

FOOD MAGAZINE

Campaigning for safer, healthier food for all

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Irradiated, illegal and on sale now

Illegally irradiated food is still getting onto supermarket shelves – including one in three shellfish products and one in six herbs and spices

Tests on samples of food available in UK shops and supermarkets have revealed a continuing breach of the regulations on irradiated food. Under the legislation, food sold in the UK that has been irradiated – whether abroad or in the UK – must be clearly labelled as 'irradiated' or 'treated with ionising radiation'.

But three surveys of food products have found food to have been irradiated before sale without the required labelling.

Most irradiated products are likely to have been imported after irradiating. The UK has only one factory licensed to irradiate food for public consumption, run by PURIDEC, a joint project between Russian isotope producers A M MAYAK, the UK's Amersham International and a German-owned company known as NUKEM Nuclear Ltd.

The UK license only allows the irradiation of herbs and spices, and PURIDEC's spokeswoman Cathie Deeley has stated that due to supermarket resistance to accepting irradiated ingredients in foods, the plant has

ceased to supply herbs and spices for general consumption.

In spring 2000, trading standards officers in Suffolk found that three different samples of shellfish (shelled prawns) showed evidence of having been irradiated. Irradiated prawns are not permitted to be sold in the UK even if they are clearly labelled as such. In this case they were not.

Out of 18 samples of shellfish sent by trading standards officers for analysis over the last five years, seven were irradiated.

In February this year, Suffolk again found evidence of irradiated food, this time in the form of irradiated cumin powder. This is permitted for sale in the UK but must be clearly labelled – which it was not.

A survey by the BBC in March this year also found further evidence of irradiated products getting into our shops.

Examination of 28 samples of foods – including snack foods, spices, stock cubes, dried soup, shellfish and food supplements – found five products testing positive for irradiation. In all cases, the likely cause was the presence of irradiated herbs or spices.

Products with irradiated ingredients included cheese, veggieburger mix and curry powder – see page 3.

The practice of irradiating food as a means of reducing the presence of spoilage organisms has been widely condemned by consumer organisations including the Food Commission as a 'quick fix' technology

which does nothing to ensure our food supply is produced hygienically from farm to fork.

Worse still, irradiation can be mis-used to 'clean up' food that is already contaminated. The practice of 'Dutching' shellfish (sending them to be irradiated in Holland so that they will pass food inspection tests) has been suspected in the trade for several years. Irradiating spices can sterilise food contaminated by insects and rodent faeces, which can be found in poorly stored products, before the spices are ground into powder for sale.



"It zaps the maggots, you can't taste the mouse droppings and you can even find the food in the dark!"

■ The Food Commission is re-launching its Food Irradiation Campaign. Send a stamped addressed envelope for further details.

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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An ill wind

The nasty smell wafting across Britain's agriculture extends far beyond those unfortunate farms downwind of a foot and mouth pyre.

The smell is the burning of intensive agriculture. It is the smell of cheap animal feed – pig-swill in the case of foot and mouth, probably pig-swill in the case of swine fever, and meat and bone meal in the case of BSE.

It is the smell of long-distance animal transport, spreading disease rapidly from farm to farm, region to region.

It is the smell of non-traceable trading practices, leading to irresponsible and sometimes criminal inclusion of condemned material into our food supply, the unregulated trading of animals, illegal imports and broken codes of practice.

Even the smell itself, and the wind it travels upon, can play a part in the problem. The burning of carcasses under the foot and mouth emergency spreads the pollution, and, perhaps more ominously, can spread BSE – a disease that resists destruction at temperatures as high as 600°C – across grazing land, crops, orchards and gardens, into our homes and our lives.

The wind has long been the curse of intensive farmers, removing the soil where bad practices have reduced the land to near desert. Wind is the curse of organic farmers who must suffer the pesticide spray drift of their intensive neighbours. It is the curse of environmentalists who see genetically modified pollen spread rapidly through the ecosphere.

But the wind reveals what is there. It shows up the problems that need to be addressed, it reveals the links between one activity and another, the imbalances in the system, the inter-connectedness of all nature.

The wind teaches us to pay attention. The smell tells us what to attend to.

The Food Magazine is researched and produced by a small team of dedicated staff and volunteers. To ensure our independence we do not accept any advertising in this magazine, nor do we accept grants from the food industry or government.

Donations can be sent to The Food Commission at Freepost KE 7564, London N1 9BR. Credit card donations can be made by calling our office on 020 7837 2250. We will send a receipt on request. All donations, large and small, are very much appreciated.

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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!

BSE controls go up in smoke



Ministry of Agriculture consultants have admitted that the cattle funeral pyres burning on farms across the UK are putting unknown quantities of BSE infectious particles into the surrounding environment.*

The burning of cattle on open pyres breaks EU BSE regulations which specify that all cattle over thirty months old must be incinerated or sent to be rendered into meat and bone meal that must then be safely destroyed. Using the foot and mouth disease emergency to break the regulations may be putting humans at greater risk of disease.

Initial estimates suggest that a pyre of 100 older cattle could release as much as one

fiftieth of the amount needed to cause CJD. With hundreds of thousands of cattle being burnt the total impact has not been estimated.

Most of the problem, the MAFF consultants suggest, would be caused by contamination of ground water by smoke deposits and by the ash left after the pyre has burnt.

Burial of animals would be even worse than burning, with up to one tenth of an infective dose released for every 100 cattle carcasses. For this reason MAFF has ordered all cattle over 5 years old to be burned rather than buried, although monitoring every animal's age before disposal has been left to local contractors.

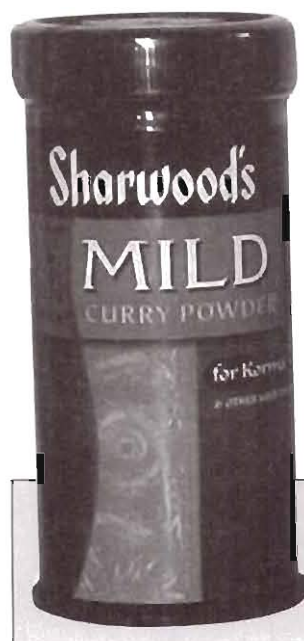
The MAFF advice appears to be based on figures derived from combustion in incinerators rather than combustion in open pyres. The assumption is made by the consultants that 90% of the infective material would be destroyed in open pyres, and that the remaining infectivity would be due to failure to ensure complete combustion of the material. In fact tests show that heating infective material to 300°C only partially reduces infectivity, and even heating to 600°C – which turns the sample completely to ash – left enough infectivity to cause the disease in 5 out of 35 test animals.

A statement from the Food Standards Agency on the hazards of burning animal carcasses did not address the issue of BSE but warned that pyres could release 'small amounts' of dioxins and hydrocarbons which would be taken into the food chain by animals grazing on pasture where the chemicals settle.

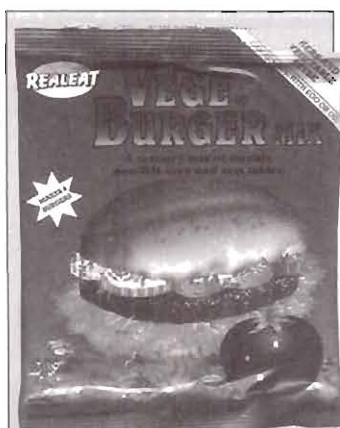
* DNV Consulting, Assessment of Risk due to BSE Infectivity from Disposal of Cattle due to FMD, April 2001 (on the MAFF website, www.maff.gov.uk).

Irradiated, illegal and on sale

The latest survey of food products, conducted in March 2001, found five out of 28 to contain irradiated ingredients. Here are the five.

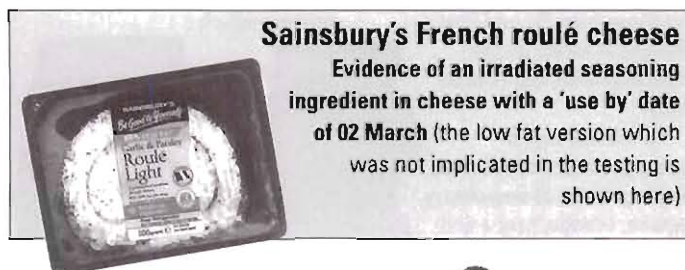


Sharwood's mild curry powder mix
Tests on batch 9208 found an 'irradiated component in the mixture'



Haldane's Realeat 'non GM' Vege Burger mix
Tests on batch L0285/2/2 showed 'evidence of an irradiated component'

Fiddes Payne 'Spice it Up' seasoning mix
Tests on batch 7548 showed a 'significant irradiated component'



Sainsbury's French roulé cheese
Evidence of an irradiated seasoning ingredient in cheese with a 'use by' date of 02 March (the low fat version which was not implicated in the testing is shown here)

Holland & Barrett's Good 'n Natural Korean Ginseng
Despite a label saying 'non-irradiated', capsules with code Exp 5/03 47262 01 proved positive for irradiation



Danone promotes calorific miscalculation

Dieters might be tempted by this bottle of 'reduced sugar' orange and peach flavour water, which states 'A 33cl bottle of Volvic Touch of Fruit contains 15% fewer calories than an average apple'.

At first we thought this a very curious claim, because apples are actually a good food to eat when cutting down on calories, since they are relatively low in calories and rich in nutrients and dietary fibre. It seemed a shame that Volvic should encourage people to drink this flavoured sugared water rather than eat fresh fruit.

When we looked more closely, we began to suspect that Volvic's figures were not only curious, but actually wrong. MAFF's *Food Portion Sizes* and *The Composition of Foods* show that apples typically weigh 112g and contain 52 kcal. One bottle of Orange and



Peach Flavour Volvic water contains 76.56 kcal.

