount of seasoning. Shape into burgers and grill. The protein in the lean meat is the glue that holds the mince together as it cooks.

A burger made for you

At its best, a bought frozen burger will be virtually pure beef with a little seasoning. It won't be as lean as your own, and certainly not as lean as you could make with a low-fat mince. It will probably be made from meat more finely minced, to maximise the stickiness and keep the burger together. A good burger doesn't need any flavour boosters, colouring, starchy fillers or protein stretchers.

But a cheaper burger will not just use fattier meat, and possibly other parts of the carcass such as gristle, sinew, nerve and skin, but will also use starchy fillers, such as white bread rusk, white flour, onion paste, cornflour and even beet or pea fibre, plus extra water. Water is the cheapest ingredient, and manufacturers strive to increase the WHC (water holding capacity – the amount of water the meat normally holds) and WBC (water binding capacity – the amount of additional water the product can be persuaded to hold) of their products.

To keep these ingredients together the product may also include extra protein from low-cost sources such as soya extracts and wheat gluten. The product might then taste like greasy cardboard, so to make it more appealing the manufacturer would add flavour boosters such as yeast extract, malt extract, sugar and monosodium glutamate as well as more expensive ingredients such as herbs and spices. And there will also be a large pinch of salt – we found up to 4 grams of salt in a single serving.



Identical recipes, identical weights, but one costs 27% more.

Burger bites

Our survey found fatty, salty products pumped up with starch and water, and burgers made from a mixture of animal species.

When we went shopping we found a wide variety of burgers – fresh and frozen, beef, chicken, lamb and some burger-like ‘re-formed’ meats such as grill steaks, ribsteaks and pork grills. We took a close look at the labels and noted the ingredients and the nutrition details – where the manufacturers had provided them.

Some products make liberal use of cheap protein substitutes instead of lean meat; some bulk out the meat with fillers such as pea and beet fibres; some try to improve the flavour with extra flavour boosters; and some simply go for cheap, fatty cuts of meat.

For the purposes of this survey, we discounted all the coated burgers – the meat wrapped in breadcrumbs and/or batter, as these could not easily be compared with the rest of the bunch. We included everything called burgers unless they were clearly lamb or pork-based, and we included other burger-like beef products such as frozen grill steaks. Some products did not state clearly on the front of the packaging which meats they contained – Tesco economy burgers, for example, declared in the small print that they were actually made from chicken, beef, pork and pork rind.

Our survey does not take into account the origins of the meat, although we have included some brands from organic ranges, which guarantee animal welfare and environmental standards far higher than normal British farms.



Organix Favourites beef burgers – one of the better choices

What we checked for

Non-meat protein

Textured wheat protein ● Soya isolate ● Soya protein isolate ● Hydrolysed vegetable protein (HVP) ● Casienate

Starchy and fibrous bulking agents

Pea fibre ● Beet fibre ● Rusk ● Breadcrumbs ● Rice flour ● Wheat flour ● Maize starch ● Maltodextrin

Cheap flavour-boosters

Unspecified flavouring agents ● Monosodium glutamate ● Yeast extract ● Malt extract ● Sugar

Preservatives etc

These shouldn't be necessary in frozen product, unless the ingredients aren't fresh. We looked for: sulphites (eg E223) and antioxidants (E304, E307).

Nutrition

Label-readers beware! Some products give nutrient values for raw products, some for cooked. There is around 30-40% loss of fat during grilling.

We looked at the total saturated fat in raw products, and the fattiness of the meat – all figures are based on raw product estimates.

Better burgers

In terms of quality, the following score fairly well with the meat being rated at less than 25% fat. Of these, only the Organix Favourites did not use cheap flavour boosters.

The best

Home-made using low fat or regular minced beef

Otherwise

Dalepak sandwich burgers
Organix Favourites beef burgers
Pure Organics beef burgers
Tesco grillsteaks
Tesco quarterpounders

Fatty failures

Lean meat is a source of good nutrients including iron and B vitamins. Meat with a lot of fat, especially saturated fat, is bad for the heart. For children and adults, the total daily amount of saturated fat shouldn't exceed 20-25 grams.

The better products have less than 10g saturated fat in a 4oz serving (uncooked), while we estimated three of Iceland's had over 20g.

The fattiest one. Even after grilling a 4oz serving of Iceland's Grillsteaks would give you a whopping 36g fat, 16g saturated fat.



Salt sellers

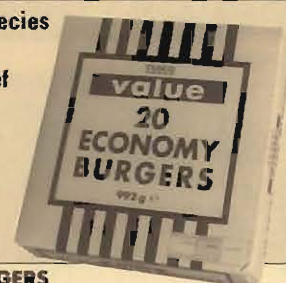
We found excessive amounts of salt in some burgers. Children and adults should have a maximum of 5-6 grams of salt in a day. The best products had less than 1g salt per 4oz serving, while the following had the most:

Sainsbury frozen chargrilled beef burgers – 3g salt
Stateside frozen grillsteak – 3g salt
Safeway frozen beef burgers and quarterpounders – 4g salt

The saltiest one: Even after grilling, a 4oz serving gives you 4g salt, before you add your own.



The three species burger – chicken, beef and pork.



VALUE BURGERS

INGREDIENTS: Chicken (39%), Water, British Beef (13%), Rusks (Wheat Flour; Salt), Pork (8%), Pork Rind, Salt, Onion Powder, Colour (Plain Caramel), Wheat Flour, Flavouring, Preservative (Sodium Metabisulphite), Antioxidant (Ascorbic Acid).

CHECKOUT

Burgers – how they compare

	meat %	added protein	added filler	flavour boosters	preservatives	% saturated fat (uncooked)*	fattiness of meat*
Home-made using low fat minced beef	100	no	no	no	no	4	○
Home-made using regular minced beef	100	no	no	no	no	7	○○
Asda prime beef grill steaks	97	no	no	no	no	16	○○○○○
Asda Farm Stores economy beef burgers	60	yes	yes	yes	yes	16	○○○○○
Asda prime beef burgers/quarter pounders	80	no	yes	no	no	14	○○○○○
Birds Eye Aberdeen Angus mighty beef grill steaks	90	no	yes	yes	yes	16	○○○
Birds Eye homestyle beef burgers	95	no	no	yes	no	11	○○○
Birds Eye beef grillsteaks	90	no	yes	yes	yes	11	○○○
Birds Eye 100% beef burgers	98	no	no	yes	yes	13	○○○
Birds Eye Aberdeen Angus beef mega burgers	80	yes	yes	yes	yes	9	○○○
Birds Eye beef burgers/quarter pounders	81	yes	yes	yes	yes	9	○○○
Dalepak flame grilled beef grills	94	yes	yes	yes	no	12	○○○
Dalepak gold beefburgers	98	no	yes	yes	no	12	○○○
Dalepak quarter pound sandwich burgers	83	yes	yes	yes	no	8	○○
Dalepak peppered beef grills	89	yes	yes	yes	no	9	○○○
Dalepak flaming big burgers	84	yes	yes	yes	no	12	○○○○○
Iceland beefburgers with seasoning	98	no	yes	yes	no	16	○○○○○
Iceland chargrilled quarterpounders	97	no	yes	yes	no	18	○○○○○
Iceland beefburgers with onion	80	yes	yes	yes	no	18	○○○○○
Iceland quarterpounders	80	yes	yes	yes	no	16	○○○○○
Iceland beef grillsteaks	95	yes	yes	yes	no	22	○○○○○
Organix Favourites beef burgers	81	no	yes	no	no	9	○○○
Pure Organics beefburgers	80	yes	yes	yes	no	8	○○○
Ross tendergrill beef grillsteaks	80	yes	yes	yes	yes	11	○○○○○
Safeway mega burgers	99.5	no	no	no	no	14	○○○
Safeway farm assured beef peppered grillsteaks	85	no	yes	no	yes	13	○○○
Safeway beef burgers/quarter pounders	82	yes	yes	yes	yes	14	○○○○○
Sainsbury quarter pounders	82	yes	yes	yes	no	10	○○○
Sainsbury thick and juicy quarter pounders	82	yes	yes	yes	no	9	○○○○○
Sainsbury grill steaks	98	no	no	yes	no	14	○○○○○
Sainsbury chargrilled beef burgers	80	no	yes	yes	yes	11	○○○○○
Sainsbury microwaveable quarterpounders	83	yes	no	yes	no	16	○○○○○
Sainsbury 100% beef burgers	98	no	no	yes	no	11	○○○
Sainsbury beef burgers with onion	82	no	yes	yes	yes	16	○○○○○
Stateside diner supervalue grillsteaks	60	yes	yes	yes	no	14	○○○○○
Tesco beef burgers/quarterpounders with onion	82	yes	yes	yes	yes	12	○○○○○
Tesco 100% quarterpounders	99	no	no	no	no	9	○○
Tesco economy burgers	60	no	yes	yes	yes	12	○○○○○
Tesco beef grillsteaks	97	no	no	yes	no	11	○○○

