

# The FOOD MAGAZINE

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

Published by The Food Commission

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FAT FREE!

## Organic standards hijacked!



**ORGANIC  
BEEF**

**O**rganic standards are under attack. Weak international definitions of organic food are being used to lower the standards and undermine the quality of organic produce.

Take beef. Organic beef produced in the UK comes from animals reared for at least two years on a wholly organic farm. In the Irish Republic this minimum period could be just two months.

The organic-for-two-months rule is the Irish government's interpretation of the European Commission rules on the minimum necessary period for rearing organically certified beef. The Irish government has proposed making this its national standard for organic certification, by-passing the local independent organic certification bodies, who are furious about the change. Their higher standards for organic beef would be effectively outlawed.

The Irish government's move appears to be a bid to seize a piece of the rapidly expanding, lucrative European organic food market. The two-month rule would allow conventional beef farmers to enter the organic market, simply by 'finishing off' an animal using partly organic animal feed during the last weeks before slaughter.

Organic standards have been under attack in the press and from UK government agencies. The Food

**Organic beef from Ireland?**  
According to Irish government proposals this meat can come from a conventionally-reared animal but two months before slaughter the animal is given partly-organic feed – making the meat legally organic.

Commission believes that the standards need defending and strengthening.

'Conventional food producers are seizing on the "organic" name as a symbol of health and integrity, and using it on highly processed, over-packaged products,' said Food Commission director,

Dr Tim Lobstein. 'They have a lot to gain by reducing the standards in order to increase their access to the market. Now is the time to resist.'

■ To find out more, read our special feature on pages 4-6.

### Also in this issue

- Supermarkets push junk for kids' packed lunches .....page 9
- Low levels of pesticides cause brain dysfunction .....page 21
- How to spread lies without breaking the law .....pages 12-13
- ASA tells Columbus Eggs to remove heart protection claim .....page 11

**Get the facts with the Food Magazine**

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

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

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

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## Good-bye to Sue, hello to Kath

Sue Dibb, the Food Commission's co-director and *Food Magazine* co-editor is moving on. In September she joined the National Consumer Council as Senior Policy Officer where she will continue to be involved in consumer food policy.

We all wish her well and thank her enormously for all that she has given to the Food Commission over an incredible sixteen years of campaigning for better food.



Now we welcome Kath Dalmeny to our hectic office, where she will be taking on responsibilities for campaigning and researching for the Food Commission and producing material for the *Food Magazine*.

Kath comes with several years of experience with the Schumacher College, and more recently working on the Organic Targets Bill, the Organic Rebuttal Project and helping produce the magazine *Digest* for Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming and *Adwatch* for Sustain's advertising project.

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## Can you help?

Regular readers will know that the *Food Magazine* does not accept advertising in its pages. Nor do we accept grants or sponsorship from the food industry or government. We value our editorial freedom and we will not compromise in bringing you the facts about the food that is sold and eaten in the UK today.

If you can offer any further support for our work, however small, please send a donation to The Food Commission, Campaign Office, Freepost KE 7564, London N1 9BR, or phone us now with your credit card to hand. We will send a receipt on request. Thank 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.

### 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.



# Nestlé abandons baby biscuits

Following our criticism of Nestlé's over-sweet baby biscuits, the company has announced that it is to withdraw its Junior range of baby foods. Our survey showed Nestlé's Banana and Apple Fruit Stick to contain 50% sugar – we gave it a resounding five thumbs down in the Food Magazine survey – with Nestlé Milk & Honey Biscuits also coming under attack for its hefty 22% sugar content.

Health campaigners have also welcomed the recent withdrawal of Nestlé's Sesame Sticks – bread sticks with sesame seeds, marketed as suitable for young children. David Reading, Director of the Anaphylaxis Campaign, said: 'Nestlé is well aware that sesame is regarded as a serious major allergen. Nestlé is also aware that babies and toddlers who are exposed to sesame may run the risk of



becoming allergic to it. One of the most fundamental principles of good manufacturing practice is to avoid, wherever possible, inclusion of major allergens as ingredients. It is incomprehensible that Nestlé should have

deliberately introduced a food like this into the baby sector.'

But watch out. Sesame Sticks could be on the supermarket shelves for a while yet. No more will be manufactured, but the product has not been recalled.

And the advice of health visitors? Don't give them to your baby or young child, and watch out for sesame seeds in other products.



**We criticised Nestlé for having the sweetest baby biscuits on the market. Now they have been withdrawn.**



*"When that BSE report comes out it'll be dog eat dog in Whitehall."*

## BSE report due end of October

The report of the two-year inquiry into the handling of the BSE crisis during the years 1986-1996 will be placed in the House of Commons library at the end of October. It is expected to be critical of government ministers, officials and scientific advisers – but to stop short of accusing any individuals of being legally culpable.

■ More on BSE on pages 7 and 8.

## WHO agrees food plan

Member countries of the European Region of the World Health Organisation have voted unanimously to adopt a five-year plan to improve nutrition and food safety in Europe.

The programme covers a wide range of food-related concerns, including agriculture policy, advertising, the environment and health inequalities, and will focus on supporting member state initiatives.

■ Details from Aileen Robertson, WHO Copenhagen, e-mail aro@who.dk.

# US won't label GM foods

A US court has upheld the American government's policy not to require GM declarations on foods containing GM ingredients.

Finding against a coalition of environmental and consumer groups, US Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly declared that genetically engineered foods were not materially different from conventional foods and that therefore there was no grounds on which the government could be accused of failing to protect consumers.

Industry groups were reported to be delighted, accusing the environmentalists of 'using scare tactics, rather than science' in their attack on the technology.

The lack of a GM declaration may make imported US foods illegal in Europe where GM declarations are required for foods containing GM ingredients (see Letters, page 22). A CODEX committee has agreed that internationally traded goods with GM

ingredients will have to carry a GM declaration.

The court ruling came shortly after an announcement by Taco Bell that it was recalling 635,901 cases of taco shells from grocery stores after admitting that a crop of GM corn which had approval only for animal feed had been used in manufacturing the shells.

## Illegal labelling

The consumer foundation Stiftung Warentest in Germany found that a third of 82 products they tested contained GM materials, although none carried a GM declaration. Three products had more than one percent GM, and were therefore illegally labelled. These were reportedly an American pancake mix, a Dutch tofu ice-cream and a British confectionery bar.

## BADvertisements!

This magazine takes no advertising for food products. We believe that food companies already promote their products too much.

But we do like to expose food companies' deceptive descriptions, silly statements and loopy labels.

So watch out for our ANTI-ADVERTISEMENTS scattered through this magazine!

# Minefields of misinformation

**Newspapers have been quick to exploit conflicting views of organic food. Even the government joined in.**

In September, the head of the government's Food Standards Agency, Sir John Krebs, launched a stinging attack on organic food. Speaking on BBC TV, Sir John said that consumers are being ripped off if they think they're getting food that is better for them nutritionally when they buy organic.

That Sir John chose to speak out so strongly came as a surprise to many of the people and organisations who have been working to promote organic food on the basis of health, quality, environmental and economic benefits which, they say, are well documented.

Sir John chose to denigrate organic food on the basis of its nutritional composition, saying that it is no better than conventionally produced food. Although

the jury is still out on many issues surrounding nutrition and organic food and farming, this is due to the complexity lurking beneath the seemingly simple question 'is organic food more nutritious?' Comparisons need to be made comparing like with like, selecting crop varieties that have not been bred to respond better to agrochemical farming, and that have been subjected to equivalent post-harvest treatment and processing. Comparisons need to take account of water take-up by the plant, the soil types, the weather conditions, the insect and bird life that affect pollination... indeed, virtually all the influences on crops that farmers have argued about since farming began.

In July of this year, Sustain co-ordinator Jeanette Longfield, and Tim Lang of the Centre for Food Policy, met with Sir John Krebs of the Food Standards Agency. Part of their discussion focused on organic food and farming, and Sir John agreed that this was an area in which more research was needed. He also agreed that the Food Standards Agency might have an important role in commissioning and overseeing such research.

But with the message coming loud and clear from MAFF that 'the market must decide' when it comes to organic food, and with the Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill being blocked on its way through parliament despite the support of over 230 MPs, it's difficult to believe that the government are ready to put real commitment behind growth in the organic sector.

## Changing markets

Despite the headlines and Sir John, consumers are still expressing their confidence in organic food: the market for organic food is growing at around 40% per year. Manufacturers and retailers are eagerly seeking new ways to get a piece of the action. But concerns are beginning to be voiced that as organic moves into the mainstream, standards could begin to be watered down.

In the past month, Tesco has been running a new TV advertising campaign for their organic lines. A grandmother is shown worrying about what to feed her grandchildren, after being warned by their mother not to feed them unhealthy foods. On arriving at Tesco, the grandmother is advised to buy healthy organic pizza,

organic ice cream and organic chips, which the children devour with glee.

Tesco is just one of the manufacturers and retailers who have hijacked the organic label as 'added value' for their normal range of products. Hundreds of

organic products are coming onto the market, included highly processed organic jelly sweets, sugar-laden organic cereals, organic chicken burgers and even organic cigarettes (see back cover).

With Sainsbury's buying up tracts of land in the Caribbean in which to plant organic monocultures for the European market, the opportunity for 'organic' to be associated with 'local' and 'fresh' is rapidly being eroded. Organic farming is already coming under the familiar pressures of conventional farming to produce regularly shaped, all-year-round, blemish-free produce on a mass scale, to be transported halfway across the world to wealthy markets in the west.

The notion of organic, with all its attendant concepts of value and well-being is being whittled away. Unless we stick to our guns and specifically demand food that lives up to the exacting standards we hope for – in nutrition, safety, animal welfare and environmental health – we will be back to square one.



## BADvertisement



**You've heard of free-range, barn-raised and organic eggs? Well, here's a new variety: John Bowler's Freeganic Egg.**

**Freeganic? What does it mean? What's the 'ganic' bit? Well, inside the box John Bowler explains his chickens are raised on environmentally friendly farms, without hormones or antibiotics, and fed on cereals from UK farms. But nowhere does it say that the eggs are certified as organic.**



## Organics: Rebutting the lies

To help you find a path through the minefield of conflicting views, an Organic Rebuttal project is currently underway, organised by the Soil Association in partnership with Sustain.

The stated aim of the project is 'to rebut the unfounded criticisms of organic food and farming'. This will be undertaken by gathering together scientific studies, briefing papers, journal and newspaper articles from around the world.

Eventually, the documents will be catalogued on the Sustain website – many of them being made available electronically. A summary report will also be published, drawing together the research and helping to identify gaps in the current research.

■ Contact: Catherine Fookes 020 7837 1228.

# Standards need to be stronger

**A**lthough more friendly to the environment than agrochemical farming practices, organic standards do not cover many aspects of food production. Here we look at the food chain and ask where the standards could be used to encourage better practices.

- **Global resources:** controlling the use of irreplaceable resources including the oil and steel needed for mechanical farming practices; encouraging farms to sequester carbon; encouraging crop diversity.
- **Working conditions:** encouraging the fair remuneration of labour; providing healthy and safe workplaces.
- **Prices:** encouraging fair trade practices; ensuring non-exploitative relations between traders especially for products imported from low income countries.
- **Food miles:** controlling the air-freighting of products over excessively long distances; encouraging greater support for local producers.