That's 45% *more* calories than an average apple!

In fact, this product has very little to do with fruit at all. It may have pictures of oranges and peaches on the label, but the ingredients added to this water are sugar, flavourings and citric acid.

French call for Danone boycott

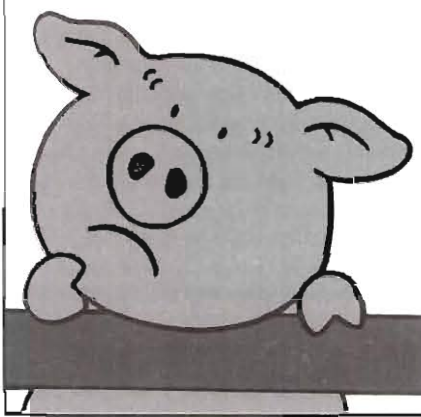
A boycott of Danone products has been called by French food workers and parliamentarians after the company announced closures and job losses in their French manufacturing plants. The petition has been signed by 86 members of the National Assembly

BADvertisement

We couldn't help having a pang of sympathy for Percy Pig whose smiling face appears on these pig-shaped fruit



gums. Percy's piggy sweets might be 'made with natural fruit juice' and 'no added colours', but they also contain gelatine, which is probably made from... boiled pig. Poor old Percy. That should wipe the smile off his face.



Drinks go for a smooth sales pitch

What is a 'Smoothie'?

We thought it meant a thick blend of fruit juices – 100% fruit, like those from PJ and Pret a Manger. A touch on the expensive side, but reliably fruity.

PJ's Smoothie, a product leader, is 100% fruit juice – a blend of strawberry, banana, orange, grape and apple.

We became suspicious when we found that some drinks marketed as smoothies aren't so pure as we might expect.

Sainsbury's Smoothie lists water as the first ingredient, with a total of only 40% fruit plus added sugar, citric acid,

flavourings and ascorbic acid. Ironically, it's marketed as part of Sainsbury's 'Healthy Balance' scheme which

is meant to make it 'easier to choose foods with lower fat, salt and added sugar'. Lower than NO

added sugar? Come off it, Sainsbury's!

But our winner in the 'fake smoothie' stakes is SmithKline Beecham's Ribena Smoothie. It has Blackcurrant and Raspberry boldly on the front, and the description 'A refreshing fruit Smoothie blended with juices'. But examine the ingredients and you'll find that this 'smoothie' is mainly water, with 33% sugar and only 10% fruit juice.

Now Pret a Manger says it is so disappointed with the misuse of the name Smoothie, it won't use the word any more, and promises its blended fruit juices do not contain 'added water or anything weird... just fruit'.



Irradiation creates toxins in eggs

New evidence that the process of irradiating food can change the chemicals in food has emerged in tests of eggs by researchers in South Korea.*

They have found that compounds called hydrocarbons can be formed from an egg's natural fats, and that the quantity of hydrocarbons formed is directly linked to the degree of exposure to radiation.

Hydrocarbons are a large family of chemicals, some of which can cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals, and some of which are known carcinogens. There do not appear to have been tests of the hydrocarbons formed in irradiated eggs.

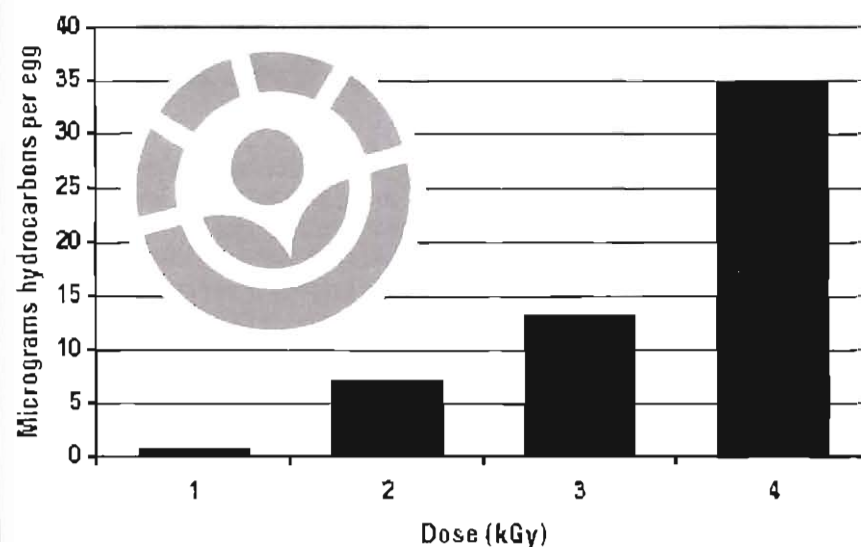
Doses of irradiation between 1 and 7 kiloGray (kGy) are typically used to irradiate food to reduce the presence of live bacteria such as *E. coli* and salmonella. As the figure shows, the researchers found raised levels of hydrocarbons when irradiating with as little as 0.5 kGy.

The levels of hydrocarbons may seem small, but the amounts compare with the

levels of significant nutrients found naturally in eggs – including selenium, vitamin D and several B vitamins, which are all present in amounts less than 35 micrograms per egg.

* KT Hwang *et al*, *Food Research International*, 34, pp321-328, 2001

Hydrocarbons detected in eggs, by dose of irradiation



Scientists question GM safety

A prestigious panel of scientists from the Royal Society of Canada has called for more rigorous testing of genetically modified (GM) crops and foods, and has urged authorities to adopt the 'precautionary principle' when assessing GM technologies.

The Society's Expert Panel on the Future of Food Biotechnology expressed criticism of the level of secrecy surrounding the testing of new GM products and recommended external reviews of approval documents, open to public access.

The panel also expressed strong concern over the use of GM fish in fish farms located around Canada's coastline, and called for a moratorium on all GM fish grown this way until further assessments have been made.

Urging the Canadian government to adopt the precautionary principle when assessing new technologies, the Panel said that use of 'substantial equivalence' was 'scientifically unjustifiable when used to exempt new products from full scientific scrutiny'.

'When it comes to human and environmental safety,' the chairman, Professor Conrad Brunk of the University of Waterloo, stated, 'there should be clear evidence of the absence of risks; the mere absence of evidence is not enough.'

Co-chairman, Professor Brian Ellis of the University of British Columbia, added 'Genetic engineering is a powerful technology, and it won't be going away. However, the public needs to be confident that any deployment of GM products occurs only after thorough and objective assessment, and that provision of benefit for the public good in Canada remains the ultimate benchmark.'

The Panel was established at the request of Health Canada (the government health ministry), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and Environment Canada (the environment ministry) to advise on the regulatory system and the scientific capacity to ensure the safety of GM food.

In the same week, the Canadian government's Auditor General published a report strongly critical of the national Food Inspection Agency. It claimed the Agency was not putting the necessary resources into food inspection, was not properly assessing risks, was lacking in important information on food-borne pathogens, failed to reach performance targets and did not ensure compliance with its rulings.

■ Royal Society of Canada, Press Release, 5 February 2001 (www.rsc.ca).

Radiation resistance found in bacteria

Bacteria found in a sample of canned meat that was assumed to be sterilised have shown a remarkable ability to withstand irradiation.

The bacteria, dubbed *Deinococcus radiodurans*, can survive 1.5 million rads of gamma radiation, hundreds of thousands of times greater than the doses used to sterilise food, and thousands of times greater than would kill a human.

The bacteria appears able to reform its own DNA after irradiation has fragmented the molecule, using repair mechanisms that are not fully understood.

Deinococcus radiodurans is believed harmless to human health. However, widespread use of food irradiation technology could increase the chance of other bacteria developing resistance, leading to potential health problems.



Farming for the future

Sustainable farming doesn't mean going back to the 19th Century. Sweden shows us how agriculture can move forward

Stig Eriksson (right) is far too polite to laugh at the troubles of his farming counterparts in Britain, but he has good reasons to feel proud.

Fifteen years ago he was forced, much against his financial instincts, to adopt expensive pig-rearing methods. He was required by law to abandon intensive farming practices and to operate the most stringent national animal welfare standards anywhere in the world. He had to stop using growth-promoting antibiotics in feed. He had to raise loans and mortgages to pay for the conversion of buildings to meet the high standards.

Now he can laugh at his own success, if not at others' problems. He and his fellow farmers stopped the use of meat and bone meal in cattle feed, cut their use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers, and brought in tight hygiene standards. Sweden is now one of the few countries in the European Union to have no cases of BSE. And despite the ban on

routine antibiotics, the rates of salmonella in the poultry flock have fallen to less than 1%, compared to 37% in the UK.

The land is important to Swedes. Less than 9 million people, a population barely that of Greater London, occupy a country nearly twice the size of the United Kingdom. Three-quarters of the land is forested (compared with 10% in the UK), and half the remainder of Sweden is covered by inland water. Farms affect the natural environment, and a series of programmes to cut pesticide use, to reduce nitrate fertilisation and to increase the land devoted to organic production are yielding success. As the figures show, Sweden boasts some enviable figures.