NB data obtained in May 2000. Formulations may change.

* Based on estimates from cooked data where uncooked data was not available.

Estimated fattiness of the meat used in the burger:

○ = under 10%, ○○ = under 20%, ○○○ = under 30%, ○○○○ = under 40%, ○○○○○ = over 40%

Burger and 'steaks'

The burger originally derives from a thick German sausage from the town of Hamburg, which was served as a single slice. The name was adapted for the squashed meatball beloved of Americans and now the most popular fast

food in the world. The name Hamburger has spawned Lamburger, Baconburger, and now even Ham Burger – a ham flavoured pork burger.

With the development of machines that can finely chop gristle and rind into small, edible pieces, and the development of chemical binders that can enhance the stickiness of the

protein in the meat, new products are now available. These are usually referred to as grills, grillsteaks, ribsteaks or a similar name, and it is legally required to declare on the packaging that the product is made from re-shaped chopped meat.

CHECKOUT

Loopy labels

Our round up of laughable labels and potty products

Nice logo – but what does it mean?

The shiny red tractor that has recently appeared on many supermarket foods, from meat and poultry to fruit and vegetables, is designed to

steer us towards buying British and supporting British producers. Backed by the National Farmers Union (NFU), many might feel that the British Farm Standard scheme is a worthy one, in

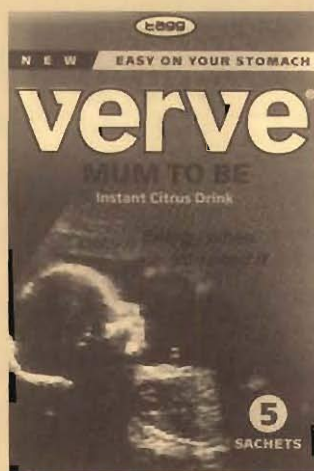
light of the financial

hardships currently faced by many UK farmers at the mercy of the strong pound.

Yet the scheme is already facing criticism over the way in which it promotes its animal welfare and environmental credentials. Claims to deliver 'the highest standard of food', that environmental and animal welfare standards are 'exact'; that food is always 'produced with the interests of livestock and the environment in mind' and that the standard is 'kind to animals' and 'caring to the environment' are likely to mislead, we believe. We've told the Advertising Standards Authority that such claims are likely to be understood by the general public to mean that foods carrying the British Farm Standard logo are produced to higher animal welfare and environmental standards than they actually are.

Farm assurance schemes, which are the basis of the British Farm Standard, do not require producers to meet the higher standards required for organic or free-range systems, or by other animal welfare-friendly schemes such as the RSPCA's Freedom Foods scheme. The BFS scheme doesn't require a farmer in the UK to do anything more than the law already requires.

And in a further twist that could add to consumer confusion, it has emerged that non-British food could carry the British Farm Standard logo. That's because EU rules prohibit the exclusion of imported food from such schemes, although the NFU says it has the assurance of retailers, Asda, Sainsbury's and Tesco that they will only use the scheme on British produce. But in law, any EU product grown to UK standards can have a cute tractor logo put on the pack.



They've got a Verve

What is this – a drink especially formulated for mothers-to-be at a time 'when your body demands much more fuel to support you and your baby? With 'all natural long chain carbohydrates and amino acids'. Sounds helpful, and presumably contains lots of vitamins, especially that one needed for pregnancy, folic acid.

Well, perhaps not too much energy, as each sachet supplies just 35 Calories, barely 2% of a woman's needs. And not so many amino acids – at just 0.2g this is less than a two-hundredth of a woman's daily needs!

As for the vitamins, the company says 'Vitamins such as B6 and folic acid have been especially omitted so that you can carefully control how much of these you may wish to take without having to add up the amounts from supplement to supplement.' So kind of them!

In its favour, this product will supply a dose of vitamin C. And a dose of aspartame. And a hole in your pocket at £2.49 for five sachets.

100% nonsense

At first glance this is a boast for 100% beef – but the claim only applies to part of the product! The product is only 80% meat. The other ingredients are 100% non-beef!



Loyd's sauce!



TV's 'celebrity' Loyd Grossman is happy to put his name to a sauce described on the front of the label as 'A sauce of sweet red peppers, tomatoes & Extra

Virgin Olive Oil...' But what's this? The small print tells us that the main oil used is sunflower oil, while olive oil is four more ingredients further down the list, at barely 1% of the product.

Come off it Loyd! Put it in your new show – Stuff the Shopper.

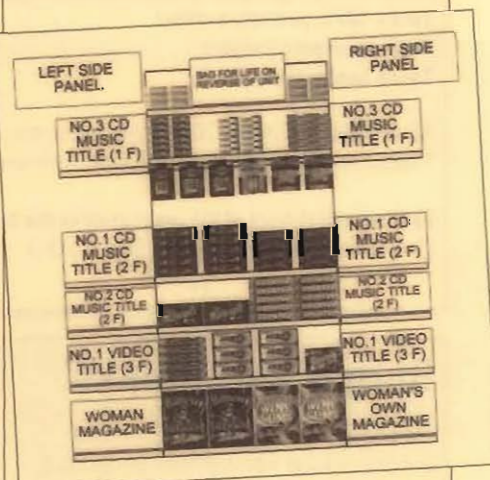
We hear that he is not alone, though. A reader told us she had bought Tesco's 'Red and yellow peppers in olive oil'. Sounds nice, but the small print says that the first ingredient is, yes, sunflower oil – we estimate up to 50% of the product – while the olive oil is a measly 4%!

Space control

Too big to reproduce properly here, but this is proof that it isn't just chance that sweets are at the supermarket checkout, nor just chance that they are arranged in particular ways.

This is Cadbury's instruction sheet to Tesco on how Tesco's checkout should look, with gum, sweets and batteries arranged just so, and CDs, videos and magazines down the sides, just so.

Don't forget that the supermarkets charge a hefty premium to manufacturers to put their produce on special shelves, especially those 'end of gondola' stands at the bottom of each aisle. We don't simply shop these days, we visit highly designed retail environments.



Marketing to minors



Companies are looking for new ways to attract children to their products. Professor Verner Wheelock takes them to task.

KIDFOOD 2000 was the title of a two-day conference and workshop held at the Holiday Inn in London, at the end of June. The programme is lying on my desk. Presentations at the conference include titles such as:

- Understanding Kids' Psychology - What Makes Them Tick?
- Down-Ageing - What's Happening to Youth Culture To-day?
- The Relationship between Kids and Brands
- Brand Stretching
- Marketing to Kids in Schools
- Kids and E-Commerce

What strikes me about this programme is that there is virtually no reference to nutrition and healthy eating. This, despite the fact that the nutritional quality of the British diet could certainly be improved as part of a strategy to reduce the very high levels of chronic disease, especially cancers and heart disease, which persist to-day. In this context, the diet of many children has been deteriorating.