● **Food packaging:** controlling the over-use of packaging materials; reducing the movement of contaminants from materials into food.

● **Nutrition:** controlling the over-processing of food; restricting the removal of natural nutrients during processing.

● **Promotion and marketing:** ensuring honest and fair advertising and labelling of products; restricting the promotion of foods which undermine good nutrition and good dietary practice.

■ The Food Commission is a member of the Soil Association's Processing Standards Committee and we are happy to raise readers' concerns at the Committee meetings. Please let us know what you think about the organic standards and how they could be changed.

### Organic nutrition:

toffees, chocolate spread, biscuits and soft drinks. Food companies love to use the word 'organic' for the integrity and healthy image it gives the product – but there is barely a whole grain or an original vitamin between them, and they spoil the appetite for nutritious food.



### Organic food miles:

carrots from Denmark, tomatoes from Israel, green beans from Zambia and broccoli from Ecuador. These are all in UK supermarkets in October, when similar produce should be available from UK farms. But supermarkets purchase their supplies from the cheapest, not the nearest, sources.



# An organic testbed

For decades, Cuba relied on pesticides and fossil fuels for its agriculture. Now almost all of the island's food is organic, showing the way to feed a hungry world.

**F**ollowing the Cuban revolution in 1959 when Fidel Castro came to power, Cuba underwent a period of rapid modernisation. Cuban farming was industrialised, dominated by large-scale monocultures of cash crops (mainly sugar and tobacco, but also bananas and coffee).

The US placed an economic embargo on communist Cuba, forcing the small state to rely on trade with the Soviet Union and other countries in the Soviet Bloc. Generous trading terms offered by the Soviet Union enabled Cuba to sell its sugar at five times the world price and in return to buy petrol and agrochemicals at low prices. Cuba relied on imports of food – buying in 100% of its wheat, 90% of its beans and 50% of its rice. Thousands of tractors were purchased to replace the traditional oxen.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 spelled disaster for Cuba. The withdrawal of Soviet aid meant that 1,300,000 tons of chemical fertilisers, 17,000 tons of herbicides, and 10,000 tons of pesticides, could no longer be imported, and the availability of petrol for agriculture was drastically reduced. Within a year, Cuba had lost over 80% of its trade, and sugar prices plummeted. For the first time since the revolution, Cuba's population faced serious hunger and malnutrition.

In response to this crisis, the Cuban government and people have been working over the past decade with the resources they had left – people, land, animals, knowledge and creativity.

Thousands of small plots of land in and around the capital city of Havana were handed over to local people and workers, who have turned them into productive vegetable gardens. By 1998 there were over 8,000 urban farms and community gardens run by over 30,000 people.

This urban agriculture now contributes a huge percentage of Cuba's food needs (see box). The food from these urban farms is almost entirely organic, as Havana has outlawed the use of chemical

## Cuba's city gardens

Food production from organic urban agriculture has grown from 40,000 tonnes in 1995 to 115,000 tonnes in 1998. In 1999 organic urban agriculture (mainly in Havana) produced:

- 65% of the rice consumed by Cubans
- 46% of the fresh vegetables
- 38% of the non-citrus fruits
- 13% of the roots, tubers, and plantains;
- 6% of the eggs

pesticides in agriculture within the city limits. The city gardeners have also found that pest problems have diminished because of the huge diversity of plants being grown. 'We are reaching biological equilibrium. The pest populations are now kept under control by the constant presence of predators in the ecosystem. I have little need for application of any control substance,' the president of one city garden said.

In the countryside, oxen have been bred to replace tractors that became useless due to lack of fuel and spare parts. Their manure is used to fertilise the soil and build soil structure, and integrated

pest management is being developed to replace the pesticides that are no longer available.

Over 200 regional centres have been set up to advise on low-cost bio-control agents to replace pesticides in crop protection. Sugar-cane borer is tackled by releasing swarms of a parasitic fly called *Lixophaga*. Caterpillars are combated by a tiny wasp, *Tricogramma*, that feeds on the caterpillar's eggs. And cut banana stems are baited with honey to attract ants, which are then placed in sweet-potato fields, leading to the complete control of the sweet-potato borer – a major pest – by the predatory ants.

As a testbed for organic techniques on a large scale, Cuba has turned conventional wisdom on its head. It has shown that a country can feed its people – in this case 11 million people – without expensive chemical inputs. It has also shown how effective small-scale production can be, with the highest productivity coming from the diverse city plots run by local people. It is a crucial case study for the ongoing debate on whether environmentally friendly forms of agriculture can feed the world.

For more information, contact:

■ The Cuba Organic Support Group, which works to support Cuban community-based projects involved in organic production: COSG, 58 Broad Lane, Coventry CV5 7AF. Tel: 024 7667 3491; email: cosg@supanet.com.

■ Grupo de Agricultura Organica, Tulipan 1011 e/Loma y 47 Apdo. Postal 6236C, Codigo Postal 10600, Nuevo Vedado Ciudad de La Habana, CUBA. Phone and fax: 0053 7 845 387; email: actaf@minag.gov.cu.



**Huertos intensivos (intensive gardens) are raised beds with a high ratio of compost to soil, run either through a State institution or by private individuals.**

# BSE – time for action

**As we go to press the report of the BSE Inquiry is being prepared for publication. It's not the end of the story.**

Leaks and speculations about the forthcoming BSE report abound. There is expected to be a serious ticking-off for officials and politicians from a previous era, but the present government will distance itself from the debacle, and will give reassuring messages about the benefits of having the new Food Standards Agency to stop anything like this happening again...

This will not be good enough. There are still many unresolved issues and bad practices, and these need immediate action. Here is a small selection:

## Compensation to vCJD victims

The government will lose credibility if it fails to offer compensation to the human victims of the disease. After paying out more than £1bn to cattle farmers for the value of the animals they had to destroy, it would be cruelty indeed to tell families of vCJD victims that the government put no value on the lost human lives.

Liability may be hard to prove, but there are plenty of cases where 'no-fault' compensation is agreed. And anyway, who decided that oxtails, bone-in beef and mechanically recovered meat were safe to eat – right through to the mid 1990s? And who failed to bring in regulations banning bovine extracts in human vaccines (see page 10) and other medical and cosmetic products?

## Cattle blood

Eleven years after banning the use of cattle meat in cattle feed, there is still no ban on the use of cattle blood. It makes a nutritious ingredient for rearing calves after they have been separated from their dams. And at that young age they may be most susceptible to infection, and have the longest time for the disease to spread through their guts and nervous system. The loophole needs to be closed.

## Slaughter methods

The commonly used technique of captive bolt stunning (equivalent to hitting the animal with a hammer) followed by pithing (driving a spike through the brain to stop the creature twitching while it is bled) are known to spread pieces of brain tissue into the lungs and the bloodstream. Infected brain tissue from sub-clinical animals has been and may still be easily spread into edible parts of the animal.

## Removing specified offal

One of the major issues that is expected to be looked at in the Inquiry report is the lack of strong enforcement of the controls that required brain and spinal cord tissue to be removed from the carcass. Case after case was found where this material was still clinging to the carcass when it went to be cut for packaging. The level of care and hygiene in abattoirs was poor. The BSE crisis may be dwindling but the hygiene crisis persists – the majority of UK slaughterhouses and cutting plants received a hygiene assessment score below 75%, when good ones are able to reach 95 or better. What will be the next meat scare?

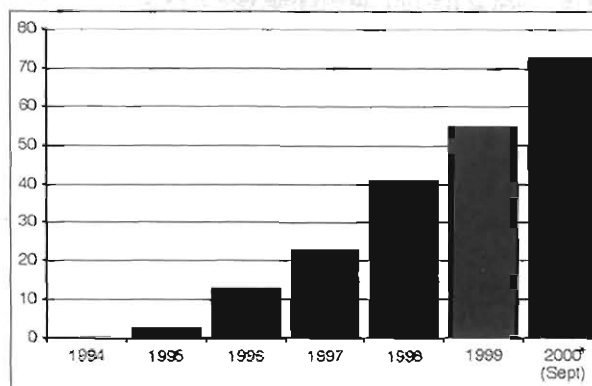
## Over Thirty Months slaughter scheme

Since 1996, cattle over 30 months old cannot go into our food chain. This was a cut-off age that suited the meat industry, as most beef cattle can be made ready for market before then, and dairy cattle are of little value when their milk yields decline. It was not a scientifically valid cut-off age to protect humans, since cattle as young as 20 months have shown BSE. And cattle younger than that may harbour the disease without showing clinical symptoms.

## Meat and bone meal stores

What happens to the older cattle? They are slaughtered in dedicated abattoirs, the carcasses are rendered down into meal, and this meal is then... Actually no-one knows what to do with the increasing mountains of meat and bone meal, potentially hazardous waste, that is accumulating in a dozen giant warehouses around the country. Applications to bury it have been refused. The current idea is to send it to power stations, where it can be used as fuel. Unless the material is heated up to 1000° Centigrade, though, the infectious prion might not be destroyed. Instead it will be blown out of the chimneys across the countryside.

**Cumulative numbers of human victims of mad cow disease**



\* plus eleven still alive.

# BSE – from farm to needle

Abattoirs have been an unregulated source of material for veterinary and human medicines. Farmer *Joanna Wheatley* asks whether humans caught Mad Cow Disease from the parts of the animal we don't eat

**A**s a beef farmer and one-time scientific researcher, I have been following the BSE saga with great interest – not least because of my need, as a farmer and as a mother, to find out how serious the real risks are, and act accordingly.

Most theories about BSE assume that whatever started the epidemic, it spread because infected remains were being fed to other cattle. But evidence at the BSE Inquiry showed this was not the only possible cause of the spread. The Inquiry heard evidence that cattle extracts (and

sheep extracts, too) have been injected into cattle and also used in the preparation of human inoculations.

In 1984, British doctors noticed that people given human pituitary extracts as children to help them achieve better growth were starting to come down with a form of Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (CJD), similar to the more recent cases of CJD linked to beef. There was also evidence from other countries that women given Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH), designed to help them conceive, were also at risk of developing CJD.

Similar practices were happening for cattle. FSH was extracted from cattle glands not just to help regulate cattle fertility but to provoke multiple ovulation in cattle. Multiple ovulation, combined with embryo transfer techniques, allow prize cattle to generate several offspring simultaneously, using other cows as surrogates. FSH may also be used on the surrogate mothers when the embryos are transplanted.

Vets and scientists were also developing similar growth enhancing and fertility treatments for cattle, using cattle tissue, just at the time when BSE would have been first incubated. Tests were being run on the use of the pituitary extract, Bovine Somatotrophin (BST) to stimulate growth and greater milk production. The hormone was obtained from cow cadavers, and the success of the trials led to the development of genetically engineered synthetic hormone, rBST.

What is apparent from these practices is that the risk of recycling BSE through inoculation of veterinary products was far greater than through eating beef. Tissues identified as carrying a risk of infection

were categorised as Specified Bovine Offals, and banned from the food chain *but not from the pharmaceutical chain.*

Derivatives from potentially infected glands were not banned from medicinal products. Cattle pituitary hormone extracts were licensed until 1993 with a two-year shelflife. No-one advised abattoir workers, knackermen, vets or research scientists, let alone the army of hygiene enforcers, of the transmission risks.