Swedish farmer Stig Eriksson: proud of the meat he produces

Friendly farming doesn't have to mean low yields

Comparisons of yields should take account of Sweden's shorter grower season

	Sweden	UK	Netherlands
Salmonella in chicken meat	0.7%	37%	32%
Cases of BSE	0	177,000	15
Pesticide use per hectare	0.5kg	5.8kg	10.2kg
Fertiliser nitrogen per hectare	66kg	79kg	200kg
Organic farmland	11%	1%	2%
Milk per cow (tonnes/year)	7.2	5.8	6.6
Wheat harvest (tonnes/hectare)	6.0	7.4	7.7
Potato harvest (tonnes/hectare)	36.3	43.4	45.1



Margareta Winberg: promoting safe, ethical, sustainable, Swedish agriculture

'Sweden is part of the group pushing for Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform,' the Swedish Agriculture Minister, Margareta Winberg, told the *Food Magazine*. 'So is your Nick Brown, and several others such as the Netherlands, and now Germany.' She indicated, diplomatically, that the most difficult partner in the EU was France, a country that has resisted CAP reform for over a decade.

Attending a conference on the food chain, being held in Uppsala, Mrs Winberg said, 'Our responsibility for food production extends from the soil and fishing waters all

the way to the dining table and finally waste management. Every link in the food chain is significant – we must therefore take a holistic view in which the goal is safe, sustainable and ethical food production.'

Sweden is promoting itself as a model of progressive agriculture with an environmental conscience, hoping that the rest of Europe will follow. 'But,' she said, 'being the president of the Agriculture Council does not necessarily give us an advantage. The president must play a moderate role and find consensus, so it is hard to be effective.'

Organic growth in Sweden

Sweden's aim to be 20% organic within the next five years may sound remarkable to British ears, but the country's concern with high standards of animal welfare and reduced environmental pollution means that many farmers are already half-organic before they even think of registering.

KRAV, the leading organic certification scheme, says that around 5% of farmed land is certified organic at present, and at least as much again is already organically farmed, though not certified. For some farmers, a simple switch to feeding their livestock with organic feed would be all they need do, as their welfare and stocking densities already meet the criteria.

But KRAV admitted there were problems in some parts of the country, for example where trials of genetically modified (GM) crops were being conducted. 'GM potatoes used for commercial starch production are being field tested in large quantities,' KRAV's Pelle Fredriksson told the *Food Magazine*. 'Although we set fairly low standards for crop separation between organic and genetically modified crops, there are still going to be farmers affected by the potato trials, and by forthcoming GM crops such as sugarbeet.'

But KRAV remains optimistic that Sweden will achieve its target for organic conversion. The president of the Swedish Farmers Union is an organic farmer. The state railways serve organic meals. Even burger chain McDonald's serves organic milk in its burger bars.

Both Sweden and Denmark are introducing tougher controls on pesticides bought over the counter in a bid to reach their stated goal of preventing all traces of pesticides being found in ground and surface water.

Danish authorities have banned a range of pesticides for home and garden use, and are phasing out the use of pesticides in public parks and gardens. Sweden is reclassifying 25 weed-killers so that all users must first apply for a licence.

A follow-up review of the House of Lords 1998 report on antibiotics welcomes the recent cuts in antibiotic use but calls for further action. The review notes that several antibiotic growth promoters are now banned but that several remain in use.

'Experience in Denmark, Sweden and other countries has shown that, with improved husbandry, farmers can do without growth promoters altogether,' the report says.

■ House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, March 2001 (www.parliament.uk).

Sustainable apples the best

An American study comparing the production of apples over a five year period, using conventional, organic and an intermediate 'integrated' system, found the organic crops to score most highly of all systems.*

Criticisms of organic farming as being less efficient and producing lower yields were not supported. Apple yields were similar across all three farming methods. Organic and integrated systems had higher soil quality and lower negative

environmental impact than conventional systems. Compared with both other crops, the organic apples were rated the sweetest and least tart.

The authors conclude that the organic method gave the best results for both environmental and economic sustainability.

* Reganold *et al*, Sustainability of three apple production systems, *Nature*, 410, 19 April 2001.

Paying for agriculture

It was once a saying that the European Community was based on German industry paying for French farming.

But European agricultural subsidies are a bit more complex. A recent survey shows that Germany still holds the lead in subsidising the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), but that both the Netherlands and Britain are also net providers, putting more cash in than their farmers receive in support payments.

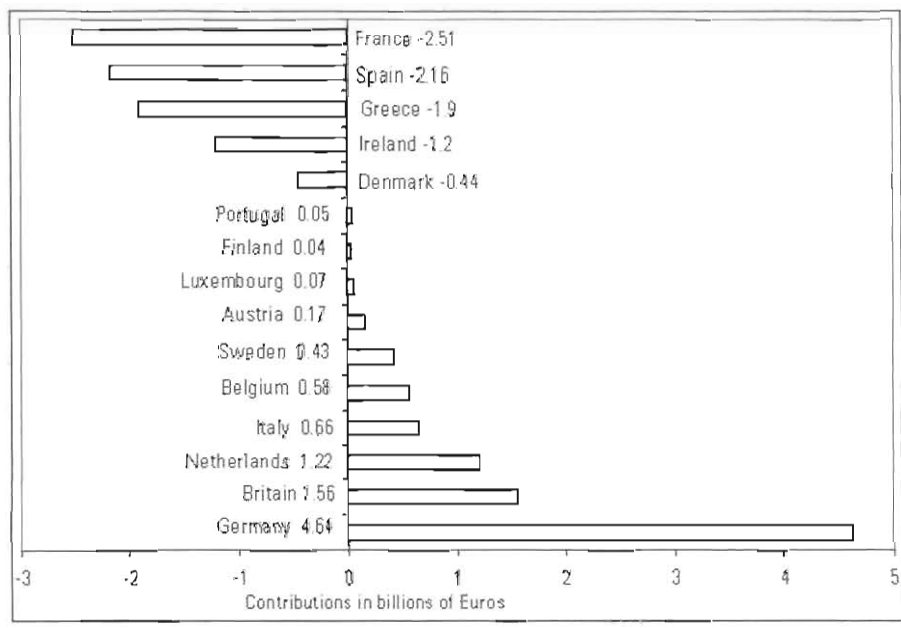
The total CAP budget is around 40 billion Euros. Countries contribute according to various measures of their wealth, and draw out farm support according to the complex CAP payment schemes – ones which largely benefit milk, meat and animal feed production, and pay for the destruction of fruit and vegetables. The table below shows the net payments made by each country.

Farmers in the European Union receive an average of £12,000 per year in subsidies,

although they will quickly point out that few farmers actually receive so much. The reason is that the distribution is remarkably skewed. Because the payments are generally in proportion to the amount the farm produces, a few large farms will take large CAP cheques, while a smaller farm will get a small cheque. The figure usually cited, for the UK at least, is that 80% of the payments go to just 20% of the farms.

With the German agriculture ministry led by a Green Party member, and with food and farming crises at the top of the political agendas for many EU countries, there is increasing interest in reforming the CAP's emphasis, shifting it from food quantity onto food quality, and from agricultural production *per se*, towards more environmentally-friendly, sustainable methods of food production. But can the net contributors persuade the beneficiaries to agree?

Who pays for the CAP: net contributions to CAP funds



Organic holiday in

You can have organic chocolates, organic soft drinks, and even organic cigarettes. Now you can try a genuine organic break in France!

A non-profit collective of optimists and farmers, with politics both red and green, and languages both French and English, have converted Paulianne, a farm in southern France, into an organic holiday experience. Here they explain what they can offer

Paulianne is an 89 hectare organic farm bordering the River Drome in the pre-Alps of south-east France. If you want to find us on the map, follow the river upstream from its confluence with the Rhone south of Valence, and you will find us between the towns of Die (pronounced Dee) and Luc.

The farm covers two small valleys and three hills and is surrounded by forest. Indeed, much of the farm itself is forest. The Drome is a wild mountain river that runs along the western border of the farm. The Drome valley is surrounded by old eroded limestone mountains ranging from the Montagne de Cerne at 1022m to the Glandasse which rises to 2041m immediately north of the farm and forms the southern end of the Vercors plateau.

We grow coriander, fenugreek, spelt, sunflowers, soya, lentils, chickpeas and haricot beans on about 20 hectares. There are hundreds of fruit trees, including apples, pears, plums, apricots, quince, cherries and mulberries. We also have walnuts and lime trees (tilleuil) and in our polytunnels we grow tomatoes, peppers, aubergines, and basil.

Mountain weather is unpredictable and often spectacular. It can rain any day of the year but the valley is one of the sunniest places in Europe, with an average 255 days of sunshine per year. Rain often comes in the

form of violent thunderstorms, even in winter. Summer temperatures can reach 40°C in the shade but night temperatures are rarely more than 20°C. The mountains around Paulianne are snow-clad from November to May. To the north, village roofs are shaped to take lots of snow and people earn a living from sheep, goats and cows. To the south it is vineyards, olive groves and fields of lavender.

The farm is home to wild boar, roe deer, beavers, foxes, badgers, polecats, pine martens, hares, red squirrels and lots of bats, all of which are relatively tame outside the hunting season. Buzzards and kites nest on the farm, and golden eagles, short-toed eagles, griffon vultures and bearded vultures come visiting. From late April to late October there is a nocturnal chorus of cicadas, grasshoppers and crickets.

Grape hyacinths and wild gladioli flower in the meadows. Then there are the poppies, giant mullein and twenty species of orchid. The mountains are home to a range of Alpine flowers as soon as the last snow melts. There is a long local tradition of picking medicinal herbs such as mare's tail, coltsfoot, St John's wort and arnica.

The farm itself is a Roman site that was dedicated to Mercury. There are various artefacts around the farm including a section of a marble column, a fountain and various stones with Roman inscriptions. Bits of Roman roof tiles, floor tiles and water conduits can be found in some of the fields but the site has been extensively excavated and most of the best items are now in local museums. The old Roman road from Lyon to Milan runs through the farm and past the house. It is now a simple farm track from one field to another.