Looking at each of the presentations individually, I can see nothing that would cause me to object. But I am concerned with the programme as a whole and the fact that the organisers apparently do not recognise the very significant importance of nutrition in the context of young people.

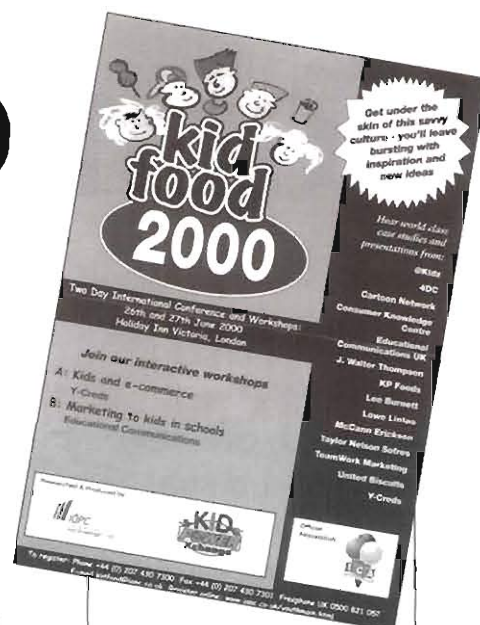
In my view, it is a failure of the food industry to place so little emphasis on issues of concern to consumers such as nutrition, food safety, food quality, and the environment. This failure has led to a break-down in public confidence. When genuine fears are raised, industry spokespersons repeatedly tell the public there is no need to worry. They also say that the industry has to produce what people will buy. This is somewhat disingenuous because the public can only buy what is offered. Even when huge amounts of money are spent on promotion, many of

the new products do not succeed in the marketplace.

I fully appreciate that nutrition, on its own, will rarely be a basis for successful products. Nevertheless, there is enormous scope for the food industry to improve the nutritional quality of the food which is specifically directed at children. There is absolutely no reason why the nutrition element cannot be an integral part of new product development and marketing strategies. There is a real challenge for the industry to provide products which children find attractive, tasty and nutritious.

Unfortunately the healthy eating aspect is usually introduced when marketers identify it as a way to promote a product which has already been developed. Far too often, the nutrition element is completely disregarded. As a consequence many of the products which appear on the market are high in saturated fat, sugar and salt. The recent report by the Food Commission* demonstrated that many of the products specifically targeted at children are quite unsuitable when examined from the healthy eating perspective.

Is it too much to ask that the organisers of conferences such as KIDFOOD 2000 should devise programmes which include items that deal seriously with nutrition? Or is it that having done their market



It's not what they sell but how much they sell that interests delegates to KIDFOOD.

research, the organisers have concluded that a discussion of nutrition would not interest the conference delegates?

* *Children's Food Examined. An analysis of 358 products targeted at children*, Food Commission, 2000.

■ Professor Verner Wheelock is former head of the Bradford University Food Policy Unit, and is managing director of the consultancy firm Verner Wheelock Associates Ltd (tel 01756 700802, www.vwa.co.uk). He writes here in a personal capacity.

An education in itself

The two-day KIDFOOD conference cost each delegate over £1200 to attend, excluding accommodation. The material included the following:

According to Nick Fuller, director of the blandly-named company Educational Communications UK, 'Marketing in schools is an industry that has developed greatly. While the ethical debate around this area continues, it is true to say that teachers are more used to and more accepting of a commercial presence in the classroom than they were ten, or even five years ago.'

On dealing with teachers, delegates discussed how to get around teachers' cynicism about commercial products but are open to well thought out projects. Topics included teachers as key decision-makers and 'how to gain their

buy-in and support' and how to align your products with the curriculum. Discussion on getting children to visit websites both during school hours focused on the provision of educational material blended with commercial material.

Andrew Jarvis, of the website company @kidz, presented a paper on how to create sites that have 'sticky content' and the key words and phrases needed to overcome parental fears. Discussion on websites included how to get children into e-commerce even though they have no debit or credit cards, for example through the use of virtual money through e-credits - notional payments for various interactive activities, such as reading advertisements or participating in quizzes and questionnaires.

Hormone hype?

Supplements and foods containing phytoestrogens, it is claimed, can help prevent heart disease, breast & prostate cancer, and relieve the symptoms of the menopause. But do such products live up to the claims, and more worryingly could they pose a risk to health? *Sue Dibb* investigates the hormone hype.

Phytoestrogens are the latest fashion in the world of functional food ingredients. Open a magazine, walk into a health food store and even the supermarket or browse the web and it won't take long to find a product or a company extolling the health-promoting properties of phytoestrogens.

Phytoestrogens are substances found in plants that can mimic, and sometimes block, the hormone oestrogen. There are several different types. The most commonly found in supplements and in phytoestrogen-rich foods are isoflavones, such as genistein & daidzein (soya is a rich source) and lignans (found in linseed, also known as flaxseed).

Epidemiological studies show the incidence of certain diseases – cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and breast cancer, for example – is lower in Asian countries and that the diets of these populations are richer in phytoestrogens compared to traditional western diets. This association is often given as the tenuous basis for promoting the health benefits of phytoestrogens and phytoestrogen-rich foods such as soy. However, traditional diets in countries such as Japan are different from western diets in many respects, not just their phytoestrogen levels. And contrary to western perceptions, foods made from soya typically makes up only a small part of such diets. Furthermore there may be significant genetic, as well as social, economic and cultural differences between populations and societies that can also influence the development of diet-related diseases.

Many researchers are now trying to understand more fully the relationship between phytoestrogens and disease risk. The picture that is emerging is a confused one. While there is some evidence of health benefits, this is not clear cut and it is becoming clear that some of these benefits may have been

overstated. Furthermore there is

emerging evidence that high levels of consumption of phytoestrogens could pose risks for some consumers.

For example, phytoestrogens and phytoestrogen-rich foods such as soya are often promoted as being protective against some cancers, such as breast cancer. The Preva pb cereal bar, which contains both soya and flaxseed, is one example of a product that is being promoted in many countries on this basis. But the science to back up this claim is currently far from conclusive. A recent review¹ concludes that 'the scientific evidence is only modestly supportive' for the claim that phytoestrogens are protective against breast cancer. And other research² suggest that high isoflavone levels in postmenopausal women might actually increase the risk of cancer, particularly breast cancer.

Yet it is just this age group that is being targeted by supplement manufacturers, and some 'functional' food manufacturers, promoting phytoestrogen-rich products for the relief of menopausal symptoms. However there is little substantive evidence to support these claims. A number of studies have not shown that phytoestrogens significantly alleviate hot flushes³. While women often report fewer symptoms during trials, typically so do women taking a dummy pill or placebo.

The prevalence of menopausal hot flushes is reported to be lower in Asia and particularly Japan.

Phytoestrogens and the heart

In a decision that has proved controversial, the US Food & Drug Administration has approved a health claim that eating 25g of soya protein a day, as part of a diet low in fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. The claim was permitted last year despite the lack of understanding of the active constituents in soya responsible for the known cholesterol-lowering effect of soya. The leading soya producer that applied for the health claim, Protein Technologies International Inc, first asserted that it was the phytoestrogens in soya which were provided the heart health benefits. This was changed to soya protein when the FDA was faced with evidence⁴ that extracted phytoestrogens (isoflavones) had no cholesterol-lowering effect. But as Anderson⁵ points out – 'a favourable impact on cardiovascular disease morbidity and mortality by a soybean-enriched western-type diet remains to be shown.'

Some of the phytoestrogen-containing supplements now being sold, particularly to women going through the menopause.



Researchers say that this association does not provide a scientific basis for the claim that phytoestrogens are important for the health and well-being of postmenopausal women* — though this has not deterred companies from developing and marketing new products. Furthermore some researchers now advise that women who may have suffered breast cancer or are at risk of breast cancer should not take such supplements — advice that we believe should be clearly stated on products.