I rang up a man who had worked at Reading abattoir (closed 1993) who said: *'Oh yes, duck. They were taking all sorts of stuff, you know. We helped lots of vets and researchers, they used to come in from the university and research places, and down from London hospitals. It was a service we prided ourselves on, helping science and medicine.'*

As some of the research laboratories were near to the abattoir, I wondered if experimental animals may have come back in to be slaughtered, potentially recycling the problem. I asked: 'What about when you supplied pituitaries and other items. Did your customers ever ask for specific animals, from a known origin?'

'No, never. We always chose the best for them. *We also used to let people in for a flat charge and they could help themselves to what they wanted.'*

The Department of Health was concerned that bovine blood serum was being used in routine vaccinations. They decided that the risk might be present but was low compared to the apparent benefit of the vaccination programmes. They also appeared concerned that, if they admitted to a risk, there might be a large public reaction against all vaccines.

Ironically, Britain has developed a world-leading system of traceability for its food animals. But only from July this year must pharmaceutical companies obtain their supplies from elsewhere in the world. And only from March next year does this apply for veterinary medicines.

If farmers are to produce animals destined for such high risk practices, it is my sincere belief that it is in everyone's interest that they are aware of the fact.

Better still, pharmaceutical herds should be established, and the animals raised to the standards befitting their purposes. I believe a policy of 'farm to needle' would benefit us just as much as 'farm to fork'.

■ *Joanna Wheatley is an organic beef farmer in the home counties.*

## BADvertisement



In great big yellow letters on a red background, Admiral's Pie from Ross proclaims '33% MORE FISH'. The product is described as 'succulent fish fillets in a delicious butter sauce topped with potato and cheese'. All very tempting. But take a look at the ingredients list and you'll find that there is only 20% fish in this newly upgraded pie – the third ingredient, after potato and water.

A quick bit of arithmetic... shows us that Admiral's Pie used to contain just over 15% fish. Sorry, Ross, not very impressive. But thank you for kindly telling us on the packet to 'Remember, fish is good for you'.



## Dumping sugar on the world

With their protected internal market and preferential trade agreements, both the US Sugar Program and EU Sugar Regime have distorted world sugar markets. A new report from Sustain shows that this has led to low world sugar prices, high public expenditure, excessive sugar beet production and dumping of subsidised exports (particularly from the EU) undermining sugar cane production in many poor countries.

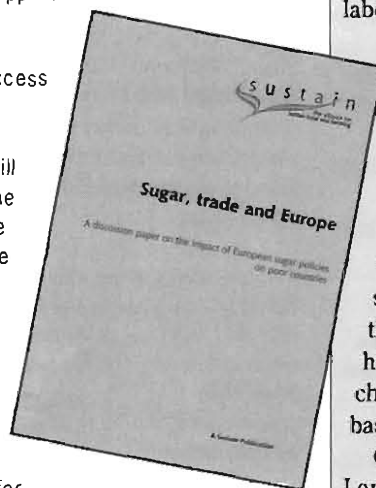
It is important to differentiate between poor countries that have preferential access to high sugar quotas (through the EU Sugar Protocol and US Sugar Program) and those poor countries that have to produce and trade sugar at the low world market prices. Through its preferential agreement, the EU Sugar Protocol has provided essential economic support for some low-income countries such as Fiji. Studies suggest that the removal of the Sugar Protocol, as it is now structured, will have serious negative consequences for many countries as they will have to adjust to lower trade prices.

The new ACP-EU agreement may address some of these inequalities with a fairer distribution of development aid and, as from 2005, non-tariff trade access (for most commodities) to the EU for all Least Developed Countries. Gaining better terms of trade through Fair Trade agreements and producing organic sugar may help some producers. Some farmers are interested in abandoning sugar cane for alternative food production. Although this may lose a source of external revenue, it does mean that the farmer and family can eat

during years of low prices for cash crops. Diversification may also be a solution for many regions which have become dependent on the Sugar Protocol.

However unless the Sugar Regime and other sugar support policies are reformed to remove the excess production of sugar, these inequalities will continue as the surplus will be dumped on the world market and world sugar prices are liable to remain low.

The Sugar Regime is up for renewal in June 2001 and most decisions will be made by December 2000. Now is the time to call an end to subsidised EU sugar exports.



■ For a copy of the report, price £7.50, contact Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming on 020 7837 1228; fax: 020 7837 1141; email: [sustain@sustainweb.org](mailto:sustain@sustainweb.org).

## Farm to FAWC

Agency capture appears alive and well in one area of government. – the Farm Animal Welfare Council, a body set up to advise on animal welfare issues.

We went to its meeting on welfare labelling schemes, only to find the committee was chaired by a farmer, and that two other members were from the meat business.

Among the many unfortunate statements made, the chairman said that he believed consumers were not very interested in animal welfare. He said this was born out by members of the catering industry, who had told him only that morning that no-one chose food at catering outlets on the basis of animal welfare.

Obviously they hadn't talked to one of London's most successful sandwich chains, Pret A Manger. Their packaging boasts that their meat comes from Freedom Farms approved by the RSPCA.

Nor did they talk to McDonald's, who have announced that in the USA they will be buying their chicken meat from high-welfare farms.

## Hidden costs of agribusiness

Conventional agriculture is costing the UK economy as much as £4 billion annually in hidden subsidies, according to a paper from Professor Jules Pretty of Essex University. The costs of water contamination, loss of wildlife, soil erosion, food poisoning and other factors are not included in the food we buy. They amount to over £200 per hectare of farmland each year.

■ *Agricultural Systems*, 65, pp113-136, 2000.

## BADvertisement

The 'New improved recipe' for Spar's own-brand frozen Beef Dinner is served up in all its glory on the front of the box – described as 'tender slices of beef with roast potatoes, carrots, peas, Yorkshire pudding and gravy'.

Strange that the gravy should appear at the end of this appetising list. It's actually the first ingredient! In fact, just over one third of this product is gravy, and another fifth is potatoes. And the beef (which contains added salt, dextrose and tri di phosphate) comes in at just 18%.

So how has the flavour been heefed up? With something called Beef Flavour

Bouillon. Come on, Spar, shouldn't this product be re-named 'Beef Flavour Gravy Dinner'?



## Legal, decent, honest and true?

Recent decisions by the Advertising Standards Authority have challenged food companies' misleading statements.

**X** Claims by C & G Food Supplies that its product, **Multibionta**, 'helps your body cope with stressful days when the pressure's on', and that New Advanced Formula Multibionta is 'the only multivitamin with probiotics' were not substantiated, according to the Advertising Standards Authority.

The ASA upheld a complaint against the company, saying that C & G had implied that the product provided a specific health benefit by reducing stress. The ASA said that research papers supplied by C & G did not support the idea that probiotics could help the body cope with stress.

**X** The ASA questioned the promotion of an 'information video' in conjunction with a brochure for a healthcare product, **Chondroitin**. Claiming that Chondroitin could help 'maintain strong and healthy bones', and using an image of two hands gripping each other, the manufacturer, Goldshield Healthcare Direct, was criticised by the ASA for implying that the product could benefit arthritis sufferers. Goldshield were advised to withdraw their brochure.

**X** A complaint was upheld against **Holland & Barrett Retail Ltd** for a national press advert claiming: 'When it comes to healthy living, no-one can give you better advice than Holland & Barrett. Our staff are experts on vitamins, minerals, supplements and health foods.' The ASA considered that customers seeking advice from 'experts' would expect them to have a recognised qualification in that subject. This was not a requirement for Holland & Barrett staff.

**X** Lindam Ltd's **Natural Flow** baby-feeding system was the subject of a complaint following their claim that the product could make colic a thing of the past by eliminating air bubbles in milk. The ASA found that evidence submitted to the enquiry was not conclusive, and there was insufficient evidence to show that air in milk

was the only cause of colic. Lindam were asked to amend their advert.

**X** Three companies making weight-loss products also fell foul of the ASA. Although claiming that their product **Sensational Fatburner** could result in 'almost immediate shedding of pounds and instant results' the manufacturer, Biotecdirect.com, failed to present any clinical evidence to back up the claim.

Manufacturers of the 'new miracle drink' **X-Fat** were chastised by the ASA when they revealed that their product had only been tested in the laboratory – not on humans. Their claim that X-Fat 'lets you eat as much as you like without putting on a pound' could not be substantiated.

Finally, claims that weight-loss tablets could absorb fat from the bloodstream were dismissed by the ASA as 'unsubstantiated'. Natural Nutrition, manufacturers of **Fat Trapper**, **Dessert Avert** and **Exercise in a Bottle** were advised to include a statement in future ads explaining the products had not been shown to help in weight loss. The ASA advised each company to consult advertising codes of practice before placing future advertisements.

### BADvertisement

Pick up a tub of Onken Biopot Lite Yogurt and you'll find a roundel proclaiming "GUARANTEE: Very low fat 0.1%, No added preservatives. No artificial colours." The impression is of a product that is natural and additive free. But don a pair of spectacles, and you'll eventually find the phrase 'with sugar and sweeteners' in lettering only 6 or 7 points in size (that's less than 2mm tall), lurking in a general description of the yogurt. Hardly eye-catching.

The EU directive governing the labelling of artificial sweeteners in products states that the phrase 'with sweeteners' or 'with sugar and sweeteners' should appear with the name of the product on food labelling. This ruling, it was assumed, would ensure that the presence of sweeteners would appear boldly on food packaging. Not hidden, as on Onken's yogurt pot, amidst the smallprint.

Onken needs to re-word its yogurt label to say 'made with Bio Cultures and artificial sweeteners'. It might not sound quite so appetising, but at least it would be honest...

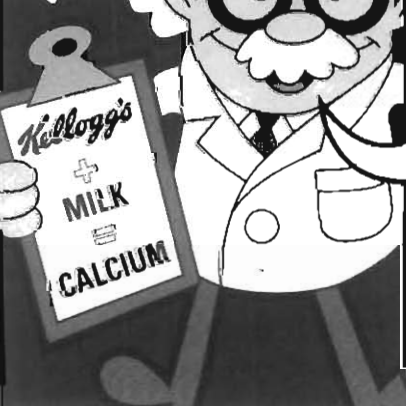
The copy of Onken's text is reproduced here at actual size.



Onken very low fat Strawberry yogurt with sugar and sweeteners is made from skimmed milk and Bio cultures. The cultures consists of Lactobacillus...

### BADvertisement

**PROF. BONESTEIN**



#### Growing up the Kellogg's way

Professor Bonestein (left, from a Kellogg's leaflet) tells us that: Kellogg's + Milk = Calcium. Of course, there's the shorter version that he doesn't mention, namely: Milk = Calcium.

Kellogg's calculations show that a 30g serving of cereals such as Frosties, with a standard helping of 125ml of milk, would give you over one third of the daily recommended calcium intake. But over half of that is from the milk!

Professor Bonestein's a scientist, isn't he? Surely he wouldn't exaggerate the health benefits of Kellogg's cereals... Frosties is, after all, 40% sugar – two spoons of sugar for every three spoons of corn.