We are planning to make Paulianne an experiment in biological diversity, ecological sustainability and energy efficiency. This year we are hoping to process fruit and vegetables, so there will be lots of bottled produce for sale. Next year we plan to plant more fruit trees - especially apricots, plus a field of lavender and one of thyme. After that we hope to develop some small-scale, intensive permaculture.

We have a small flock of chickens that live in complete freedom - a dangerous life because they attract eagles and foxes. We also have a group of donkeys which might one day earn their keep doing farm work and



southern France

trekking in the mountains. They love orange and lemon peel.

In theory, people staying on the farm could live entirely off our home-grown farm products. We sell our own fresh and processed fruit, roots and vegetables, a range of sprouted salads, jams, cereals, dried pulses, bread, muesli and eggs. Our small farm shop also stocks some bought-in items such as oranges, sugar, margarine, cheese, Marmite, olive oil, etc, most of which is organically produced. (If you can tell us how to produce organic Marmite we will do it!)

We have converted the old farmhouse (part 12th century, part 18th century) into five apartments that are now available for rent by the week, or for purchase by timeshare. The five apartments are on three floors, but because of the way the house is built into the hill, all but one of them has a ground-floor entrance.

All apartments are centrally heated, fully furnished and equipped, including bed linen. The kitchens are stocked when you arrive and you simply need to replace what you use. The rent/service charges include heating, electricity and gas.

For 2001, the weekly rents are as little as £70 for a four-person apartment (two double bedrooms) off season, rising to £250 for a ten-person apartment in August.

Timeshares are in effect leaseholds on apartments that you can buy by the week. Those who live permanently on the farm have bought 52 weeks. When you buy a



timeshare you are buying shares in the non-profit company that owns the farm.

Many visitors want to spend some of their time at Paulianne involved in the workings of an organic farm. We are delighted with any help but there is absolutely no obligation. The Drome valley has facilities for a wide range of outdoor activities. There are two local ski stations with

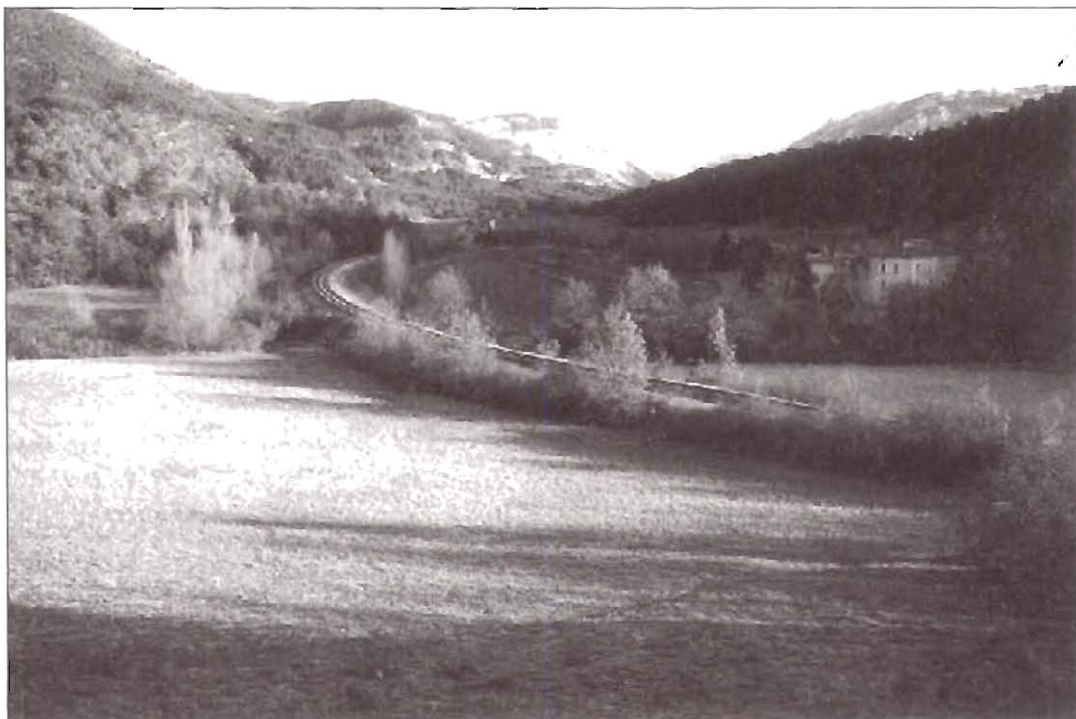
piste and cross-country routes normally open from the beginning of December to the end of March. Two paragliding schools based in Luc, our local village, are open from May to September. Pot-holing, canoeing, rock climbing and mountain walking are possible all the year round. The Vercors National Park is on our doorstep. Or you may just want to stay on the farm and use our library of field

guides to identify flowers, insects, bats or birds.

To get to Paulianne you can drive, of course, but it is quicker to take a train. A single-track railway winds its way up between the mountains towering over the Drome valley from Valence to Briançon. It actually runs through the farm, and several trains per day in each direction stop at Luc-en-Diois, just 4km down the road. Although we are farther south than Venice, the farm is only 4 hours by day train from Paris. Brussels is 7 hours by train and London is under 8 hours. There is also a night train with sleepers directly to and from Paris every night of the year. Once at the farm, you can use a small fleet of bikes.

■ For further details contact La Ferme Paulianne, Luc-en-Diois, 26310 France.
tel: 00 33 4 7521 3743.
fax: 00 33 4 7521 3923
email: paulianne@free.fr

In Britain you can contact two of the founder members, Andreas and Sabrina
tel: 020 8802 6437, fax: 020 8809 4474
email: amicha2000@aol.com



Legal, decent, honest and true?

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

X In the previous issue of *The Food Magazine*, we reported on a complaint being considered by the ASA against an advert for Sainsbury's fresh produce. The two-page magazine ad stated 'All Sainsbury's fruit and vegetables are grown with a commitment to using more natural farming methods, like this ladybird to control pests.' The ASA upheld the complaint, saying that readers could infer that Sainsbury's used natural farming methods on all their British fruit and vegetables, which was not the case.

X According to the pill-maker Agora Lifestyle, its product could boost resistance to arthritis and heart disease, asthma, emphysema, herpes, hepatitis, cataracts, Alzheimers, menopausal symptoms, high blood pressure and 'the slow decline of getting older'. Agora has been reprimanded by the ASA and told to remove its unproven medical claims.

X Complaints against an advert for a hypotonic sports drink manufactured by GoPack Superdrinks were upheld by the ASA, who questioned the drink's 'proven scientific formula', ability to 'rehydrate and replenish energy faster than any other type of drink' and the claims that its ingredients were 'natural'. Other complaints were upheld against comparative claims made by GoPack Superdrinks, implying that their drink outperformed other sports drinks.

X Claims that the high-caffeine energy drink Red Bull 'improves concentration', 'improves reaction time' and 'improves endurance' were dismissed as unsubstantiated by the ASA. Red Bull was told that it must seek advice before advertising with similar claims in the future.

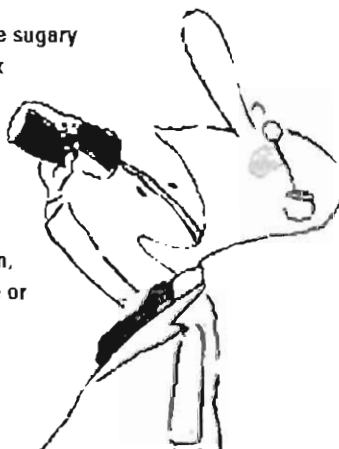
X A complaint was upheld against the Meat and Livestock Commission for a series of newspaper adverts featuring pigs accompanied by statements comparing critically British and overseas animal welfare standards, with the strapline 'Look after the

farmers who look after their pigs'. On one advert, showing a pig's head, the claim 'The longest walk some pigs can ever look forward to' appeared between an arrow that pointed towards the pig's snout and an arrow that pointed towards the edge of the ad. Another showed a mother pig with her piglets with the claim 'After she's fed them she could be fed to them'. The ASA ruled that some of the ads were misleading because they implied that UK pigs led a more free life than they did.

X Health claims for KP peanuts were criticised as unsubstantiated by the ASA. KP had issued a magazine advert picturing a packet of peanuts on top of a bottle of olive oil, a tomato, fresh bread and wine, with the question 'Why stick to the Mediterranean on your Mediterranean diet?' This was followed by the footnote 'Like olive oil, peanuts are high in the unsaturated fats which have been shown to lower cholesterol; they have the same healthy, whole-food qualities as the fresh fruit, vegetables, fish and pasta which have made the Mediterranean-style diet so popular'.

X The claim 'For 100% Organic, choose Organix' was the subject of a complaint to the ASA when the complainant pointed out that some Baby Organix products described in this way contain non-organic yeast and thiamin. These products are not available in organic form and are permitted for use under organic rules, but the ASA said that the implication of the ad was that all ingredients were 100% organic. Baby Organix was told to re-phrase this headline claim.

Red Bull – the sugary 'energy' drink was unable to show that it could improve concentration, reaction time or endurance.



ASA says company websites are not adverts

The Advertising Standards Authority's recent decision to include web-based promotions in their complaints procedure turns out to be not as good as it sounds.

This April we called the ASA to enquire about what we considered to be exaggerated health claims that we'd found on some food manufacturers' websites.

We were told that there was nothing the ASA could do. The ASA says it will only consider complaints for web-based promotions in 'paid-for space' – that is the contents of commercial emails, special offers, prize draws and paid-for banner advertising. According to the ASA, a company's own website isn't an advert. By visiting such websites, you as a consumer are entering into a relationship with that company of your own free will, and forfeit your rights to protection from any misleading claims that you find there.