Other evidence* emerging points to a suppression of thyroid function in high soy consumers and those using isoflavone supplements. And new research from Hawaii⁵ suggests a link between higher mid-life tofu consumption with increased risk of Alzheimer's disease in later life.

That phytoestrogens may pose risks as well as benefits has led researchers to urge caution. Dan Sheehan of the US Food & Drug Administration's National Center for Toxicological Research has warned: 'While isoflavones may have beneficial effects at some ages or circumstances, this cannot be assumed to be true at all ages. Isoflavones are like other estrogens in that they are two-edged swords, conferring both benefits and risks'.

In the UK, the Committee on Toxicity's Working Group on Phytoestrogens is currently considering these risks and benefits and is due to report next year. The Food Standards Agency also has an on-going research programme that is investigating some of these risks and benefits. It is also conducting an analysis of phytoestrogen-containing supplements to quantify the type and levels of phytoestrogens they contain and the claims that are being made for products.

What level is safe?

In the light of inconclusive evidence to support many of the claimed health benefits and increasing evidence pointing to potential risks of high phytoestrogen consumption, many researchers are now urging caution about their increased consumption. The Food Commission, too, is concerned about the way in which products are marketed, the lack of information provided about levels of phytoestrogens in some products and lack of warnings for groups for whom products may be unsuitable. Such concerns have led one researcher⁷ to write to the *Lancet* earlier this year about the 'potential dangers of an unregulated distribution of poorly studied products'.

For infant feeding, the current government advice is that soya infant formula is not recommended, unless on the advice of a health professional and for a diagnosed medical condition.

■ Sue Dobb is a member of the CoT Working Group on Phytoestrogens

- 1 Anderson et al, Effects of phytoestrogens on tissues, *Nutrition Research Reviews*, 1999, 12, 75-116.
- 2 Wu et al, Tofu and risk of breast cancer in Asian-Americans, *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*, 901-906, 1996.
- 3 Ginsburg J & Prelevic GM, Lack of significant hormonal effects and controlled trials of phytoestrogens, *The Lancet*, Vol 555, January 15, 2000.
- 4 Ginsburg J & Prelevic GM, Is there a proven place for phytoestrogens in the menopause? *Climacteric*, 2:75-78, 1999.
- 5 Fitzpatrick M, Soy formulas and the effects of isoflavones on the thyroid, *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 11 February 2000: 113, 24-2226.

Government enquiry calls for submissions

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals, Working Group on Phytoestrogens is calling for written submissions of relevant evidence. The Working Group has been asked 'to advise on the health implications of dietary phytoestrogens through review of published scientific research and the Food Standards Agency's Phytoestrogen Research Programme.'

The Working Group will address the following key points:

- On the basis of current evidence, does ingestion of soya-based infant formula pose any risk for human infants;
- Are there health implications to other sub-groups of the population from the ingestion of dietary phytoestrogens;
- To consider the evidence of beneficial effects of dietary phytoestrogens;
- To make recommendations for further research.

Submissions should be sent to Ms Jennifer Lamothe, Food Standards Agency, Po Box 30077, Room 651C, Skipton House, 80 London Road, London SE1 6XZ, tel 020 7972 1612.

- 6 White L, et al Brain ageing and midlife tofu consumption, *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, 19, 2000.
- 7 Sirtori, R, Dubious benefits and potential risk of soy phytoestrogens, *The Lancet*, 355: 849, March 4, 2000.
- 8 See for example, Nestel PJ et al (1997) Soy isoflavones improve systemic arterial compliance but not plasma lipids in postmenopausal and perimenopausal women. *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology* 17, 3392-3398.

Supplement company 'misrepresented scientific evidence'

Redclover, from Novogen, is aimed at menopausal and postmenopausal women. But in Australia Novogen has been found guilty of making false claims for the product, where it is sold under the name Promensil. The claim made in advertisements that the product's effectiveness in reducing menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats and mood swings 'had been proven in clinical trials around the world' was successfully challenged by Professor Alastair MacLennan, from the University of Adelaide and the editor-in-chief of 'Climacteric', the journal of the International Menopause Society. Almost three years after the product's launch, there were still no published peer-reviewed study showing Promensil to be any better than a placebo in reducing hot flushes. In finding Novogen guilty of misrepresenting scientific evidence and in breach of the Therapeutic Goods Advertising Code, the Australian advertising regulators concluded this was 'a particularly serious breach of the standards'.



Questions are now being asked, not only about the way in which Novogen's ads may have misled consumers, but also how the company may have misled the financial market. In November 1999 Novogen announced there was now 'incontrovertible evidence' that Promensil was effective in managing symptoms of menopause'.

This and similar statements made by the company have been described as 'scientifically dishonest' and 'misleading' by Monash University's Professor Henry Burger in an opinion statement to the Australian Stock Exchange.

Novogen also makes a phytoestrogen supplement called Trinovin that claims to help men with prostate problems. This has also fallen foul of the advertising regulators. Last year the New Zealand Advertising Standards Complaints Board found Novogen breached their 'therapeutics' code in its advertisement for Trinovin. The Board considered that the claim 'Trinovin improves the general health outlook for men over 50' could not be substantiated.



Promoted for the relief of menopausal symptoms, the 'Sheila Slice' was first developed in Australia. In the UK both **Bürgen Bread** and the newly launched **Nutribread** are manufactured to contain phytoestrogens from soya and linseed. No clinical trials of the products have been conducted to establish whether claims can be substantiated. Although both products contain phytoestrogens neither states the levels contained, nor how much you should eat.

European Food Labelling

J Dobinson and R Semail, Keller and Heckman LLP, Monitor Press, Suffolk House, Church Field Road, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2YA. ISBN 1871241626, Sept 1999, £99.

This is a great text for helping lawyers and food companies get their heads around the complex issues of food labelling, as it covers a broad range of current legislation, even making a stab at explaining the complexities surrounding health claims and medicinal claims. It also has a go at declaring the presence of GM ingredients and GM-free declarations, but – and herein lies its biggest problem – inevitably it will get out of date, and it can only deal with this, as it does, by pointing readers towards the relevant draft directives and reminding us to watch out for new proposals.

European Cardiovascular Disease Statistics

M Rayner and S Petersen, British Heart Foundation Education Dept, 14 Fitzhardinge Street, London W1H 4DH (www.bhf.org.uk), ISBN 1899088504, Feb 2000, £8.99.

If you wonder how many people wear pacemakers in Belgium, what proportion of men are smokers in Turkey, or whether the population of Ireland is eating more fruit and vegetables now than in the 1970s, then this is just the book for you.

Luxembourg claims to be Europe's biggest alcohol consumer, with an average person drinking over 11 litres (pure alcohol) a year, while in Iceland it's less than 4 litres and in Turkey, less than a single litre a year. And the Finns and Germans have the highest blood pressure, the French, Spanish and Belgians the lowest. All lovely stuff for speculation.

Goodbye America! Globalisation, debt and the dollar empire



M Rowbotham, Jon Carpenter Publishing, Alder House, Market Street, Charlbury, Oxon OX7 3PH. ISBN 1897766564, 2000, £11.

It is unusual these days to see authors using the phrase 'Western imperialism', but in the post-Seattle debate on who controls global trade and who is indebted to whom the term is hugely justified. This book takes the campaign to release third world countries from their debt burdens as its starting point, pointing out that the debt is inherently unpayable. The classic explanations look mainly at Western – largely American – policies which undervalue third world output, overvalue Western inputs and so use a simple accounting procedure to ensure endless economic entrapment of third world nations. This book reassesses the nature of debts, pointing out that the USA has the largest debt of all, at \$6 trillion it is twice that of all third world nations combined. The UK has a debt of £400 billion and other industrialised countries are similarly indebted. Even within the USA, debt is endemic with unpaid mortgages totalling \$4.8 trillion. Debt is simply the way we now live.