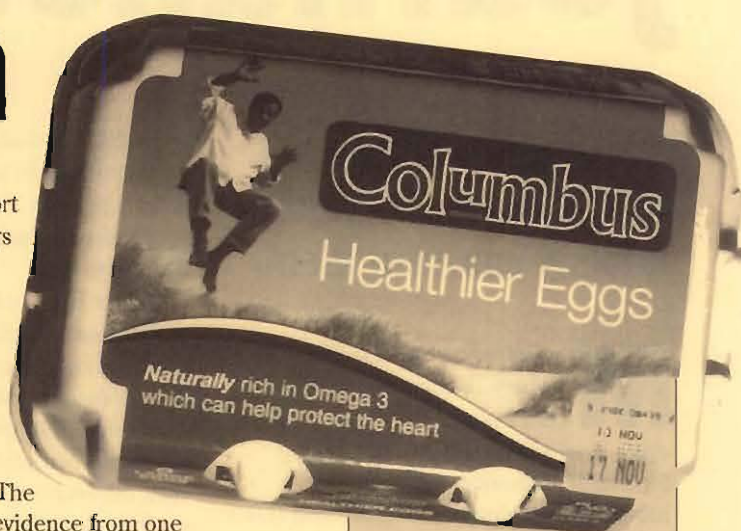


# Columbus must withdraw 'protect the heart' claim

**F**ollowing a complaint by the Food Commission to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), Deans Farm, producers of Columbus eggs, has been told that its claim that the eggs can 'help protect the heart' must be withdrawn.

The ASA ruled that the claim implied that consumption of the advertised eggs could help to prevent heart disease and this amounted to a medicinal claim. Medicinal claims are not permitted unless the product has a medicines license. The company was told it must withdraw the claim and should seek advice before making further health claims.

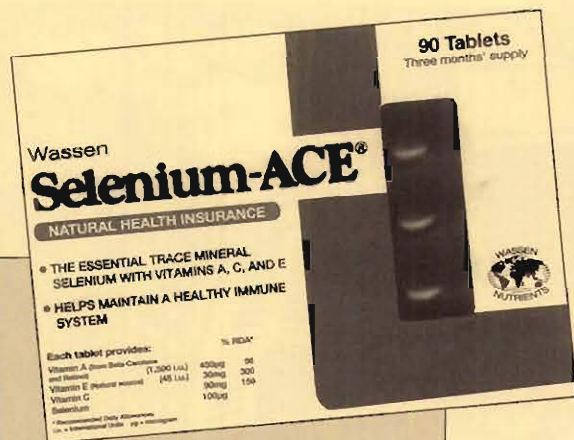
The ASA stopped short of declaring that the eggs could not affect heart health, as the consumption of one of the ingredients – omega-3 fatty acids – was known to help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. The company had provided evidence from one study showing improved blood cholesterol effects of eating omega-3 enriched eggs, and the ASA accepted that there may be a health benefit, but that this should not be turned into a medicinal claim.



Columbus – told not to make 'protect the heart' claims

## 'Protect' is a medicinal claim

Following the ASA's announcement, we went shopping for other products that might be making similar medicinal claims. Unless these products have a medicines license, the claim may be judged illegal.



Selenium-ACE – taking these tablets, says the company, provides 'natural cell protection for the entire body'.



Actimel – the company leaflet describes Actimel as a product that 'protects your body from inside' (it says this three times) having said that it can 'maintain your body's natural defences'.



Beta-carotene supplements – manufacturer Superdrug claims these pills are 'formulated to help protect the body from the harmful effects of free radicals which, in excess, can cause cell damage.' The company adds that the ingredients also 'help protect fats in the blood from oxidation'.



# A warning to journalists

**Press releases can tell fibs about food – and nobody can stop them.**

**M**agazine ads, TV ads and labels all have to comply with strict codes of practice. Make a false claim in an advert and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) or the Independent Television Commission (ITC) will have something to say about it. Make a false claim on a label and you'll soon have a Trading Standards Officer breathing down your neck.

But there's a whole category of marketing that slips through the regulatory net. This is particularly interesting when it comes to health claims for food and food supplements. When launching a product onto the market, a manufacturer will usually issue a press release giving journalists key details about the product, along with statements by scientists, doctors or other health professionals. The idea is that the journalists will use the press release as the basis of a news story to announce the arrival of the new product.

But press releases are not regulated by the ASA or the ITC, nor by Trading Standards. Manufacturers can make just about any claim they like without any danger of being reprimanded if the claims turn out to be inaccurate or misleading.

The Professional Charter of the Public Relations Consultants Association instructs its members that they shall 'have a positive duty at all times to respect the truth and shall not disseminate false or misleading information knowingly or recklessly, and to use proper care to avoid doing so inadvertently'. A useful guideline, but it is not legally binding.

Perhaps manufacturers and PR companies ought to take a leaf out of America's book. On a US press statement concerning financial forecasts we found the following:

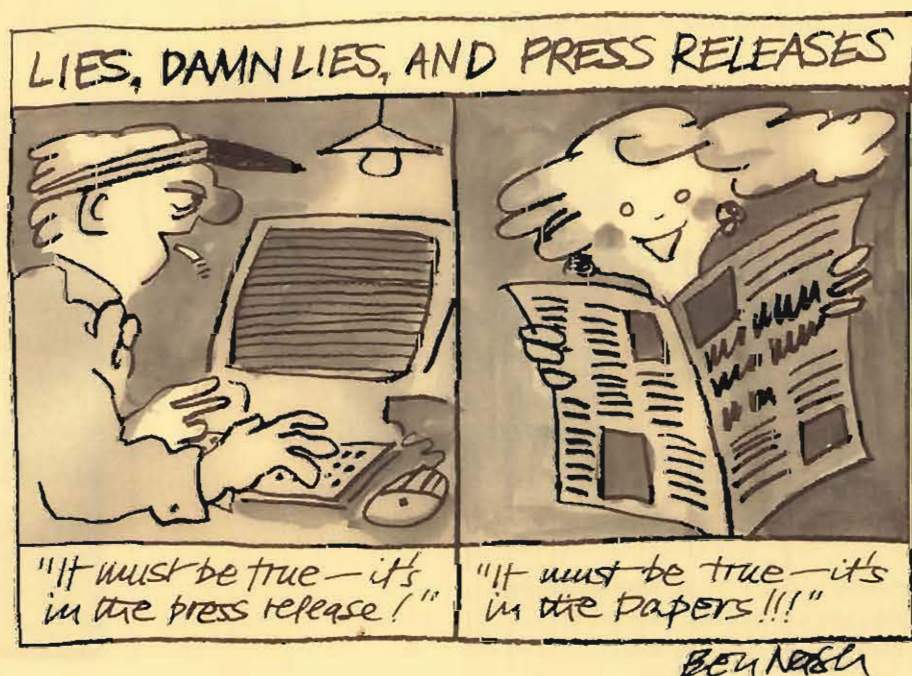
*'Information in this release may involve expectations, beliefs, plans, intentions or strategies regarding the future. These forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties. All forward-looking statements included in this release are based upon information available to [the writer] as of the date of the release, and we assume no obligation to update any such forward-looking statement. The statements in this release are not guarantees of future performance and actual results could differ materially from our current expectations. Numerous factors could cause or contribute to such differences.'*

Essentially, this disclaimer is protecting the writer from being sued. But on food-related press releases, why shouldn't there be a disclaimer reminding journalists that

facts and figures need to be checked; that health claims have to be substantiated and that claims made in the press release are for financial gain, and should therefore be treated with care?

For now, the moral of this story remains: don't believe everything you read in the papers.

The Food Commission is calling for the newly formed Joint Health Claims Initiative (JHCI) to take a hard look at the claims being made in press releases. The JHCI is a voluntary body bringing together industry, consumer and trading standards representatives. Their judgements will not have the strength of a legal decision but may be used by food inspectors when prosecuting companies. However, as press releases are not covered by any laws, no prosecutions can take place. The only contribution the JHCI can make is to publicly name and shame the miscreants. We hope the JHCI will make this an early priority.





# health claims

These are examples of press releases we've received over the past few months. How should a journalist judge what to believe when there are no regulations that govern the truth of what they say?

## BioZate

The press release claims that this 'pre-digested' protein drink has 'a positive impact on hypertension', and that laboratory tests on rats showed that the product can reduce blood pressure. Does this evidence warrant the same health claims for people?



**DAVISCO**  
FOODS INTERNATIONAL INC.  
Date: 1 September 2000  
Contact: Oliver Kahan/Steve Soper  
**DAVISCO PRESENTS HYPERTENSION-REDUCING BIOZATE AT HI EUROPE**  
Davisco Foods International Inc., Health Ingredients Europe, 20-22 November 2000, Messe Frankfurt, Hall 5.1, Stand C129

Davisco Foods International, the world's leading producer of whey protein isolates, will be presenting the ground-breaking nutritional properties of BioZate at HI Europe. Recent studies have revealed that BioZate, a unique hydrolyzed whey protein isolate, may be a contributory factor in helping to reduce hypertension - one of the key causes of heart attacks.

The trial results indicate that a single oral dosage of BioZate reduces mean arterial blood pressure up to 7 hours after administration on conscious, unanesthetized spontaneously hypertensive rats. These are considered to be effective genetic models of essential hypertension and are widely used in researching the effects of drugs on blood pressure. Laboratory evaluation demonstrated that BioZate inhibits ACE activity i.e. the Angiotensin Converting Enzyme which contributes to hypertension. Clinical trials on humans are currently underway and results are expected to be announced next year.

Hypertension is one of the principal causes of heart attacks in industrialized countries, affecting more than 50 million people in the US alone.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: American Heart Association  
1000 New York Avenue Suite 100 Lake Park, NY 10044  
PH: 212 462-6000 FAX: 212 462-6007

## Skane probiotics

The press release says that drinking this probiotic fruit drink will keep your digestive system 'in perfect balance' and could help immunise against unknown, future infections in healthy people. These claims might hit the headlines, but are they true?



## Nutribread

The press release claims that the bread contains Omega-3 fatty acids, 'the only fats that the body cannot produce itself and must therefore be obtained from food'. The press release cannot be legally challenged, even though other essential fats, as well as Omega-3, must also be obtained from food.



## Rhodiola

The press release claims that a herb available as a new dietary supplement can alleviate depression, promote mental alertness, improve tolerance to stress, boost physical energy, improve sleep patterns and hearing, prevent abnormal heart rhythm and prevent free-radical damage. But where's the proof?

These are medicinal claims and cannot be made unless the product has a medicines licence. Does it? The press release doesn't say.

## skane news release

Skane Dairy UK Ltd,  
21 September 2000  
Oxford  
Northampton  
NN1 3BA  
Telephone +44 (0)1773 794003  
Facsimile +44 (0)1773 794004

PR7076  
22nd June 2000

### NEW CLINICAL TRIALS DEMONSTRATE POTENTIAL OF HARNESSING 'FRIENDLY' BACTERIA TO 'IMMUNISE' HEALTHY PEOPLE AGAINST INFECTION

Dr Suzanne Cunningham-Rundles (Professor of Immunology and Director of The Immunology Research Laboratory at the New York Hospital, Cornell University Medical Center) presented new data in London today which indicate that stimulating the immune response in the gastrointestinal tract may hold a vital key to the health of nations in a world where changing conditions appear to permit, and even promote, the unexpected emergence of new infections.

In a paper which has recently appeared in the *American Journal of Gastroenterology*, Dr Cunningham-Rundles' work with severely immunocompromised children showed the benefits of taking the *Lactobacillus plantarum* 299v (L299v) bacteria and its beneficial effect on immune response. The children involved in this trial, amongst the 1,500 children born each day with HIV infection, also suffer the condition known as Failure-To-Thrive and therefore grow stunted.