When pressed, the ASA admitted that this definition was due to budgetary constraints – they don't have the money to police the web. But do they have the authority to rule that a company's website isn't an advert? Or to decide that claims made on those sites, whether to disparage competitors' products or to make exaggerated health claims for foods or food supplements, cannot be criticised in the cause of consumer protection?

Sorry, ASA, we sympathise with your financial situation, but are disappointed by your attitude.

The ASA ruled that some Meat and Livestock Commission ads were misleading because they implied that UK pigs led a more free life than they did.



CHECKOUT

There are few regulations to control the promotion of foods to children. In our three-page special we look at the latest tricks of the trade

Parents beware!

Manufacturers of children's food are endlessly creative in their efforts to persuade, cajole, command, reassure or trick you into parting with your cash – in exchange for products that are usually little better than junk. Last year The Food Commission conducted a survey of 358 foods marketed to children, showing that 77% contained unacceptably high levels of fat and/or salt and/or sugar.

But children don't simply eat junk food – they are sold it. The amount of money spent promoting these 'foods' is extraordinary. Each of the leading companies – Mars confectionery, Kellogg's cereals, McDonald's fast food chain, Coca Cola and Nestlé Rowntree – spend on advertising the sort of budget that would run the entire government Food Standards Agency and the Department of Health nutrition department.

So how can concerned parents arm themselves against such a well-funded barrage of unhealthy marketing? The Food Standards Agency promises us a voluntary code of practice on advertising to children, hoping food manufacturers will agree to toe the line. But the Food Commission remains sceptical and believes voluntary guidelines will not be enough when there is so much money at stake.

Without regulatory support, parents and children will need to get wised up to the

Trick number 1
Imply that children should eat the food every day



Knowing that parents are on the look-out for foods rich in vitamins and minerals, manufacturers of children's food add vitamins to their products to give them a healthier image. Some take this one step further and announce that their foods, like this Daddies tomato ketchup, contain vitamins that are needed every day. The implication is that to get a healthy dose of vitamins, children should eat tomato sauce every day. What a boost to profits!

tricks used to market food to children. We've shown you many examples in the past, from sugared cereal shaped like cartoon characters to biscuits choc-full of fat and sugar, but dressed up with added vitamins.

Now the Food Commission has identified eight new ways used by manufacturers to harness pester power and keep our children hooked on fat, sugar and salt.



Trick number 2: Tell parents it's made of 'real fruit'

Saying that a children's food product is made of 'real fruit' gives it a healthy spin. These Real-a-Peel fruit strips from Fruit Bowl aim to appeal to children and parents alike – the child gets to play with a stretchy, gooey strip of sugary jelly, and the parent is reassured that each strip is 'made from twice its own weight in natural fruit'. But take a closer look at the label on these products. Often

the only significant bits left of the fruit are the flavour and fruit sugars, with yet more sugar added 'for extra energy'. In the case of these Real-a-Peel fruit strips, this brings them to a whopping 63% sugar! Fruit Bowl claims that they are 'a great fun way to enjoy a healthy nutritious diet', but a dentist might disagree!

CHECKOUT

Encouraging kids to

Trick number 3

Encourage children to play with their food

Play value is a key marketing trick. From thickened fromage frais that can be squigged out from plastic tubes, to biscuit fingers that can be dipped into Jammie Dodger jam, sweet and fatty foods are being turned into irresistible playthings. Bite to Eat invites you to 'build your own lunch'. Pizza Lunchables from Kraft Dairylea contain biscuits, cheese slices, processed ham slices and tomato sauce (complete with a little plastic spreader). As this advert (right) from *The Grocer* so aptly puts it, 'Kids make the pizza - you [the shopkeeper and manufacturer] make the dough.'



Trick number 5

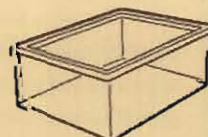
Sell it as a complete meal

Busy parents are turning increasingly to children's ready-meals that are quick and easy to prepare. But many have disappointingly low levels of quality ingredients, such as vegetables. This Mr. Men and Little Miss Mild Chicken Curry and Rice ready-meal looks like it should be suitable for young children. But the chicken and rice make up only 31% of the product, there are few vegetables, and water and cream are the leading ingredients.

Trick number 4

Say it's ideal for lunchboxes

The 'Lunchbox Instructions' on these chocolate-covered cakes say it all. A Cadbury's Mini Roll in a lunchbox = a full and happy tummy. Full maybe, but full of 42% fat and 20% sugar, which is hardly an ideal lunchbox. Parents, beware!



LUNCHBOX INSTRUCTIONS

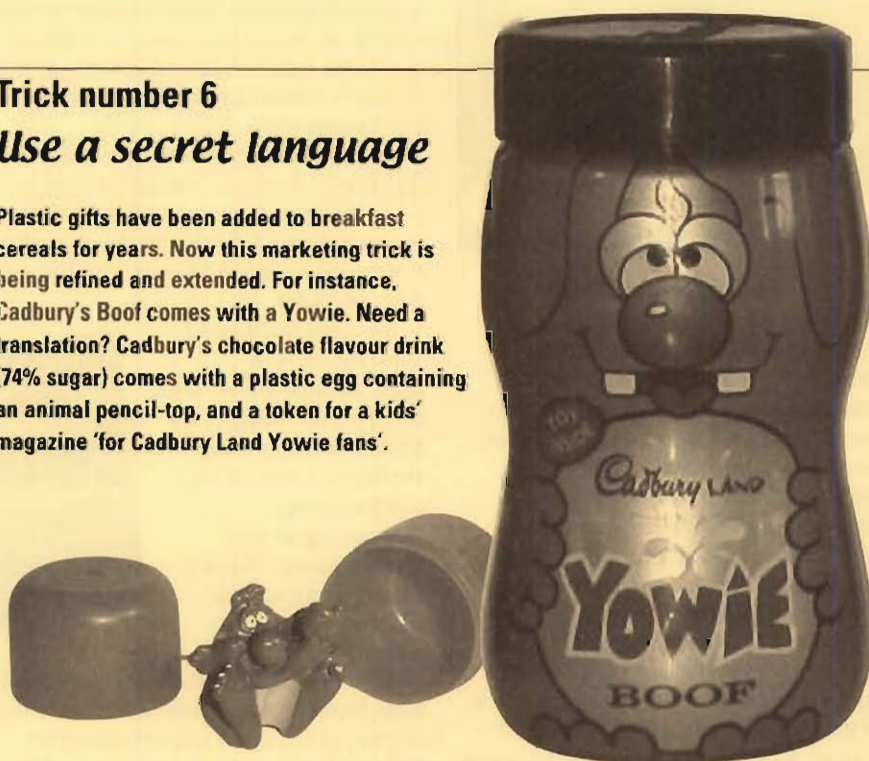
CHECKOUT

eat a junk food diet

Trick number 6

Use a secret language

Plastic gifts have been added to breakfast cereals for years. Now this marketing trick is being refined and extended. For instance, Cadbury's Boof comes with a Yowie. Need a translation? Cadbury's chocolate flavour drink (74% sugar) comes with a plastic egg containing an animal pencil-top, and a token for a kids' magazine 'for Cadbury Land Yowie fans'.



Trick number 7

Make sweets like savoury

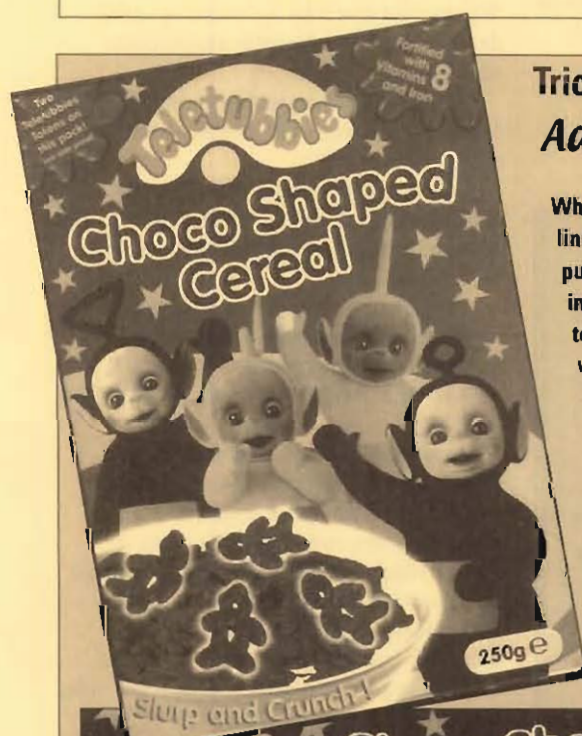
Pizzas and burgers are popular with children - so now companies make sweets that look like savoury food. We've found Haribo Build-a-Burger and Trolli Gummi Pizza - both stuffed full of additives, flavourings, colourings and, last but not least, sugar.



Trick number 8

Add BBC reassurance

What could be better reassurance than a link-up with the BBC? Known for its public-service ethic, impartiality, lack of influence from advertisers, and telephone advice lines on health and welfare... Add to this list its recent appearances on children's food products: from Teletubbies Custard Creams, and Tweenies Milk Chocolate Mini Figures to this Teletubbies Choco-Shaped Cereal, which is 40% sugar. Is it really the BBC's intention to encourage parents to feed their children junk?