But to whom are we in debt? One of the valuable lessons of this book is that third world countries do not owe money to first world countries. They are not in debt to us. They – like the USA, like the UK, like home owners – are indebted largely to the big financial institutions. Interest must be paid to the banks, including the World Bank and IMF, who loan the credit. And whereas the UK and the USA use taxpayers' money to pay the interest, in third world countries the national income is often incapable of paying the interest demanded.

Banks do not foreclose on a failing country and demand to repossess it, they simply add the interest to the existing debt. Banks also encourage greater investment by outside corporations, which in turn serves to keep the productivity of a country in private, usually Western, hands. In

terms of material goods, the third world has exported vast amounts of raw materials and repaid its notional debts many times over, but because the ownership of the factories, plantations and mines is largely Western, the goods are not accounted as being part of the debt repayment.

Easy to read and greatly stimulating and refreshing, this is moral and ethical argument at its best.



The Daily Globe: Environmental change, the public and the media

J Smith (ed), Earthscan, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN (www.earthscan.co.uk), ISBN 1853836648, 2000, £14.95.

'...the media's appetite for novelty, personality and drama stands in the way of effective reporting of slowly unfolding stories...' notes this book, which is an amalgam of chapters from various authors on how environmental issues such as biodiversity and global warming are dealt with in the media.

Scientific uncertainty and complexity are not easy to represent within existing broadcast and print news. Furthermore, when scientific consensus is reached over an environmental issue, the media are less interested, preferring scientific controversy and dispute. But, as former FoE director David Gee notes, the problem may not so much lie with the media and its preoccupations, but with political empowerment. Dealing with scientific complexity and uncertainty, he argues, 'calls more for innovation in the political machinery of democracy than for reforms in the media's handling of environmental issues'.

Nutrition CD ROM

CAB Publishing, Wallingford, Oxford, OX10 8DE (publishing@cabi.org). ISBN 085199251X, £120 (reduced prices for students and developing countries).

Not a book but a CD disk from the Wellcome Trust, this tutorial package for teaching the rudiments of classical nutrition is an excellent primer for newcomers to the subject. Its focus is on problems such as deficiency diseases and their symptoms, and on malnutrition and underdevelopment, but a final section on diet and chronic diseases opens the way to further studies on the prevention of disease in more affluent societies. The images and graphs are clear and valuable, and a helpful glossary completes the bundle. It appears a bit pricey, but is presumably cheaper than a series of tutorials from a live lecturer.

Perhaps a second CD could look at public health issues in advanced economies, the diseases linked to our modern, processed diet, and the nutritional problems faced by populations such as those in the UK. It might also look into other food-borne problems, such as high levels of additive consumption and individual problems of food intolerance, as well as nutrition policy issues such as the impact of modern agriculture on food quality.

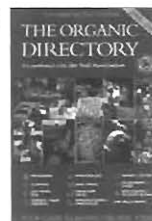
Available for PCs only, pentium and Windows 95 or later.

The Organic Directory

C Litchfield, Green Books with the Soil Association, Foxhole, Dartington Devon TQ9 6EB (www.greenbooks.co.uk), ISBN 1870098846, June 2000, £7.95.

This is a directory, not a guide, so there is no attempt to evaluate the shops, cafes, organisations or suppliers listed here. Indeed they each write their own details, so it all beautifully subjective.

But as a directory it takes you county by county through the UK with the names and addresses, phone, e-mail and website of everyone who is active in organic food. A very handy guide for foodies and greenies both.





What the doctor reads

The latest research from the medical journals

Fizzy drinks and weak bones

A study of teenage girls has found a significant link between the quantities of cola and other fizzy drinks consumed and bone fractures. Although the large majority of girls consumed fizzy drinks, those who consumed the most were also the most likely to suffer broken and fractured bones during physical activity.

The researchers suggest two possible explanations: (i) that the high levels of phosphorus in the soft drinks are weakening bones by reducing the calcium content, or (ii) that the soft drinks are replacing more traditional milk drinks that contain large amounts of calcium. The former explanation is supported by the UK National Osteoporosis Society, who explained that high levels of phosphorus in the blood leads to calcium being taken from bones in order to maintain the blood's phosphorus-calcium balance.

■ G Wyshak et al, *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 154, p610, June 2000.

High blood pressure risks

The link between raised blood pressure and a higher risk of early death, for example from strokes, is well-accepted, but a new study across six countries throws new light on the relationships. Surveys in Japan, the USA, Serbia and three European regions show that populations differ substantially in the risk of death for a given level of blood pressure.

All groups showed an increasing risk with a rise in blood pressure, but the rates of death in Mediterranean parts of southern Europe and in Japan were barely a third of those found in other regions for a given level of blood pressure. Defining a 'high risk' level of blood pressure is thus very different for some communities compared with others.

■ CW Peggy et al, *New England Journal of Medicine*, 342, p1-8, Jan 2000.

Salt risks linked to weight

A second study on blood pressure and stroke has confirmed the links between high salt (sodium) consumption and increased risk of a stroke, and also shown that this link is mainly found in overweight people, not in normal-weight people. Examining the health and causes of death of over 9000 people in the USA, researchers found that high-salt consumers were three or four times more likely to have a stroke than low salt consumers, but that this only applied to people with a body mass index over 27.3 (women) or 27.8 (men).

The study suggests that reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease in overweight patients involves both weight loss and reduced salt intake.

■ J He et al, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 282, p2027-34, Dec 1999.

Weight raises diabetes risk

Up to 90% of diabetic patients are overweight, and there is increasing evidence that weight gain causes diabetes rather than diabetes leading to weight gain. Even a moderate weight loss of 10% can have major benefits in terms of reducing the risk of developing diabetes in the first place and of keeping it controlled after it is established.

However, doctors face problems ensuring that patients stick to weight-loss practices, including low-calorie diets and exercise. Recent innovations include encouraging patients to use exercise clubs on prescription, but further initiatives to 'turn the tide of obesity' will be required.

■ J Tremble and D Donaldson, *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 119, p235-9, Dec 1999.

St John's wort concerns

The popularity of the herbal anti-depressant St John's wort has led to a rise in reported problems arising when people taking medication for other problems also take St John's wort. In particular, there appear to be cases where the herbal treatment has reduced the effects of drugs including warfarin, cyclosporin and theophylline. There have also been several cases where the remedy appears to have led to break-through bleeding in women taking contraceptive pills, again probably due to a lowering of the effectiveness of the drug with the possibility that women are no longer protected from unwanted pregnancy.

Other studies have found side effects when St John's wort is combined with other types of antidepressant. And other herbal remedies, such as ginseng and dong quai, also appear to interact with drug treatments.

The researchers call for more extensive research, and careful monitoring of drug treatments taken with herbal remedies. GPs should keep records of their patients' use of herbal remedies in conjunction with medical treatments.

■ E Ernst, *The Lancet*, 354, p2014-5, Dec 1999; and A Fugh-Berman, *The Lancet*, 355, p134-8, Jan 2000.

Osteoporosis in young men

Eating disorders such as anorexia are usually associated with younger women, and a common side effect is reduced bone mineral density, leading to osteoporosis. Now a new study shows that young men, too, may suffer eating disorders and that they too may show loss of bone minerals.

Eating disorders affect about 5% of adolescents, and as many as one in six of these will be young men. In a test of bone density, similar levels of mineral loss were found in both male and female patients. The authors warn that the young men may be likely to undertake sports activities which put them at risk of bone fractures, but that they should be encouraged to undertake moderate weightbearing exercise to help strengthen the bones.

■ A Andersen et al, *The Lancet*, 355, p1967-8, June 2000.

Green tea has new surprises

For several years, green tea has been reported to contain a range of anti-oxidants known as catechins (forms of polyphenols). Now a new study has been looking at other chemicals in green tea and found that they, too, have anti-oxidant effects.