(Continued...)

## NUTRIBREAD

11 September, 2000

Top TV Chef partners Nutribread®

Well-known celebrity chef James Martin, will be serving up some tasty treats at this year's Good Food Show courtesy of Nutribread®.

James will be working with Nutribread® throughout the Good Food Show, which runs from November 20th to December 3rd at the NEC in Birmingham.

James has designed and will be demonstrating a collection of Nutribread® recipes on the Nutribread® stand - E120, everyday at the show.

Nutribread® was launched in February and has been a great success. The range currently consists of two loaves but there are exciting plans for more to follow.

Nutribread® Brown Loaf for Women contains natural Plant Oestrogens, Evening Primrose Oil and added Calcium. These ingredients may help to aid some of the effects of menopause, ease pre-menstrual tension and may help prevent the development of osteoporosis.

Nutribread® Whitebread Loaf for the Family contains Omega-3 fatty acids, which may help to reduce the risk of heart disease. They are the only loaf that the body cannot produce itself and must therefore be obtained from food.

James who has been profiled as one of the country's hottest chefs is originally from Yorkshire, which is where Nutribread® is based by William Jackson Bakery.

James was discovered by Antony Worrall Thompson after leaving at Scarborough technical college. Since then he has gone on to pursue a variety of roles, notably head chef at the Hotel du Vin and Bistro, TV personality and presenter. Author of two books and James has recently opened his own deli in Worcester called Cadogan & James. Not bad for a 27 year old!

For your chance to see James in action, make a note in your diary to visit the Nutribread® stand E120, at this year's BBC Good Food Show.

Ends

## NEWS RELEASE

### Rhodiola - the herb, a true miracle herb

Available November 2000 at Home Visits

A source of Rhodiola, Rhodiola rosea, is a natural plant

growing in 5,000 to 10,000 years old in the Himalayas

and is found in the Himalayas, the Alps, the Pyrenees and the

Andes. It is a natural plant growing in the Himalayas, the Alps, the

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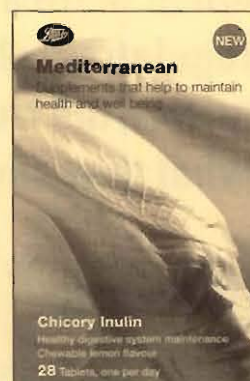
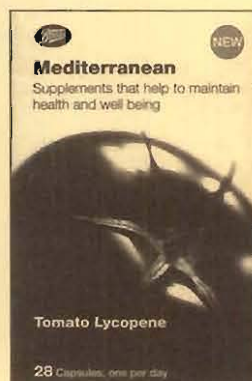
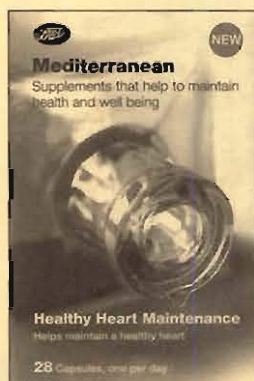
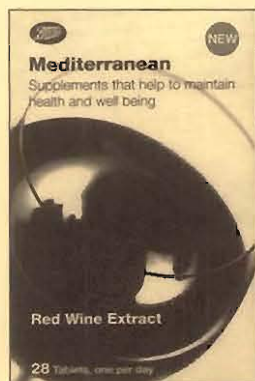
Pyrenees and the Andes. It is a natural plant growing in the Himalayas, the Alps, the

Pyrenees and the Andes. It is a natural plant growing in the Himalayas, the Alps, the



# CHECKOUT

## The Mediterranean diet in a pill?



It's the kind of health advice you might talk about in the pub... Do you remember that research that showed that Mediterranean people live longer and don't get heart disease? Wasn't it to do with eating more pasta? Or was it garlic? No, I heard it was to do with how they cook their tomatoes. No – that wasn't it. It's because they drink red wine. Cheers!

Playing on the mythological quality that 'The Mediterranean Diet' has come to embody, Boots has this summer released a new range of dietary supplements.

Called Mediterranean Supplements, the range includes 'Chicory Inulin', 'Tomato Lycopene', 'Red Wine Extract' and 'Healthy Heart Maintenance' (a mix of fish oil, vitamin E, olive oil and garlic). They are claimed to 'help maintain health and well being'.

The packs point out that 'Fresh fruit and vegetable consumption in the UK has dropped 30% since 1970,' and that 'Digestive disorders affect one in five people in the UK.' The solution (according to Boots)? Taking tablets daily – handily packed in foil with each capsule labelled with a day of the week. Just like medicines.

Of course, Boots doesn't actually say that the supplements will prevent heart disease. But statements on the packs such as 'Fatal heart attacks and coronary heart disease are lower in France compared with the rest of northern Europe' and 'France has one of the highest life expectancies in

Europe', displayed next to 'You too can experience the health benefits that are attributed to a Mediterranean Diet' could lead the reader to that very conclusion. But the link isn't made verbally, so it doesn't actually break the food supplement rules.

The fact that each type of capsule is sold in a separate box illustrates how manufacturers like to tailor products to fit in with current news stories, and the kind of nutrition information circulating that is little better than gossip. For each of the theories about why a Mediterranean Diet might help to prolong life, they produce a pill. 'Mediterranean people live longer because they eat tomatoes?' Take Tomato Lycopene capsules! 'Don't the health benefits come from olive oil and garlic?' Take olive oil and garlic supplements! 'French people don't get heart attacks because they drink red wine?' Take Red Wine Extract! Just as well for Boots that their customers believe different things. A month's course of each of these supplements costs £6. And 'Healthy Heart Maintenance' will set you back £8.

There's no reminder on any the packs about the role of an active lifestyle in preventing heart disease. Nor is there any advice about the benefits of supplements only as part of a healthy diet. A healthy intake of fruit and vegetables could, after all, contain the very ingredients that Boots are marketing. Why take a tomato lycopene capsule when you could eat a

tomato? Why take an olive oil capsule when you could have olive oil dressing on your fresh salad?

Our particular favourite in this respect is the Tomato Lycopene supplement, which states: "One capsule is equal to two large ripe tomatoes per day." Equal? What about little things like flavour, texture, vitamin C and dietary fibre? And aren't tomatoes vegetarian? we ask, because these capsules are coated in meat-derived gelatin.

Oh, and all these Mediterranean pills are made in – er – England!

### Boots is not alone...

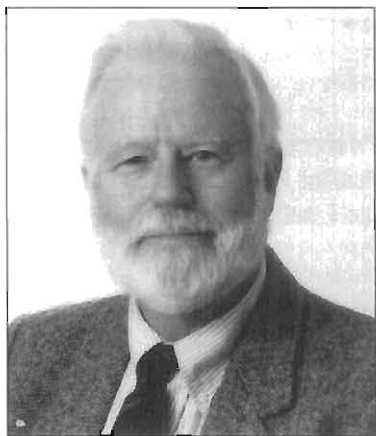
Boots isn't the only manufacturer to produce a Red Wine Extract food supplement. 'French Parad'ox', containing polyphenols and proanthocyanidins, claims that it could help maintain a healthy heart. At least this pack points out that the product is a food supplement and can only be of benefit in the context of a healthy lifestyle.





# Ludlow fare

Food lovers flocked to the Shropshire town of Ludlow in September, to sample the delights of real produce. *John Whiting* was among them.



*Oh I have been to Ludlow Fair  
And left my necktie God knows where...*

So wrote A.E. Houseman over a century ago. During his lifetime Houseman was best known as a classical scholar, whose *pints and quarts of Ludlow beer* may have been, like another recently boasted 14 pints a day, more a product of imagination than of memory. At any rate, Ludlow's modern Food and Drink Festival, now in its sixth year, appears to be a more sober though far from abstemious occasion; each day at closing time the crowds were merry but still upright.

This is a very different affair from the food-industry-dominated events which take place in Olympia and Earl's Court. Occupying the big H-shaped marquee in the grounds of Ludlow Castle were 73 stalls, all of whose exhibitors came from within a 30 mile radius of Ludlow. Those lucky enough to sample their wares departed with a healthy respect for the Heart of England producers and even a guarded optimism for the survival of local food traditions.

These were not expensive imported luxuries, but sausages and organic free range meats – there are half-a-dozen local butchers in Ludlow alone! – cheeses, pâtés (both meat and vegetarian), breads, wines, beers and ciders. The tents, furthermore, were full of the sort of average families you'd see at a motorway stop. Elitist? Don't make me laugh!

Off to one side but open to the stallholder area was a demonstration marquee where local chefs whipped up a few of their choice recipes. These are a distinguished lot – there are three Michelin-starred restaurants within easy walking distance. After local food and garden writer Mirabel Osler wrote them up for the *New York Times*, they started getting bookings from all over America.

But famous though they are, they enhance and express the local cuisine rather than dominating it. Shaun Hill, the best-known celebrity chef (he'd hate that label), runs a small six-table restaurant serving fixed-price menus at an inclusive

cost which at most Michelin-blessed shrines would hardly cover the extras. And he's there in the kitchen, not off somewhere promoting a line of eponymous sauces.

Also in the demonstration marquee was Bob Kennard, the Soil Association Abattoir Campaign Co-ordinator. He told us how close this interdependent network of small producers is to being destroyed by prohibitive charges threatening the survival of local abattoirs, already disappearing at an accelerating rate. If the small-scale meat and dairy herds are driven out of business, he told us, then grain production, on which everyone including real ale producers depends, will cease to be profitable in this country and we'll be a giant step closer to a totally centralised world food industry.

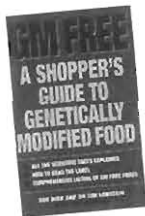
On a lighter note, an open discussion was billed on the provocative subject, 'Do the English really enjoy their food?' After a last-minute cancellation by the scheduled moderator, Mirabel Osler was asked to step in and she in turn asked me to share the podium. What sort of response would there be? We needn't have worried: after all, whatever audience showed up would consist of enthusiasts who had come of their own accord to a festival entirely devoted to food and drink. In the event, the questions were reasonable, the responses were intelligent and informed, and after a very few minutes we two moderators could have crept away and let them get on with it.

Some of the English enjoy their food very much, thank you, and they'll do their best to keep it that way.

■ John Whiting is a free-lance food writer and gourmand.

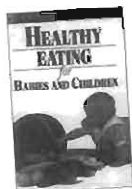


# marketing



## 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



## 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.



## 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



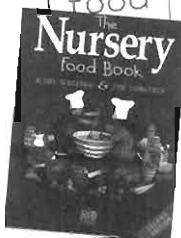
## What the Label Doesn't Tell You

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.



## 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.



## 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. Each poster costs £2.50 inc p&p.

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# Packed Lunch Junk

As children went back to school in September, the big retailers rolled into action with their usual habit of promoting unhealthy food for kids' packed lunches. We decided to compare the foods to the government's guidelines on nutrition (table reproduced below) to see exactly what children will be eating.

## Nutrition guide

— per 100g —

This is a lot		This is a little
10g	sugars	2g
20g	fat	3g
	saturated fats	1g
5g	fibre	0.5g
3g	sodium	0.1g

## Sainsbury's shows how (not) to 'Pack them off'

Sainsbury's took three pages of the September issue of *The Sainsbury's Magazine* to promote 17 food products for kids' lunch boxes.