The Food Commission plans to publish a review of policies needed to improve children's nutrition, based on our conference in March (see next page). For further details send a s.a.e. to 'Children's Nutrition', The Food Commission, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF

Food Commission makes children's nutrition a hot topic



In the last edition of *The Food Magazine*, we included a brief report on our new research project looking at initiatives that promote better nutrition for children. Contact with government departments and with other charities and campaign groups has shown us that while there are dozens of activities, campaigns and research projects focusing on disparate themes such as promoting fruit to children, or ensuring adequate state benefits for pregnant women, many shared very similar concerns about the diets and health prospects of the nation's children.

In March, the Food Commission called a meeting of key people whose work has a significant influence on children's nutrition in the UK. They represented voluntary groups such as the Maternity Alliance, health visitors, the Food Standards Agency, the Department of Health, the British Dietetics Association, School Nutrition Action Groups, Action and Information on Sugars, the National Heart

Forum, and food companies working on progressive initiatives, such as the Co-operative Wholesale Society and Baby Organix.

Many more individuals and organisations expressed their interest in the event, and we hope to invite them to become involved in future meetings and projects. The Food Standards Agency for Wales has already asked to include our forthcoming Children's Nutrition Action Plan in their research for a nutrition policy for Wales.

Our research, and discussions during and after the meeting are helping us to identify what needs to be done and who needs to do it. Over the coming months, we'll be putting this into action, developing research and campaign work and drafting policy documents. If you'd like to find out more about the developing Children's Nutrition Action Plan, contact Kath Dalmeny at the Food Commission, or email: kath@foodcomm.org.uk.

Mary Daly's talkshop

Health visitor Mary Daly looks at food and health issues.

A parent came to see me recently clutching a large bottle of Ribena Toothkind in one hand and a distressed toddler in the other. She had just been to her dentist and the treatment to alleviate her child's toothache was even more distressing than the toothache.

The mother said her dentist had advised her to cease the practice of giving her toddler 'juice' in a bottle. The mother reported her child was very fond of juice and relied on it to get to sleep at night and wondered if Ribena Toothkind was a safer alternative.

My curiosity aroused, I called into my local supermarket on my way home from work to investigate the difference between Ribena and Ribena Toothkind and was greeted by a gobsmacking array of Ribena products. They are the single most stocked drinks brand in my local supermarket.



All of the Ribena Toothkind drinks contain the magic ingredients aspartame and acesulfame K. And they all display the following statement: 'Ribena Toothkind does not encourage tooth decay and has been scientifically proven to minimise tooth erosion'.

We now know that the Advertising Standards Authority has successfully challenged that claim in the high court.

The pack also declares 'not suitable for babies less than 1 year', which begs the question: Is it being recommended for babies from a year?

Artificial sweeteners are banned in weaning foods, but according to the Food Standards Agency, Ribena Toothkind is not covered by the regulations as it is not specifically manufactured for babies.

I examined the other low-calorie drinks sitting alongside Ribena Toothkind on the supermarket shelf. Their ingredients lists and advice regarding use were pretty similar to those of Ribena Toothkind. The main difference was the large panel across the front of every pack of Ribena Toothkind 'The only drink accredited by the British Dental Association'.

So what are the unique ingredients that make Ribena Toothkind so attractive to the British Dental Association? Artificial sweeteners! Surely not! If that is the case why not all low-calorie drinks? I finally concluded that the British Dental Association is endorsing not what Ribena Toothkind contains but what it does not contain – namely sugar.

As a health visitor, I wish to endorse a drink which is tooth-friendly. It is called 'tap water'.

BADvertisement

Families with hyperactive children have to deal with behaviour ranging from extreme difficulty concentrating, constant movement and sleeplessness to (in the worst cases), bad language, aggression and violence.

The Hyperactive Children's Support Group says that one of the key ways to counter hyperactivity is to avoid some of the colourings used in processed foods.



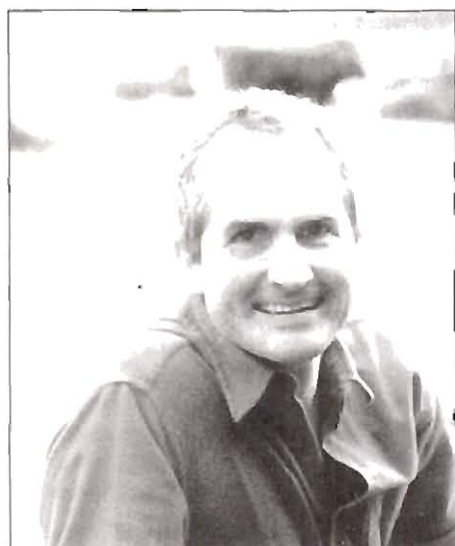
Imagine our horror, then, when we found these sweets in a newsagent. In the ingredients list we found: E102 (Tartrazine); E104

(Quinoline Yellow); E110 (Sunset Yellow); E122 (Carmoisine); E124 (Ponceau 4R); and E150 (Caramel). These are all E-number additives that HACSG recommend should be avoided if children are prone to hyperactivity.

The name of these sweets is a cruel irony, because Kids Kandy chose to call their sweets 'Mix-Up Toddler'!

Swill must go!

Richard Guy of the Real Meat Company argues that a ban on swill is long overdue



In my career I have mercifully spent very little time on 'nasty' farms. But the two nastiest pig farms I have ever seen were both swill farms.

Swill farms are the very bottom end of farming, for a mammal that gets landed with some pretty poor conditions even at the best of times.

Other than BSE (another story!) the disease outbreaks that have caused farmers the most damage and posed the biggest risks since 1967 have been foot and mouth (1967, 2001) and swine fever (1971, 1986, 1987). All were caused by swill feeding.

Giving pigs left-over scraps of food has long been part of the original relationship that pigs have had with humanity. The 'walking dustbin' – itself so eminently edible – was an early example of recycling. There was not a problem whilst the householder (and end consumer) had a strong personal interest in the well-being of the pig and the wholesomeness of what it ate.

Farming pigs this way goes back thousands of years and is distinctly traditional, not modern. But changes in the practice of

swill feeding and pig rearing have combined to make it dangerous.

The swill is no longer from a farmhouse kitchen. Swill collectors get their material from barracks, hospitals, schools and prisons, airports or almost anywhere. It can be an unholy mix of anything from bits of bully beef to cutlery (true!). It is supposed, by law, to be boiled for 15 minutes before being fed to pigs, but a swill farmer will find it quicker and cheaper not to bother.

The pig is not kept in the farmer's back yard. Swill-fed pigs are kept in squalid, crowded pens well away from public gaze. And it is not the owner or final consumer of the pig that monitors what the pig eats, but someone who probably has no conception of, or concern about, who the final customer may be. The anonymity of the customer tends to remove any significant degree of conscientiousness.

Back in the 1980s, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization warned Britain that the density of livestock presented a high risk of a major epidemic of foot and mouth disease taking hold rapidly. Not enough notice was taken of that warning.

There are three moves that must be taken to help prevent a future epidemic.

- If it has not been banned by the time this article is published, **swill feeding must be banned without delay**. Only about 2% of farmers use swill for pigs. The majority use meal or pig nuts, like a dog biscuit, made largely from vegetable material.
- The movement of stock must be more restricted. There should be a compulsory

three-week gap between movements of stock between premises. This may spoil the fun and the profit for dealers but will hardly affect genuine farmers. Most importantly, it would prevent disease rapidly crossing county and country borders before being detected. Sadly, it has taken this crisis to draw into question the use of the Little Red Tractor logo (an industry assurance scheme intended to restore consumers' faith in British agriculture) on swill-fed pork products.

- As a believer in good animal welfare, I suggest it is **time to phase out livestock markets**. If the infected sheep involved in the start of this epidemic had not been through two livestock markets the number of cases and locations would have been a fraction of the current number. The markets may look lovely in sepia tones in weekend colour supplements, and they may provide a great day out for farmers, but they only subtract from the welfare and well-being of the animals. They suffer unnecessary journeys, lots of noise and fuss, being pushed along metallic and confusing corridors, being poked with sticks.

The organic movement which had earlier this year given its support to livestock markets, should withdraw its support for them. Compassion in World Farming disapproves of them. The Real Meat Company does not allow its stock to pass through them.

■ Richard Guy's Real Meat Company can be contacted on 01985 840562 (www.realmeat.co.uk).

BADvertisement

What would you expect from a carton marked 'Spring Water'? A refreshing drink of water without any additives? That's what reader Mrs R Tantram from Surrey thought, until she took a carton of Calypso Spring Water home and put on her reading glasses. It was only then that she saw that it was 'Forest Fruit Flavour with Sweeteners'. In the small print is a list of artificial flavourings and sweeteners that, says Mrs Tantram, "made me decide to pour this 'Spring Water' down the sink!"



Better bread for a healthy heart

Our high levels of heart disease in the UK may be due to our low intake of potassium and magnesium. Veteran campaigners Margaret and Arthur Wynn believe it is time to put the minerals back in our bread

An inquiry into inequalities in health¹ found sharp differences in the incidence of heart disease and strokes between higher and lower income brackets (see figure 1, opposite) with least wealthy people (social class V) three times as likely to suffer such cardiovascular problems compared with the wealthiest (social class I).

Throughout the last two decades, nutritionists have focused on the role of dietary fat, especially saturated fat, in raising the risk of these diseases. But according to the UK Adult Nutrition Survey,² the differences in fat intake, and of saturated fat intake, hardly differ between income groups (see figure 2). If anything, lower income groups are eating less fat than higher income groups.

An excessive intake of any dietary component – including fat – can be harmful, but the much higher prevalence of disease in the poorer social groups do not seem to be a consequence of excessive fat consumption. What then are the nutritional risk factors for heart disease and stroke?