The new chemicals, called pheophytins, have specific effects at preventing the oxidation of linoleic acid, an essential fatty acid needed for human heart, lung and brain function. The authors suggest that yet other active chemicals remain to be discovered.

■ K Higashi-Okai et al, *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, 80, p117-20, 2000.

Nutrition in medical practice

Increasing interest in providing complementary treatments within the NHS has turned attention on nutrition training for doctors. A series of letters in the *British Medical Journal* has urged doctors to take greater interest in the value of nutrients, foods, herbs and other dietary remedies for a range of ailments, and to be more open-minded about the role of intolerance reactions in disease.

The classic Greek founder of doctoring, Hippocrates, said 'Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food'. Yet few medical schools offer more than an hour or two of lectures on nutrition, in a five-year course. Although some argue that things will never change while pharmaceutical companies and surgeons have such a vested interest in treating disease, others argue that a well-founded, evidence-based course in nutrition would help doctors treat, and even prevent, many common ailments.

■ See, for example, *British Medical Journal*, 320, page 1538, June 2000, and www.bmj.com.

Taking control

Community participation, says a new guide, is not just a good idea. It is something which works in practice.

Phrases with multi-syllable words – such as Participatory Appraisal and Community Mapping – can mystify more than they can illuminate. But a new guide from the voluntary group Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, shows that behind these phrases lie real and novel opportunities for involving people in their own destinies.

In this full-colour, 90-page guide to community action we are treated to a wide variety of innovative methods of making maps and graphs that actually reflect experience. The experience, more often than not, is one of difficult access to shops, poor availability of healthier foods, higher prices, lack of cars, and in a context of depressed housing, crime and drugs. These experiences can be put into visual form, and compared with neighbouring areas, and compared with what might be if things were to be changed.

Change is the key to the value of these exercises. 'Community participation' in shaping the built environment and the resources within that environment has been a democratic watchword for several decades, yet the forces against real change have been severe – poverty and unemployment among them. With a notional shift of public policy towards reducing social exclusion, a renewed movement in community

activism is emerging, with new tools and ideas behind it.

The theory is this: change becomes more possible when the planning of resources is made more transparent and open to community influence. Transparency in planning means improving the understanding of planning ideas and principles – and the key to doing this is through mapping.

Maps – which are made by the participants in the process, not by experts and authorities – show what is available where, and by inference, what is not available where. Maps reveal inequalities. Shops, bus routes and parking are obvious, but mapping methods can be extended to mapping the available fruit and vegetables (greengrocers, supermarkets, street markets), the available sweets, crisps and ice creams (newsagents, corner shops, cafes), the cheapest fresh fish and low fat milk (supermarkets, delivery services), and so on.

Deprived families can start to see what they have and have not, and they can use this to put pressure on planners. Planners in turn can see what it is that people are asking for, and can integrate their transport, retail, jobs, economic and health strategies into a more coherent, and more transparently democratic, whole.



How participation and mapping techniques work in action

And maps can go further: they can reflect not just the distribution of resources, but the distribution of responsibilities. Who controls whom? Who can make the changes and to whom are they answerable? Seeing these relationships mapped is the first step to making changes to both the physical and the political environment.

■ **Reaching the parts... Community mapping: Working together to tackle social exclusion and food poverty, £20 (£10 to Food Poverty Network members), from Sustain, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF, tel 020 7837 1228, fax 020 7837 1141, email sustain@sustainweb.org (website: www.sustainweb.org).**

Economy lines or branded?

A survey of supermarket discount lines (such as Economy, Saver, Value and No Frills) compared with premium brand products has found wide variations in quality. Economy eggs are no different to premium brand eggs, and economy flour similar to premium flour. But economy sausages contain more bulking agent (rusk) and less meat, and some economy-line sizes are subtly smaller than their premium counterparts.

Some economy lines are made by the same manufacturers as the premium brands, and are acknowledged to be the same product. Yet premium lines can command higher prices. Brand loyalty, says the author, is sometimes stronger than faith in the church or the police.

■ **E Salmon, Study of Supermarket Economy Line Foods, research thesis (Contact Eunice Salmon, c/o Swindon BC Environmental Services, 01793 466118).**

Good nutrition can cut waiting lists

A research paper by the acclaimed nutritionists Margaret and Arthur Wynn argues that improved nutrition would dramatically cut the times people spend in hospital, emptying beds and cutting waiting lists to much lower levels.

The poor nutritional status of some patients dramatically increases the costs of those patients' stay in hospital and increases the likelihood the patients would return to hospital after being discharged.

■ **M and A Wynn, Reducing waiting lists for hospital admission: community nutrition services reduce the need for hospital beds, June 2000 (contact the Wynns on 020 8348 1470 for the report).**

Homeless and hungry

A government survey of homeless people in Glasgow found that one in five had eaten food only once during the day before the interview, and one in twenty had eaten nothing at all.

Hunger may contribute to sleeplessness, which in turn leads to disturbed mental states. Two in five homeless people were on painkillers, sedatives or antidepressants, and one in three had attempted suicide.

■ **Health and well-being of homeless people in Glasgow, National Statistics (www.statistics.gov.uk), June 2000.**

Experts review diet guidelines

New European dietary targets have been proposed by nutritionists, which include unexpected advice on sugar intakes and breastfeeding duration. The recommendations, from experts across the European Union are being submitted to the European Commission for official approval, and will feed into the French Presidency initiative on public health.

The recommendations form part of a programme on dietary targets co-ordinated through the University of Crete (the EC-funded Eurodiet programme – see details and working papers on <http://eurodiet.med.uoc.gr/>). The dietary targets for

population averages are given in the table below, and are stronger than the 1990 guidelines from the World Health Organization and the UK's 1992 recommendations.

It is intended that these targets will be used to develop EU-wide nutrition surveillance projects and to guide the development of EC policies. Moves to assess the impact on health of non-nutrition policies – such as agriculture and trade policies – are also being explored by the World Health Organization for the European Region as a whole, in their proposed Food and Nutrition Action Plan (for details e-mail Aileen Robertson at aro@who.dk)

Dietary goals for European populations (Eurodiet proposals)

Dietary fat as % energy	< 30
Saturated fatty acids as % energy	< 10
Trans fatty acids as % energy	< 2
n-6 polyunsaturates as % energy	4-8
n-3 polyunsaturates per day	2g linolenic and 200mg very long chain
Carbohydrates as % energy	> 55
Sugary intakes, occasions per day	4 or fewer
Fruit and vegetables per day	> 400g
Folate from food per day	> 400mcg
Dietary fibre per day	> 25g (or 12.5g per 1000 Calories)
Salt (sodium chloride) per day	< 6g (2.4g sodium)
Iodine	150mcg (50mcg infants, 200mcg pregnant women)
Exclusive breastfeeding	about 6 months
Adult body weight	Body Mass Index 21-22

Fat: for the population as an average, recommended fat intake is limited to 30% of total food energy intake. This is below the current UK guidelines of 33-35% intake, and is designed to take account of rising rates of obesity. For a typical 2000 kcal/day adult diet, fat intake should therefore be limited to around 66g, around 4 tablespoons of oil or 2-3 oz solid fat. Also included in the guidelines are recommendations to increase physical activity to an average of 1.75 times basal metabolic rate.

Polyunsaturates: the recommendations include specific targets for n-6 (omega 6) and n-3 (omega 3) forms of polyunsaturated oils. N-6 fatty acids should amount to an average of 4-8 % of food energy, and n-3 fatty acids should be a daily amount to 2g of alpha-linolenic acid and 200mg of longer-chain n-3 fatty acids. In practice much of this can be found in vegetable oils and foods such as sunflower spreads, but the longer chain n-3s are mainly found in oily fish. A 100g portion of salmon or tuna or sardines can easily provide this amount – indeed a half-pound of fresh mackerel provides enough long-chain n-3s for the average adult for a month.