The Sainsbury's packed-lunch menu includes processed cheese, chocolate biscuits and chocolate selection packs, flavoured soft drinks, and three types of crisps.

Of the 17 products, ten contained very high levels of fat and saturated fat — a whopping 39% of fat in Pringles (16% saturated fat); 33.4% fat in Nik Naks corn crisps; and 31.4% of fat in Cheese and Onion Hula Hoops (13.6% saturated fat). Other products had very high levels of sugar — over 40% in the case of Wagon Wheels and 30% in Harvest cereal bars (plugged as being natural, wholesome and 'packed with vitamins and iron'). The ingredients lists on many of the products showed artificial preservatives, sweeteners, colourings or flavourings.



Last autumn, the Food Magazine criticised Sainsbury's and Tesco for offering money-off vouchers to mothers of young children, for lunch-box products such as sweets, hot dogs, sweetened cereal, processed cheese, jelly, chocolate, crisps and soft drinks. A year on, and the supermarkets haven't changed their bad habits.

The guideline for parents? If a product is marketed as suitable for lunch boxes, take a closer look at the label — it's more than likely that it is sugary, salty, or fatty junk.

## LiDL offers little

In its A2-sized brochure, LiDL offered 21 food products with the heading 'Where Packed Lunches Cost Less!' Perhaps they should have written, 'Where Packed Lunches are Worth Less!'

The LiDL packed-lunch menu includes Happy Kids Lollipops, Raspberry Jaffa Cakes, Cheese Flavour Corn Puffs, Chocolate and Hazelnut Spread, and Claw-Shaped Corn Snacks. The prices are low, but then so is the nutritional content.

We estimate that at least 17 of the 21 products are high in fat and/or sugar and/or salt. And ingredients lists on many of the products show artificial preservatives, sweeteners, colourings or flavourings.



## Children's food — how to get it right!

Getting kids to eat healthy food isn't easy, so we've produced a special poster guide to Children's Food. The poster will help you to sift the junk out of a child's diet — and it also has lots of great tips on getting them to eat healthy foods! The poster costs only £2.50 and is available from The Food Commission, Publications Dept, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.





# Refreshing approaches to child health

'Eat five portions of fruit or vegetables a day' is familiar advice if you want to protect yourself against coronary heart disease, asthma, respiratory illnesses and some cancers. But simply being told that fruit and vegetables are good for you doesn't seem to do the trick in getting children (or adults!) to actually eat them.

A number of projects are looking for ways to solve this problem, trying different strategies to persuade children to reject junk food and eat fruit and vegetables instead.

## New funding for national scheme

The organisation Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, has received a grant from the National Lotteries Board to develop a nation-wide campaign to increase fruit and vegetable consumption among 7-11 year olds – especially among children from low-income families.

Project staff will work with children, teachers, community groups, food retailers, local councils, caterers and growers to develop promotional activities to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. Pilot projects will be launched in schools in Lambeth, Plymouth and Leeds. The experimental methods and strategies used in these areas will be closely monitored so that recommendations can be made for future schemes in other parts of the UK.

The work will focus on promotional materials for fruit and vegetables, and could include a teachers' project pack,

comics and a video (promoted by characters to whom children can relate), rewards (such as hats, T-shirts and stickers) and ideas for school food committees to ensure a school environment that supports the fruit and vegetable theme (covering school meals, tuck shops and vending machines).

The project will also work with wholesalers, retailers, specialist retailers and market traders to encourage them to develop pricing strategies and promotional activities to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. And growers will be encouraged to get involved by hosting school visits.

■ **Contact:** Kate Bowie or Richard Siddall at: Sustain, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Tel: 020 7837 1228; fax: 020 7837 1141. Email: [kate@sustainweb.org](mailto:kate@sustainweb.org) or [richard@sustainweb.org](mailto:richard@sustainweb.org).



## Call in the Food Dudes...

Some of the strategies to be adopted by the Sustain project are inspired by studies on children aged between five and seven, carried out by the Psychology Department at Bangor University.

The researchers found that heroic cartoon characters extolling the virtues of fruit and vegetables, accompanied by a reward scheme, were key factors in increasing children's consumption of fruit and vegetables.

In videos shown before children's mealtimes, the Food Dudes (pictured left) are depicted fighting the forces of evil in the form of the Junk Food Junta, and chanting "If I eat my fruit tonight, General Junk will get a fright." After watching the video, children

were offered some of the foods they'd seen the Food Dudes eating.

The children were offered rewards, such as Food Dude caps, lunchboxes and T-shirts if they ate at least three quarters of the fruit and vegetables offered to them.

The studies showed very encouraging initial results, and many of the children were still eating most of their fruit and vegetables eight months after the trial period was over.

■ **For information about the Food Dudes scheme** contact Professor Fergus Lowe, School of Psychology, University of Wales (Bangor), Brigantia Building, Penrallt Road, Bangor LL57 2AS. Tel: 01248 382210; fax: 01248 382599.

## Government action

### Health Action Zones

The Government has identified geographical areas of particular concern, where some people suffer from more health problems than those in other areas – usually because of poverty. These areas are designated as 'Health Action Zones', and money and staff are made available to work to remedy health inequalities. The stated aims of the Health Action Zones are to:

- Tackle health inequalities, which have increased in the UK in the last 20 years;
- Modernise the care system and ensure people can access services;
- Develop partnership working.

Food has been identified as a key area affecting health inequalities, and some of the HAZs have instigated breakfast clubs and healthy schools schemes to get across the healthy eating message. Project staff from the Sustain fruit and vegetable team will be working with Health Action Zone representatives in Plymouth, Lambeth and Leeds to promote fruit and vegetables, particularly among children from low-income households.

### Extra funding

In June, minister for Public Health Yvette Cooper announced a £2m project to promote fruit to young schoolchildren through experimental projects such as 'fruit tuck shops'. The funding will go to health, education and community workers who will be asked to submit tenders to conduct the project under the title National School Fruit Scheme.

### Scottish initiative

An initiative of the Scottish Executive was announced, also in June, by minister for Scottish Health Susan Deacon. The aim is to ensure that every child in Scotland eats at least one piece of fruit every day, in a scheme run along similar lines to the Department of Health project described above.

## A break from junk

The school tuck shop at Seaford College, West Sussex, is 'jettisoning the junk and pouring away the pop' following headmaster Toby Mullins' decision to give foods with additives the push.

'Removing the sale of these items in school should help our students to concentrate more on their studies, as well as enjoying better health,' he said. 'It is our job to educate and that is what we are trying to do – not just academically, but in this case, our pupils' palates.' Tuck shop and vending

machines are now stocked with juices, cereal bars, fruit and fresh sandwiches and rolls. There are plans for adding hot soup and warm snacks.

The change follows earlier moves to improve school dinners, and a subsequent improvement in academic achievement among the children.

■ Contact Seaford College on 01798 867212.

## Diet disaster area

As reported in the previous issue of *The Food Magazine*, a government survey on the diets of British school-aged children showed that:

- 20% of children ate no fruit at all during the period of the survey;
- for some children, sugar accounts for over 30% of their energy intake;

- for every ounce of green leafy vegetables, boys are eating a quarter of a pound of sweet biscuits while girls are eating a quarter of a pound of confectionery;
- children from low-income families are more likely to be obese.

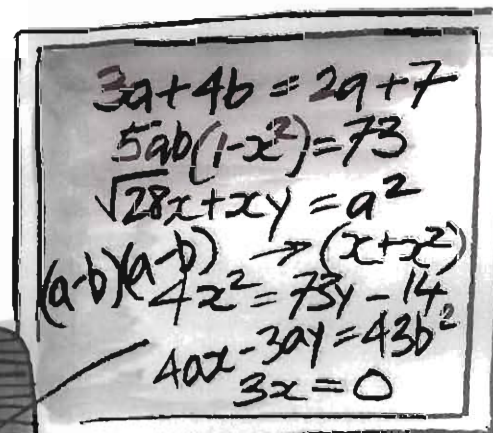
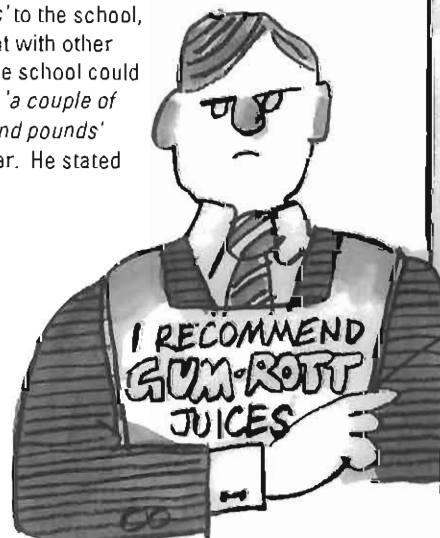
## Hoarding schools

Cash-strapped schools in Ireland are selling wall space as poster advertising sites, following a deal between 65 schools in Dublin and PR company Ad Infinitum.

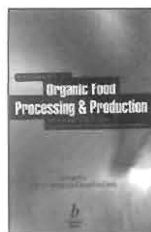
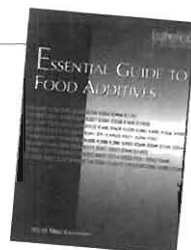
Adverts for Ribena already adorn the walls of one comprehensive, where Principal Derek West admitted that a site in a canteen was worth 'a few hundred pounds' to the school, and that with other sites the school could expect 'a couple of thousand pounds' this year. He stated

that the income would go towards paying for a librarian, a nurse and a sports coach for the school.

■ See: [www.independent.ie/2000/264/d01g.shtml](http://www.independent.ie/2000/264/d01g.shtml)







## Handbook of Organic Food Processing & Production, 2nd Edition

S Wright and D McCrea (eds), Blackwell Science (with Sainsbury's Supermarkets), www.blackwell-science.com, 2000, ISBN 0-632-05541-3, pp230, rrp£69.50.

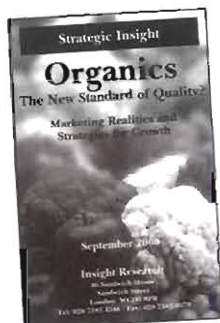
A fine introduction for a business wanting to get into producing or importing organic foods, this handbook covers the essentials – but at a price.

From a gentle introduction by Craig Sams, president of Whole Earth Foods, to a review of the regulations in New Zealand, the book offers the expected facts and figures, some guidance on regulatory and legal issues, a whiz through some practical issues in meeting the standards, and a list of web sites for suppliers.

Sadly, it doesn't cover the food chain beyond the processor: there's nothing on catering, little on retailing, nothing on labelling (except wines) and little on marketing and promotions. Consumers at the receiving end will therefore find little of direct interest, but might enjoy day-dreaming about starting their own business...



More facts and figures on organic production – mainly farming and market data, but with greater depth than in books – can be found in this series of publications from Hohenheim University (in English). Eight volumes so far, costing around £20 each. Order from www.uni-hohenheim.de/~i410a/ofeurope/ or try the Soil Association bookshop (tel 0117 9290661).



If you really like spending money, then you could order a copy of

the latest report from Insight Research, which estimates market growth and opportunities, consumer types, brand positioning, marketing and current retailer strategies. About 130 pages, for a whopping £495.00 from www.insightresearch.co.uk (tel 020 7383 4546).

## Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain



G Monbiot, Macmillan, www.macmillan.com or www.panmacmillan.com, 2000, ISBN 0-333-90164-9, pp430, rrp£12.99.

As readers of his *Guardian* column will know, George Monbiot writes fluently and passionately on a range of environmental issues, including food concerns. Here he alerts readers through a blend of fact, argument and vivid descriptions, to the increasing influence of large companies over our daily life – with chapters on supermarkets, genetically engineered food and patented genes – and finishing with 'A Troublemaker's Charter' that reminds us that 'only one thing can reverse the corporate takeover of Britain. It's you'.

The book is also a reminder of the shift in the political spectrum of the last decade, with Britain's radical left losing its stricter class analyses in favour of the American left view, focusing on power and money, the large against the small. Indeed, as if to prove the point, Monbiot's book features a quote on the front cover from a doyen of US radicalism, Noam Chomsky.

## Animal Welfare

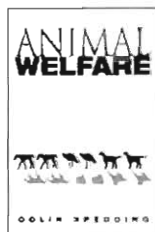
C Spedding, Earthscan, www.earthscan.co.uk, 2000, ISBN 1-85383-672-9, pp188, rrp£12.95.

Sir Colin Spedding, Emeritus Professor and the Chairman of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, has been in the business of researching and promoting animal welfare for 30-odd years. One might have expected a dry, if reliable, book on the subject. This, though, is far from dry. How about this challenge:

'Is it any better welfare for an overfat dog to eat toffees than for an obese child with bad teeth to do so? And it is no use asking the dog or child!' (p10)

And his coverage is broad – not just farm animals but pets, zoo animals, sport animals (including racing and hunting), animals in film and on TV, animals used in experiments and wild animals affected by our activities. It's a great primer for anyone coming into the area.

■ Note: he doesn't list the animal welfare organisations as there are 1200 of them – but he gives the starting point for internet browsing: www.worldanimal.net/wan.htm.



## Essential Guide to Food Additives

M Saltmarsh (ed). Leatherhead Food RA Publishing, www.lfra.co.uk (tel 01372 376761), 2000, ISBN 0-905748-37-9, pp322, £35 plus p&p.

If your 'E for Additives' is getting a bit dusty, but you still find the information useful, then you might like to get up-to-date with this volume. It's similar in arrangement, listing all the 'E' additives by numerical order, and giving for each an idea of the foods it would be found in, its reason for being there, limits on the amounts to be used and how the additive is manufactured.

Missing is the crucial information about the impact of each additive on human health – perhaps not surprising as this comes from a research body mostly funded by, and geared towards, the food industry and its needs. The issue of additive safety is discussed in the introductory chapters, which dismiss scares about additives as largely unfounded. Nothing is said about the role that additives play in encouraging generally unhealthy diets, giving an unfair advantage to processed foods, especially fatty, sugary and salty foods, compared with relatively unprocessed, fresh foods.

## Entertaining Single-Handed

M Whiting, Diatribal Press, 2000, ISBN 1-902110-01-3, pp137, £9.95.

We don't normally review recipe books but this one is unusual in several respects.

First-off, it's written by our staff cookery expert, Mary Whiting. Second, it's got nearly 100 great recipes, including a terrific Christmas section – plus lots of tips. Third, it's got cartoons by our magazine cartoonist Ben Nash. And fourth, it is available post-free from us, until stocks run out. You won't find it in the bookshops.

It makes a nice Christmas present for people who like cooking but either live alone or are the only cook in the household. Give it – then get yourself invited over!

**SPECIAL OFFER: available £9.95 post-free from the Food Commission (tel 020 7837 2250)**





## What the doctor reads



### The latest research from the medical journals

#### Aspirin... or a cup of cocoa?

Readers may know that aspirin not only treats headaches but also reduces the adhesion of platelets in the bloodstream, helping prevent thromboses and atherosclerosis. But you don't have to take an aspirin a day to get the benefit. Research shows that cocoa has similar anti-platelet effects.

The researchers found that a cup of cocoa made with water (to prevent the milk proteins complicating the results) was just as effective as aspirin. But, warns a commentary in the *British Medical Journal*, don't expect that a drink made with full-cream milk, whipped cream and three spoons of sugar, or a bar of chocolate full of fat and sugar, will be so heart-friendly. ■ *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 72, pp30-35, 2000.

#### Vitamins may slow senility

In a study of 3000 Japanese Americans taking part in a heart programme, those taking vitamins C and E as supplements were found to be less likely to be showing signs of senile dementia four years later, according to researchers.

The effects were noticeable for vascular dementia, the second most common cause of dementia, but they did not apply to the commonest cause, Alzheimer's. The researchers speculate that the vitamins, both of them antioxidants, may have their effect by limiting the amount of damage that occurs in the brain after a stroke. They may also protect against brain cell injury and death in a variety of diseases. ■ *Neurology*, 54, p1265, 2000.

#### Pesticides and brain dysfunction

People who are frequently exposed to pesticides, such as arable farmers and gardeners, may have a higher risk of mild cognitive dysfunction. More than 800 people in Holland were given colour-word tests, verbal learning and recall tests, fluency and letter-digit tests and the results were assessed in relation to their exposure to pesticides through their work or their hobbies.

Those exposed to pesticides were five times more likely to have poor results on the cognitive tests. Other environmental hazards, such as organic solvents, metals and other chemicals showed no significant links to impaired cognitive ability. ■ *The Lancet*, 356, p912, 2000.

#### Diets and long life

A study of 160 people with an average age of 80 years looked at the foods they ate and their survival over the next five years. At the start of the period, the group were, on average, eating diets with more than the recommended levels of nutrients, but those that were eating the best diet among

the group were more likely to be alive at the end of the period.

A third of the group had died within five years. Those surviving were more likely to be eating plenty of citrus fruit, milk and yogurt, and less likely to be eating a lot of meat.

■ *Epidemiology*, 11, pp440-445, 2000.

#### Thymus and orchis

There has been much amusement in the medical press about the possibility of confusing substances derived from cattle offal – banned under BSE legislation – and quite different material from plants.

Dietary supplements often contain animal parts, and both these and plant material may be named in Latin. A bottle containing 'thymus' for example, might mean the thymus gland or it might mean the herb thyme. And the word 'orchis' might mean a bull's testicle or an orchid.

■ *New England Journal of Medicine*, 343, pp304-305, 2000.

#### Preventing heart disease in women

Two recent studies show that healthy diets help to reduce heart disease risk for women. A study of 84,000 nurses in the USA period found the lowest risk of developing heart disease over fifteen years were those women who smoked least, exercised most, drank an average of half an alcoholic drink per day, ate high-fibre cereals, plenty of fish, but small amounts of saturated fat, trans fat and foods with a high glycaemic index (easily turned into blood sugar).

The second study looked specifically at whole-grain foods and their links to the risk of having a stroke. The same group of women (data was available for about 75,000) were compared for their diets and risk of developing a stroke over 12 years. Those who were eating the largest amounts of whole-grain foods had the lowest risk of developing a stroke, after controlling for other known cardiovascular risk factors.

■ *New England Journal of Medicine*, 343, pp16-22, 2000; *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 284, pp1534-1540, 2000.

The government's expert group on food allergies has reported that 20-30% of the UK population think they

have adverse reactions to certain foods, but that objective tests found less than 2% of adults actually show such reactions. This rose to 8% among infants and children.

Of those that did suffer, most reacted to normal foods such as nuts, cow's milk and wheat, and only three people in every 10,000, the scientists said, were genuinely at risk of suffering reactions to synthetic additives or contaminants.

Other countries show different patterns, with many people in Japan showing rice allergies, and people in Scandinavia showing allergies to cod.

The *Food Magazine* has found that Professor Peter Aggett, who chaired the group that wrote the report, receives research and teaching fees and grants from food companies and groups with industry links, including Wyeth, Unilever, Nestec and the Meat and Livestock Commission. Several other advisers on the committee benefit from food industry support, including companies making food additives.

■ *Committee on Toxicity*, [www.doh.gov.uk/cot.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/cot.htm)



## Additives in medicines

I have just read your Food Magazine which has reminded me of a query I have on infant colic remedy.

I used Infacol for my son who suffered badly with colic. We were pleased that the medicine seemed to relieve his pain. However, one of the ingredients of the product is saccharin.

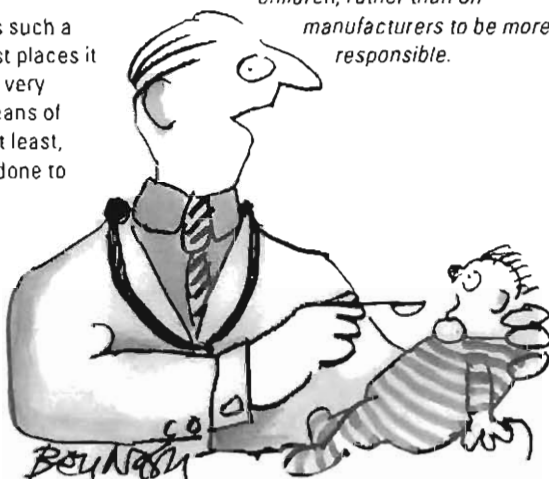
If, as you mention, saccharin has such a bad name, then surely one of the last places it should be used is for a medicine for very young babies. Is there not some means of ensuring that products for babies, at least, don't contain it? Can something be done to see that manufacturers rectify the situation?

CE Smith, Winchester

*Foods sold expressly as suitable for babies and young children are not permitted to contain artificial sweeteners (nor several other categories of additives). But medicines come under different regulations and no such ban is in place. The*

*companies argue that they use it instead of sugar, to help the medicine go down...*

*Medicines should show on the pack, or in a leaflet in the pack, what the main ingredients are, so you do at least have some choice. But we think it is wrong to put the burden on consumers to protect their children, rather than on manufacturers to be more responsible.*



*"She may need some more medication to deal with the effects of the sweeteners."*

## GM free-for-all

I bought a beef pie that was labelled 'GM free'. What does this mean? I've heard that this could mean that up to 1% of the food could be genetically engineered. Is this true?  
S Colebrook, Portsmouth

*Current legislation on GM labelling requires food to have a GM declaration only where GM material is present in the final food. There is currently no legislation on phrases such as 'GM free', 'GE free' or 'contains no GMOs'.*

*The advice from the Food Standards Agency is that if manufacturers write a phrase like this on their products, it must be prepared to substantiate the claim if challenged.*

*The Food Safety Act makes it an offence to describe a product falsely or in a way that is likely to mislead a shopper. The Trade Descriptions Act makes it an offence for a trader to supply a product to which a false description has been applied. So if you found that your pie did actually contain GM material (for example, GM soya included in the pastry), you would be able to challenge the manufacturer, saying that you had been misled. And a court might agree that you had also been misled if you discovered that the cows that supplied the beef in your pie had*

*been fed GM grain. But no test case has yet been brought on this issue.*

*The European Commission is expected to publish (later this year) a draft regulation on the labelling of food as 'GM free'. It will be circulated to member states for comment. The Food Standards Agency has undertaken to consult with interested parties on the content of this proposal.*

*You also asked about the 1% contamination threshold. The current regulations require a GM declaration on any food that contains detectable GM ingredients or additives (with detectable DNA or protein). But if the product contains small amounts of GM material due to accidental contamination the manufacturer doesn't have to label it as GM, providing this is less than 1%.*

*If accidental contamination has occurred, the manufacturer must prove to the enforcement authorities that it has taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the food is from a non GM source. So a manufacturer couldn't deliberately add a GM ingredient and avoid putting a GM label on the product. It is also interesting to note that this threshold of 1% applies to each of the individual ingredients, so the level in the final food could be much lower.*

## Milk damage

Milk has been my downfall. At home we had a farm cow with ad lib milk, butter and cream.