The Adult Nutrition Survey looked closely at the intakes of several vitamins and minerals, and compared these with the recommended amounts – the Reference Nutrient Intakes (RNIs) which are considered sufficient to provide the needs of 95% of the population. Which, if any, nutrients were not being eaten in sufficient quantity? And which of these might differentiate lower and higher

income people, and so might help to explain the differences in cardiovascular disease?

Table 1 shows that several nutrients were, on average, not being consumed at the recommended level. If the average figure shows a shortfall, then for about half the group the shortfall will be even greater.

Potassium and magnesium are two nutrients with deficient intakes for both men and women, especially those in lower income households. These same two minerals were also the commonest deficient nutrients in a national survey of men and women aged over 65 – and indeed in this older age group the amount of potassium and magnesium being eaten was even less than found among people on low incomes.

That disease levels should be higher and the consumption of certain nutrients be lower among the same social groups provides evidence of a link between the two. A British review of 19 clinical trials found that

potassium supplements lowered blood pressure significantly.³ The authors suggested that potassium intakes should be included in recommendations for the control of blood pressure.

A review of 33 clinical trials again found the same relationship, concluding that increased potassium should be considered as a recommendation for the prevention and treatment of hypertension.⁴ And a study of nearly 44,000 men aged 40 to 75 found the risk of a stroke was increased significantly among those who habitually ate a diet with low potassium levels. The same was true of low magnesium levels.⁵

Potassium is used within every cell in the body. A special enzyme transports potassium from the blood and through the cell wall and maintains the right level of potassium in each cell. This enzyme in turn relies on an adequate supply of magnesium.

Table 1. Average intake of nutrients as a percentage of recommended levels² Median intake values as percentage of RNIs. Figures below 100 indicate that average intake levels are below those recommended for health.

	men		women	
	social classes I and II	social classes IV and V	social classes I and II	social classes IV and V
potassium	95	81	73	64
magnesium	110	97	92	74
iron	162	143	74	62
zinc	119	113	126	108
calcium	140	120	110	93
iodine	162	149	127	106
vitamin A	167	128	170	109
vitamin B1	170	160	175	150
vitamin B2	169	146	154	127
vitamin B3	240	222	241	205
vitamin B6	171	171	142	117
folate	153	145	115	93
vitamin C	176	117	176	110

A study of nearly 60,000 nurses which has been running since 1980 has found that the highest blood pressure is associated with a low intake of magnesium.⁶ There was no significant association of blood pressure with fat or saturated fat consumption. A follow-up study confirmed the link between magnesium and reduced blood pressure. A 21-year study of 14,000 people found that those with the highest magnesium levels in their blood had the lowest risk of heart disease.⁷

Sources of magnesium and potassium

The magnesium and potassium content of different foods varies widely and daily intake can be increased simply by choice of foods. In the typical diet, bread and cereal products contribute 30 per cent of magnesium intake and 14 per cent of potassium intake.

The seeds of plants are the best source of magnesium (magnesium is essential for plant cell division). Not only wheat grain but also oats, barley, rye and brown rice and the seeds of legumes, such as chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils and soya beans and edible nuts, all have a higher magnesium content than other parts of the same plants.

The potassium and magnesium content of the diet can be increased or decreased by individual choice but the amounts of these minerals in food may be increased or decreased at the point of manufacture. Processing often results in mineral loss. The milling of wheat grains to produce white flour and bread, which occupy a key part of the British diet, is one cause of the low intake of magnesium and potassium as shown in the figures below (in milligrams per 100 grams of food).⁸

	potassium	magnesium
Wholemeal flour	340	120
White flour	130	31
Wholemeal bread	230	76
White bread	110	24

Most breakfast cereals are fortified with vitamins, and this is stated on the package as a selling point. The content of magnesium and potassium in breakfast cereals varies widely – bran flakes, for example, contain 130mg of magnesium per 100g, but corn flakes have barely a tenth of this (14mg). This is not stated on the packet.

Bread and flour products are staples of diet in the United Kingdom. Moreover high income families typically eat more wholemeal bread, and less than half the amount of white bread, compared with low income families.⁹

The Bread and Flour Regulations are a powerful instrument for public health. By regulating the 'essential ingredients in flour'

they have the effect of restoring to white flour some of the nutrients lost in milling: calcium, iron, thiamin and niacin.

The public health value of the regulations could be increased. As this article shows, the levels of magnesium and potassium should be restored to white flour. Indeed, it can be argued that zinc and iodine, important for growing children and childbearing women, should also be restored, and the level of iron, presently below that of wholemeal flour, could be increased. Fortification with folate is currently being considered.

By regulating the ingredients of bread, the regulations can also safeguard the consumer against harmful additions. The salt content of bread could be reduced in line with government policy, and following the recommendations of many national and international health organisations. Wheat grain and wholemeal flour contain around 3mg of sodium per 100g, but bread contains 400-500mg per 100g, added by the manufacturer. Excessive salt aggravates the effects of potassium deficiency and increases potassium requirements.

We believe that the evidence on the association of cardiovascular disease and deficiency of essential nutrients is enough to justify a review of the Bread and Flour regulations to ensure that white flour and bread contain all the essential nutrients found in natural wheat.

Publicity explaining the importance of an adequate intake of these minerals would prepare public opinion for changes in bread and flour, and subsequently for improvement of other processed foods.

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Figure 1. Early deaths from cardiovascular disease¹

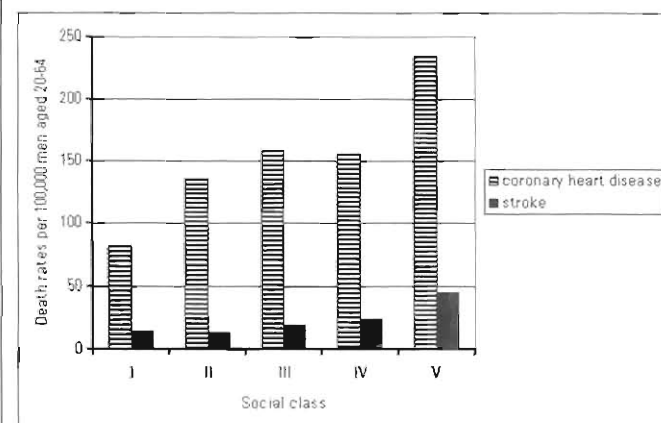
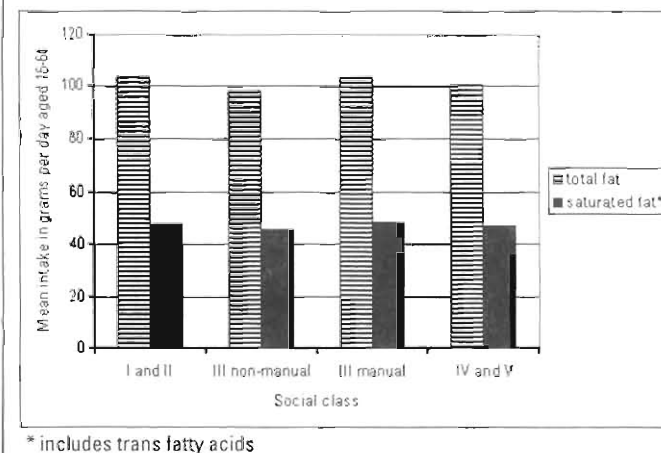


Figure 2. Fat and saturated fat consumption do not show large class differences



Fat or thin?

Adam Winston of Preston wrote to us with the following question: "I heard a radio programme in January in which the commentator was scoffing at the silly mistake someone had made in suggesting that there were more overweight people in the world than underweight people."

The commentator said someone had obviously got their statistics muddled up, as famine and poverty lead to high levels of under-nourishment, and that this must affect far more people than the small proportion of the population in wealthy countries where people could afford to be over-nourished, and hence become overweight.

Can The Food Magazine help put the record straight? Do you have global figures for the numbers of people in both camps?"

Obesity is one of the fastest-rising epidemics of modern times. And it is not just well-off countries that are experiencing the problem.

As our letter shows, the common assumption is that obesity only occurs among the richest populations of the world, and that poverty and hunger still rule across most of the globe. But the radio commentator was living in the past, as the numbers of overweight people (adults, anyway) now greatly exceeds the numbers of underweight people.

Indeed, obese people (with a BMI* over 30) now outnumber underweight people (BMI below

17). The figures are shown in figure one, derived from the World Health Organization's Global Database on Body Mass Index, which gives estimates for the year 2000.

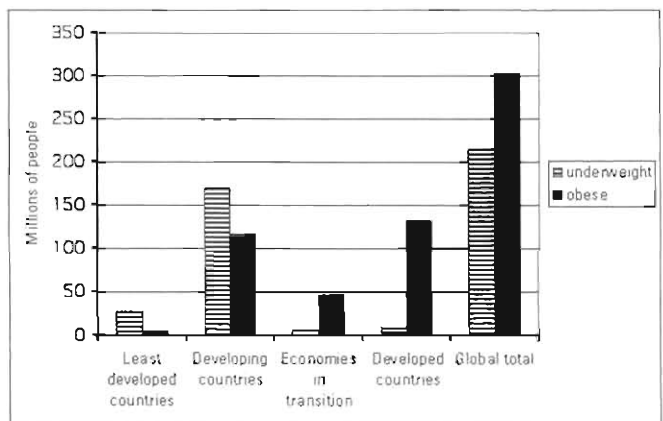
The cause is both the excess consumption of food found in developed countries but also the changing patterns of diet found in many parts of the world including Asia and Latin America. Diets traditionally based on a large amount of staple complex carbohydrate foods, such as rice and cornmeal, have given way to diets with greater fat content and more meat and dairy foods rather than vegetables. This results in rapidly rising obesity rates in countries such as China, India, South East Asia, the Caribbean and South America.