Sugar: following a fierce debate on sugar recommendations (industry interests were allowed to participate), the expert group dropped the

suggestion of limiting recommended sugar intake to 10% of total dietary intake and instead suggested that average sugar intake should be limited to not more than four occasions of eating sugary foods each day. This was accepted as a practical and understandable alternative to the previously widely-used formulation. There is a close link between frequency of consumption and the total amount consumed, and if anything sugar frequency is more closely linked to tooth decay than is sugar amount.

Breastfeeding: the group adopted a recommendation that exclusive breastfeeding should continue to 'about six months'. Some wanted this to be 'at least six months' and others pressed for the current recommendations adopted in the EC Directive on baby foods which assumes that breastfeeding should continue to 'about four months'. The new guidance follows the recent report to the World Health Organization arguing strongly for a six-month recommendation, both for the sake of infant optimum nutrition and as a means of encouraging mothers and health workers to resist pressure to replace breastmilk with commercial milks and weaning foods. The recommendation is for a population average (as are all the recommendations) and therefore assume that some of the population will fall below, and some above, the average.

Row over six months breastfeeding

A row at the World Health Organization (WHO) broke out after scientific advisers on breastfeeding complained that their recommendations were being undermined and misrepresented by WHO officials.

A scientific report recommending six months exclusive breastfeeding was published by the WHO in 1998, but its implementation as WHO policy has been delayed. A scientific working group meeting at WHO in Geneva this year complained that the preparatory papers had been edited and discussion on a six-month recommendation had been curtailed by WHO staff. Twenty out of 28 WHO consultants at the meeting signed a statement calling for a six-month statement but discussion of this proposal was not allowed.

The original report, which the Food Commission has seen, clearly states that breastfed babies show no nutritional deficiencies of growth retardation if exclusively breastfed for at least six months, and that for the purposes of encouraging a firmer stand against pressure from commercial influences and six-month recommendation should be adopted by the WHO. This year, the WHO claimed that research into the matter is still underway.

The WHO, under the recently-appointed Norwegian politician Gro Harlem Brundtland, has moved closer to 'participatory' programmes with commercial interests, and it is feared that this is compromising its ability to make clear, unbiased statements on health. A WHO official acknowledged that 'The food industry continues to play an important and constructive role in relation to infant feeding.'

For over two decades, the WHO and its sister UN body, UNICEF, have played a leading role in defending breastfeeding from being undermined by commercial substitutes, but there have been recent reports of increasing staff concern over the involvement of food companies in global projects and programmes, and even the co-financing of joint initiatives.

* See also 'WHO accused of stifling debate about infant feeding' *British Medical Journal*, 20 May 2000 (www.bmj.com).

WHO's 1998 report recommended breastfeeding for six months, but commercial pressures may be stalling its implementation.



Inedible toys

I am one of three parents who have lost young children through choking on the small toys inside chocolate eggs. The problem with these products is that the toy inside the egg is in a plastic capsule and this often smells and tastes of chocolate too, which encourages children to put it in their mouth. And the toy inside it is often in small pieces. Some of the wrappers have a safety warning, but it is difficult to read and only says that the sweet should not be given to under-threes. All the children who died were three and over.

The parents who have suffered because of these unsafe sweets have been campaigning to alert others to the dangers and to ask the government to take action. We have been supported by GPs, Ear, Nose and Throat specialists, trading standards officers, MPs and WIs.

Mrs Ann Day, Blackpool.

On the same subject David Drew MP also writes to us:

It has come to my attention that there are a number of confectionery products which have been promoted in a way which makes them dangerous to young children. As a result of this I recently moved an Adjournment Motion in the House of Commons when, in particular, I drew attention to small chocolate eggs with a toy enclosed. These products have already resulted in

three known fatalities in this country, and European legislation is already in place, or on its way, to ban these products in Belgium, Greece and Portugal. They are also banned in the USA.

Recently there have been a number of examples of manufacturers and retailers who have shown themselves to be highly responsible by withdrawing products which represent a hazard. These include:

- Nestlé who withdrew their chocolate egg, with a toy enclosure, world-wide.
- Cadbury's who have introduced a chocolate called a Yowie but with the toy in it of a size which is highly unlikely to result in a choking incident.
- Britvic which withdrew a product when it realised its bottle top could be a hazard to children.
- Tesco who have recently withdrawn a confectionery product as a result of potential strangulation hazard with a girl's hair band.

I thought that this is a subject that would interest you and your readers and if you would like any further information from me please do not hesitate to call my office.

David Drew MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Food washes

As organic produce is so expensive and not readily available, I have been using Veggi Wash recently and am wondering whether I am wasting my money. Veggi Wash is supposed to remove 'farm chemicals, waxes, surface grime and insects' from fruit and vegetables. Presumably nothing can eradicate chemicals that penetrate deep into vegetables and fruit?

Sara Spain
London SE3

Reply: You're right. Washing will not remove those chemicals which are known as 'systemic' and penetrate inside fruit and vegetables. We haven't been able to independently assess the products' claims to remove surface chemicals and grime but in 1998 the Consumers Association reported in Health Which? that this product was 'no more effective than water'. The government advises us to wash all fruit and vegetables before use and for children we're advised to peel some fruit and veg including apples and carrots.

Organic diversity

I've heard someone say on the radio that there were fewer birds and other animals on farms these days, but this didn't apply to organic farms. Is this well-documented? Presumably there are more insects if the farmer doesn't use sprays, and that means more food for animals and birds.

John Larigetti, Kings Lynn

Eds: There have been several surveys which show pretty convincing evidence that organic farming is a much better way of supporting wildlife and biodiversity than conventional, intensive farming. A good review of the evidence is given in a new report from the Soil Association, called 'The Biodiversity Benefits of Organic Farming' (phone 0117 929 0661, website www.soilassociation.org).



GM rice

Your article on Biotech poses the question 'Does the world need GM vitamin A-enriched rice?' and makes the helpful suggestion of encouraging the growing of more fruit and vegetables and animal products such as eggs and cheese.

I find this absolutely nauseating.
Janet Pascoe, Ickenham

Eds: Sorry to upset anyone who doesn't believe in eating animal products. We were trying to make the point that GM fortification of rice only makes the populations more dependent on one crop, rather than encouraging a greater variety of foods in their diet.

Yeo Valley defended

I need to spring to the defence of one of my favourite ingredients for helping make a low-fat diet interesting and palatable. Your article on Yeo Valley Organic 'Healthy' crème fraîche said it was misleading to call a product that was 18% fat 'healthy'. But in fact the product has half the fat of traditional crème fraîche but all the taste.

I reserve my ire for the Tesco brand version, labelled 'healthy eating' which tastes of nothing, and which uses added ingredients including gelatin (!) to simulate correct texture.

Ray Tantram, Great Bookham



Label reading

There seem to be lots of products now getting on the supermarket shelves which list the ingredients and also give the amounts of the ingredients. But there seem to be some inconsistencies, with some of the ingredients stating the amount and some of them not. This is very muddling — why is it happening?

Joan Maratells, Sellyoak

Eds: You have spotted the new law coming into effect, called QUIDS, the Quantitative Ingredient Declarations law. This requires manufacturers to declare the amounts of the ingredients in their products — but as you say it doesn't include all the ingredients. They only have to declare the amounts for those ingredients which 'characterise the food' or are featured in the name of

the food (and even then there are some exceptions). So a tub of strawberry dessert, say, might tell you the amount of strawberry, but not the amount of added water, starch, sugar and thickening agents.

All very confusing, as you say. We are calling for a simpler rule: list all ingredients and declare the amounts of those that are over 1% of the product.



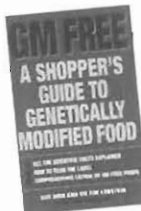
Strawberry
dessert — but only the
strawberry is quantified.