The result – milk allergy, brittle bones and loss of all teeth age 56. The two healthiest two-year-olds I have ever seen here in Spain are, after having been breastfed, milk-free children. They never have colds and have no need to go to the doctor.

Besides, what are the cows eating these days? In Spain, crops are sent to feed cows when they fail pesticide checks!

P Murphy, Benicarlo, Spain

## Hospital fare

Many thanks for your invaluable work exposing just what is in our food.

I am wondering whether it is possible to start a campaign against chemical colourings in food. I recently ate a red jelly when in hospital and found my mouth and lips covered in vivid red dye. I had one analysed and it contained two red dyes E124 ponceau 4R and E 129 Allura Red.

I have written to the hospital objecting to chemicals in hospital food as so many patients are having drugs for treatment and the dyes could clash with these. And so many of these dyes seem unnecessary – e.g. in Rice Creamola made by Nestlé there are three – E104, E110 and E124, all 'coal tar' dyes, and Lucozade has E110, too.

M D Yates, Woking, Surrey

## MSG message

Once I would have been surprised that so many children's foods contain Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) but not any longer. It seems to crop up in a very wide range of savoury products and snacks.

This is not just a matter of eking out the more expensive ingredients. My (adult) son is sure he is allergic to MSG, and we strongly suspect that my grandson age 4 is, too. There is a serious health issue here.

S Tillyard, Norwich

**Monosodium Glutamate is added to many foods.**







Keep on writing  
but please keep  
your letters  
short! You can fax us on 020 7837 1141

## Fortified junk

A few months ago you pointed out that organic Rice Pops had more sugar than regular ones, and had no added vitamins. Then more recently you were criticising poor quality food that had added vitamins. Perhaps you could explain your real position on this topic, or at least make up your mind?

Personally I don't believe food should be allowed to be fortified with anything. Food should also not be stripped of its integral nutrients.

G Purmann, London SE

*We agree with you. As our article on fortified junk tried to explain, we believe fortification is done for marketing purposes, helping to sell poor quality foods. It only confuses the healthy eating message about which foods are good to eat. Our point about organic Rice Pops, and about the other organic processed foods spreading across the supermarket shelves, is that they may be just as bad, or even worse, nutritionally, than their regular counterparts. Unprocessed, organic whole foods are the better answer.*

*Did you see the Tesco adverts on TV, in which a child's mother asks the child's granny to get a healthy tea ready, and granny asks the friendly assistant at Tesco's? The assistant points out all the organic foods she can buy – and granny fills her trolley with organic chips, white bread, pizza, chocolate biscuits and ice cream. When mum comes home granny is smugly pleased, but mum despairs.*

## Beef damage

I have seen some recent statements from the meat industry saying that beef sales are now back to pre-1996 levels. 1996 was when the government publicly admitted that BSE in cattle was linked to the vCJD disease in humans, but hadn't many people stopped eating beef even before that date?

Jen Hershent, Lancaster

*Indeed, beef sales had been affected by the BSE scare since the late 1980s, and an attempt to restore beef sales was made by John Gummer when he made his daughter Cordelia eat a burger in front of the world's media in 1990.*

*But interestingly, beef sales had been in decline from way back in the 1970s. Our graphs show that the total beef used for food (including catering, fast food etc) and shoppers' purchases of fresh beef to eat at home, have been falling steadily for over two decades. We may be back at pre-1996 levels, but these were nothing for the industry to boast about.*

## Fat children?

In a past issue of your magazine you discussed being overweight and obese, and how these are defined as having a BMI over 25 or over 30 respectively. Can you remind me what BMI means, and can you tell me whether it applies to children?

Cal Hartley, Washington DC

*BMI means Body Mass Index, and you find out what your personal BMI is by dividing your weight in kilograms by your height in metres and then dividing by your height in metres again:  $BMI = \text{weight}/\text{height}^2$ . Healthy BMIs are in the range 20-25 for adults. Over 25 is considered overweight (and therefore at increased risk of ill health and a shortened lifespan) and a BMI over 30 is considered obese and possibly in need of medical intervention.*

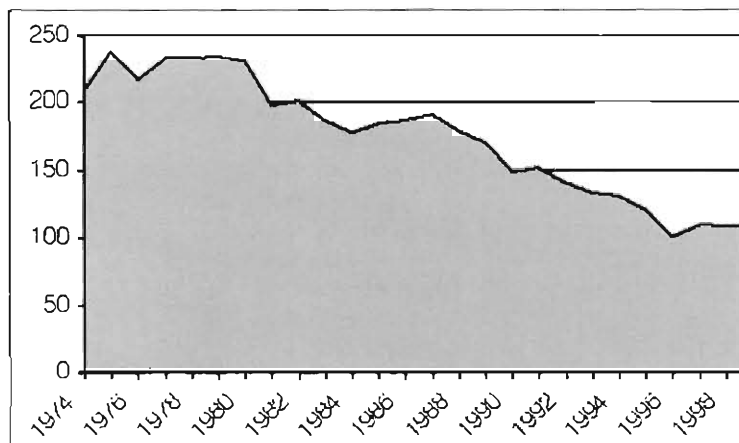
*For children there are reasons to be cautious. A paper in the medical press this year suggested that in fact BMIs much lower than the adult levels would indicate children on their way to being overweight or obese. The figures are shown here (right).*

### BMIs for overweight or obese children

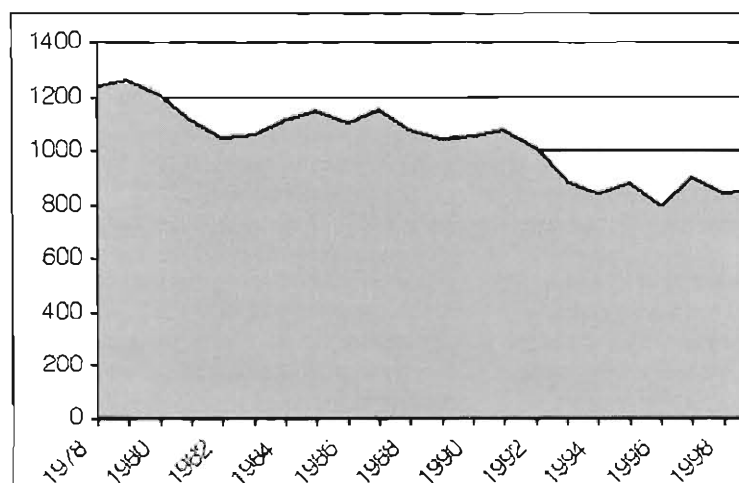
Age	overweight		obese	
	boys	girls	boys	girls
3	17.9	17.6	19.6	19.4
5	17.4	17.2	19.3	19.2
7	17.9	17.8	20.6	20.5
10	19.8	19.9	24	24.1
12	21.2	21.7	26.0	26.7
15	23.3	23.9	28.3	29.1
18	25.0	25.0	30.0	30.0

Source: T Cole et al, *British Medical Journal*, 320, 1-6, 6.5.00

Beef purchased for home consumption (grams/person/week)



Total UK beef supplies (thousands of tonnes/year)





## Life at the top?

Who runs the Food Standards Agency?

The man at the top is Sir John Krebs, previously responsible for giving advice on culling badgers as a way of preventing tuberculosis in cattle, and son of the man who described the uptake and release of energy in cells (the Krebs cycle). He is the chairman and is technically only part time.

His chief officer is Geoffrey Podger, full time civil servant and previously career bureaucrat in MAFF and the Department of Health.

At one of the BSE consultation meetings open to the public, chairman Krebs frequently had to ask



Podger to help him answer questions from the audience. During one of Podger's lengthy replies, Krebs actually raised his hand and said 'Excuse me, Mr Chairman... oops, I'm the chair, aren't I?' Podger grinned broadly.

Now Podger is tightening his grip on the agency. We hear that staff have been instructed not to communicate with Krebs except through Podger. 'We don't know what to do. What happens if we meet Krebs in the lift... can we speak to him?' asked one new recruit.

So when Krebs makes a silly statement to the media, we can have a good guess who has briefed him. Or set him up.

*"Don't open your mouth till I tell you what to say!!"*

## Children need adverts

Next spring sees the launch of a Swedish-led campaign to restrict adverts targeted at children. Campaigners fear that youngsters easily confuse facts with promotional fiction, and that children's 'pester power' forces reluctant parents to buy unhealthy products.

But the advertising industry is outraged at the idea that adverts to children should be restricted.

'By cutting kids out of the marketing process... we are ill-preparing them for life in today's marketing-oriented consumer society,' said a spokeswoman.

Pester Power should be encouraged, she said. 'Happy children mean happy parents – and if kids know what makes them happy, why not listen to them?'

■ **Marketing Business**, 10.99, p11.

## Sunny substitutes

Our correspondent in Portugal reports that Procter & Gamble's soft drink, Sunny Delight, has been launched across the country, 'flooding the shops' to coin a phrase. Adverts in the press urge children to drink the low-juice beverage for their health.

Sadly, it comes at a time when the local orange harvest is having to be buried because it is not economical to pick the fruit.



## Agency release

Government advisory committees, as readers of this magazine will know, are often loaded with people linked to industry. The process of putting your friends on the board is so well known in business that it has its own term; agency capture.

The usual defence of this practice is that committee members are there for their expertise, not their industry links. Anyway, said the apologists, we see nothing wrong with the practice.

We are pleased to see that a new approach is now gaining ground. Tucked away on the bottom of page 17 of a

government document on pesticide regulation comes a note on the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP):

*'It is important that the ACP be independent of the Government and the pesticide industry. In particular, the chairman should have no financial interests in the industry (e.g. through consultancies and shareholdings). Ideally, the same restriction would apply to all committee members...'*

In the next issue of the *Food Magazine* we will see how well this is happening in practice.

## Veggie-out

We are all encouraged to eat more fruit and veg. That's been the UK Department of Health policy for several years, and they have happily seen the development of a campaign to 'Eat Five A Day'.

Not to miss an opportunity, the Germans have developed a campaign of their own. What do they call it? Fünf Am Tag, of course.

Realising they were becoming isolated in a veggie-mad Europe, The French have woken up to the need for a similar campaign. The trouble is, the French already believe they eat the best diets in the world. They claim they already eat five portions of fruit and veg per day, and anyway they don't want to be imitators of other countries' slogans.

So what have they come up with? Dix Par Jour!

■ See: [www.10parjour.net](http://www.10parjour.net)



## Only joking?

A decade ago, we ran a story showing how the

word 'organic' might get misused as meaning 'good for you'.

Now reality catches up with humour.

Organically-grown tobacco for pipe and cigarette smokers – '100%

Chemical-Additive-Free,

Whole Leaf Natural

Tobacco and nothing else' – is being sold by the Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Co. Their slogan: Smoke Less and Enjoy it More.

Fortunately they also remind us 'Tobacco seriously damages health'.



*Gotta watch my health – only saccharin-free gin and organic fags now*



From the Food Magazine 1991