Notice

The Additives Survivors' Network — a group of people concerned with the effects some food additives (especially aspartame) have on individuals — is planning an Additives Awareness Weekend for August 26-28.

The Network is promoting a Pledge to Picnic pack, encouraging families to have an additive-free picnic, available for £8 which includes a year's membership of the campaign. Contact them at 63 Downlands Road, Devizes, Wilts SN4 0 5EF (e-mail geoff.brewer@clara.net).

marketplace



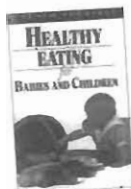
GM Free - A shopper's guide to genetically modified food

What we know, what we don't know - this clearly written book explains the potential benefits and risks of GM food and will help you to make the right choice for you and your family. £5.70 inc p&p



What the Label Doesn't Tell You

Food labels will only tell you so much. This no-nonsense consumers' guide will help you through the maze of food marketing hype, government hush-ups and media scare stories. £7.70 inc p&p.



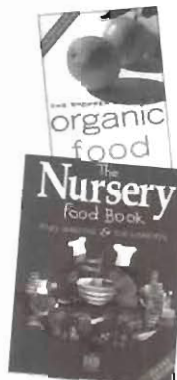
Teach Yourself Healthy Eating for Babies and Children

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



The Food We Eat - 2nd edition

The award-winning author Joanna Blythman's examination of the best and worst in British food today. An excellent book which will make a great gift for anyone who enjoys their food. £7.99 inc p&p.



The Shopper's Guide to Organic Food

Lynda Brown's great new book explains all that you need to know on organic food and farming, with an A-Z guide to organic foods. £8.99 inc p&p

The Nursery Food Book - 2nd edition

A lively and practical book exploring all issues relating to food, nutrition, hygiene and multicultural needs, with tips, recipes and sample menus along with cooking, gardening and educational activities involving food. Excellent handbook for nursery nurses and anyone caring for young children. £13.99 including p&p.



Poor Expectations

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



Food Irradiation

Good food doesn't need irradiating yet the UK has legalised the process. This book explains the technology and the risks. Only a few copies left. £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 (approx. 21 issues). Send for index of major news stories and features in past issues. Stocks are limited and many issues are already out-of-stock.



Posters: Our guides to Genetically Modified Foods, Children's Food and Food Labelling

These easy-to-understand posters are packed with essential information to help you and your family eat healthy, safe food. They explain the problems with GM technology; give useful tips on getting children to eat a healthy diet; explain how to understand and use nutrition labelling; and help you see through deceptive packaging and marketing claims. £2.00 and £2.50 inc p&p.

order form

publications

GM Free - A shopper's guide to GM food	£5.70	<input type="checkbox"/>
Healthy Eating for Babies & Children	£6.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Nursery Food Book - 2nd edition	£13.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Food We Eat - 2nd edition	£7.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full set of available back issues of the Food Magazine	£30.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
What the Label Doesn't Tell You	£7.70	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Shopper's Guide to Organic Food	£8.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor Expectations	£5.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food Irradiation	£6.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poster - Genetically Modified Foods	£2.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poster - Children's Food	£2.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poster - Food Labelling	£2.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
List of available back issues	free	<input type="checkbox"/>

subscriptions

Individuals, schools, public libraries	£19.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERSEAS Individuals, schools, libraries	£25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisations, companies	£40.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
OVERSEAS Organisations, companies	£45.00	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Food Magazine is published four times a year. Your subscription will start with our next published issue.

payments

Please tick items required and send payment by cheque, postal order or credit card. Overseas purchasers should send payment in £ sterling, and add £1.50 per book for airmail delivery.

Payment ☐

Donation ☐

Total ☐

☐ I have enclosed a cheque or postal order made payable to The Food Commission

☐ Please debit my Visa, Mastercard or Eurocard

My credit card number is:

Card expiry date:

Signature:

Name

Address:

Postcode:

Send your order to: **Publications Dept, The Food Commission,**
94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Tel: 0207 837 2250.
Fax: 0207 837 1141. Delivery will usually take place within 14 days.

E-oh! BBC goes Laa-Laa and a bit Dipsy



BBC Worldwide

TELETUBBIES RANGE HELPS A HEALTHY BALANCE

It can be one of the biggest headaches for a parent – how to eat food that's good for them without tears and far coverage and debate in the press at the moment about the

'It can be one of the biggest headaches for a parent – how to get your children to eat food that's good for them without tears and tantrums.' So starts a press release promoting this Teletubbies snack food (high in fat and sugar), along with biscuits, sweets, desserts and tinned pasta with sausages, all designed to appeal to young kids. We're too cynical to be surprised by manufacturers dressing up food for kids as 'healthy' by adding a sprinkling of vitamins and claiming 'no artificial' this and that. But what really caused us to say 'Uh-oh!' is that it's the BBC doing the publicity. And we thought the BBC was an ad-free zone!



"I've been offered a Marlboro ad, and a chance to do a promo for Monsanto!"

Functional myths

The hype surrounding the exploding sales of functional foods has been blown apart by a leaflet advertising a Functional Food Strategic Conference next September. The world's largest food company Nestlé is to speak, and the title of the lecture will be: Promise unfulfilled: Why functional foods are struggling and what can be done.

It doesn't stop some companies, though, from launching into the unknown. Watch out for the coming of Friskies new Pre-Biotics for Dogs. (The secret ingredient is actually a dose of dried chicory added to the dogfood.)

Sweet FSA

A rare glimpse into the naivety of the website creators for MAFF and the FSA is shown when you start searching for documents on their sites.

We wanted to find the regulations on the amount of sugar required for jam. We searched for sugar and found, among the technical literature, a fascinating document explaining how the level of sugar is related to obesity. If you want to look yourself it's at http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk/dept_health/pdf/sugar/sugar4.pdf.

You can download this document and happily start reading it, but after a few pages you smell a rat. And indeed, a small footnote tells you rather obliquely that it is a paper prepared by the British Sugar Bureau, a sugar industry body. The paper was submitted to the Department of Health to try and get the government to change its advice on limiting our sugar intake. You wouldn't know it from the paper, but the Sugar Bureau was told to get lost.

Oxidation

Fed up with all this stuff about needing anti-oxidants? You are not alone.

A company calling itself Spring Cool has decided to sell you a product titled 'Liquid Oxygen'. In fact, the product is old fashioned liquid water, but 'superoxygenated' with bubbles of oxygen.

The blurb tells you that 'it is believed when you consume liquid oxygen the added oxygen refuels your body'. If you did believe such nonsense, you wouldn't do so for long. Anyone foolish enough to drink genuine liquid oxygen would be dead in seconds.



Sunny depression

In our last issue we mentioned that the makers of Sunny Delight were launching a vitamin enriched product in Asia, Nutridelight, to be promoted by the children's agency UNICEF as an alternative to a healthy diet for malnourished children.

We asked, ironically, if the next UNICEF idea would be vitamin-enriched sugar. Sadly, we were depressed to learn that this was actually happening in Guatemala, as early as 1974, and now a new UNICEF project with the International Sugar Organisation is underway in Swaziland.

Meanwhile a reader with links to the Philippines sent us this packet of Hi-Nutrition Tang, a soft drink with fruit flavouring and 21 grams of sugar plus vitamins. Made by Kraft, it carries a Kraft logo declaring 'Good Food To Grow Up On'.



Eggscruciating?

Someone is trying to destroy the market in eggs, it seems.

A seditious leaflet has been circulated telling us about how hazardous British eggs are, with warnings that we must never use any eggs that are dirty, nor eggs that have been washed. We must never use left-over egg dishes, and we must always wash our hands before touching eggs, and again after we have finished handling them.

Who could be so cruel as to suggest that the humble egg is so dangerous? 'Why, the British Egg Information Service, guarantors of the Lion symbol. Full marks for honesty.