In the UK, we too are experiencing rising obesity rates. By around the age of 50, over 23% of men are obese, compared with 16.5% in 1993. With women some 30% are obese at age 65, compared with 24% in 1993.

Even among young children, recent surveys show that obesity is on the increase. A survey of more than 60,000 children under five years old found the proportion of overweight children rose from 15% to 24% and the proportion of obese children rose from 5% to 9%, during the last decade.

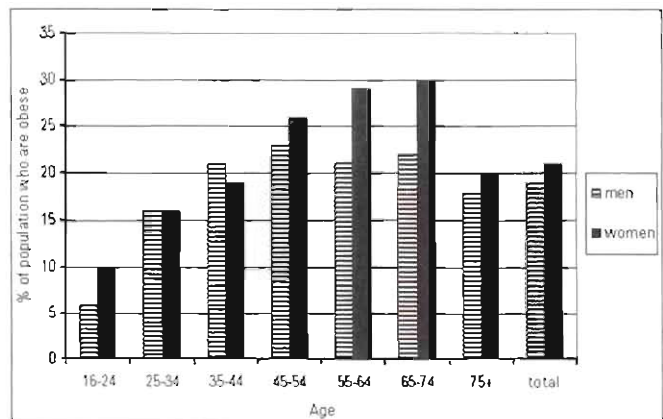
*** Body Mass Index, BMI.** To work out your Body Mass Index (BMI) divide your weight in kilograms by your height in metres squared

Global incidence of underweight and obesity

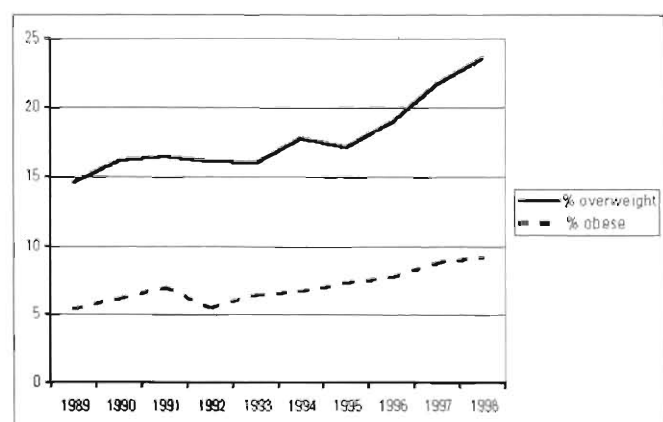


Source: Chizura Nishida, WHO, Geneva

Obesity levels in UK men and women, 1999



Overweight pre-school children in NW England, 1989-1998

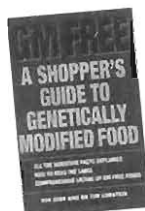


Source: Bundred et al, BMJ, 322, 27/1/2001.



NEW BOOK - Fast Food Nation

This bestseller from the US is already storming the British book market. *Fast Food Nation* exposes the realities behind the fast food culture which permeates our society. We liked this book so much (check out the review on page 20) that we've decided to make it available to our readers. Available at a special introductory price of £9.99 (p&p is free).



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



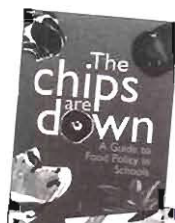
The Food We Eat - 2nd edition

The award-winning author Joanna Blythman's examination of the best and worst in British food today. *'Blythman's decoding of the information on the back of packets of products we regularly consume is calm, thorough and quietly devastating ... buy this book and she will knowledgeably and appetizingly explain the best sorts of fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry and staples on the British market, how to judge the firmness, and, finally, how to buy them'* says Emily Green of *The Independent*. £7.99 inc p&p.



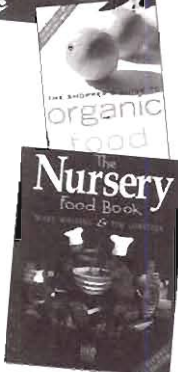
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Back issues usually cost £3.50 each but we're selling a full set of available issues (approx. fifteen issues from 1995 to 2001) for £30.00. Send for index of major news stories and features in past issues. Stocks are limited and many issues are already out-of-stock.



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This is an excellent guide to the planning and promotion of healthy eating in schools. The book is full of nitty-gritty practical guidance, such as how to gain the enthusiasm and support of teachers, parents, health professionals and, most importantly, pupils. £15.00 inc p&p.



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



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Packed with essential information to help you and your family eat healthy, safe food these posters 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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Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal

E Schlosser, Houghton Mifflin, 2000, ISBN 0713996021 – to be published in the UK by Alan Lane, Penguin Press.



Campaigning journalist Eric Schlosser has taken on the fast food industry single-handed in its heartland – America – and is finding he is not alone.

His book is on non-fiction best seller lists all over America. When it first came out, a friend in Illinois who tried to get it from his local library found there were 56 eager readers ahead of him. The New York Times website has a forty-minute audio interview you can listen to. An internet search gets you almost 9,000 hits and still climbing.

Even the ultra-conservative *Daily Telegraph* has reviewed the book well in advance of UK publication and given it very favourable notice. In fact, the only major publication to damn it has been the *Wall Street Journal*, perhaps it uneasily detects a connection between the book's runaway sales and McDonald's plunging US profits.

Schlosser's audience is not limited to the usual suspects; he has found support among comfortable middle-class readers whose concerns rarely go beyond their families and their neighbourhoods. Perhaps they feel betrayed by the very industry which has so completely won the hearts of their children.

Schlosser was himself shocked by what he discovered. Having set out to write a nostalgic vignette on the birth of the takeaway by way of the drive-in, he gradually encountered interlocking spheres of economic and political influence which forced him to rethink the book's raison d'être. At its centre are well-documented instances of cynical corruption and filthy food, made all the more shocking to parents by the revelation that these extend all the way from the slaughterhouse to their local shops.

'A Taco Bell employee said that food dropped on the floor was often picked up and served. An Arby's employee told me that one kitchen worker never washed his hands at work after doing engine repairs on his car. And several employees at the same McDonald's restaurant in Colorado Springs independently provided details about a cockroach infestation in the milkshake machine and about armies of mice that urinated and defecated on hamburger rolls left out to thaw in the kitchen every night.'

One of the book's strongest features is that it is not just another single-issue diatribe. A perusal of the index leads to detailed analyses of the corporate infiltration of state school systems, the buying and selling of politicians, the emasculation of trade unions, the bankrupting of small farmers and many other integrally related topics.

The chapter on the artificial creation of flavour encapsulates the entire commercial food industry. Nothing that comes out of a modern food factory has any inherent identity whatsoever; every product's taste is the result of a complex chemical formula.

For instance, a typical 'strawberry' flavour may consist of: *amyl acetate, amyl butyrate, amyl valerate, anethol, anisyl formate, benzyl acetate, benzyl isobutyrate, butyric acid, cinnamyl isobutyrate, cinnamyl valerate, cognac essential oil, diacetyl, dipropyl ketone, ethyl acetate, ethyl amyl ketone, ethyl butyrate, ethyl cinnamate, ethyl heptanoate, ethyl heptylate, ethyl lactate, ethyl methylphenylglycidate, ethyl nitrate, ethyl propionate, ethyl valerate, heliotropin, hydroxyphenyl-2-butanone (10 percent solution in alcohol), a-*

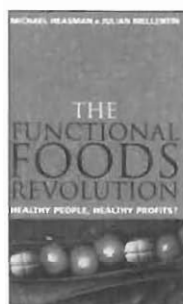
ionone, isobutyl anthranilate, isobutyl butyrate, lemon essential oil, maltol, 4-methylacetophenone, methyl anthranilate, methyl benzoate, methyl cinnamate, methyl heptine carbonate, methyl naphthyl ketone, methyl salicylate, mint essential oil, neroli essential oil, nerolin, neryl isobutyrate, orris butter, phenethyl alcohol, rose, rum ether, g-undecalactone, vanillin, and solvent.

Although the US is the *Fast Food Nation* of the book's title, Schlosser makes it clear that the social and biological pathology he exposes are as internationally pervasive as global warming. If the book makes half the impact in Britain it has made in the US, our fast food executives are in for some sleepless nights.

If you would like to order a copy of *Fast Food Nation* turn to Marketplace on page 19, where we have added it to our booklist.

The Functional Foods Revolution

M Heasman and J Mellentin, Earthscan, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, 2001, ISBN 185383 6877, £16.95.



All foods serve a function, of course, but marketing maestros have laid claim to the term 'functional' as a means of selling novel products. So-called functional foods – such as probiotic sweetened yogurts, fibre-enriched soft drinks or fish-oil enriched white bread – have featured many times in *The Food Magazine*, mostly because of our criticisms of the bogus health claims made for particular products, and the misleading nutritional information that goes with them.

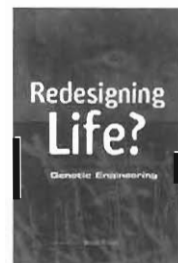
Now we have a book that looks at the industry, the regulations and the trends in product

developments. It isn't the 'wake-up call' promised in the blurb on the back cover, but it is a useful accumulation of facts and figures, reported by experienced journalists. As journalists they don't take sides – the book is not especially critical of functional foods or their marketing, nor does it see the new food products as revolutionising our dietary habits.

But the book does include three pages devoted to the 1996 Food Commission survey of functional products and, being one percent of the total book, those pages constitute a valid and valuable added functional ingredient!

Redesigning Life: The Worldwide Challenge to Genetic Engineering

B Tokar (ed), Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, 2001, ISBN 185649 8352, £15.95.



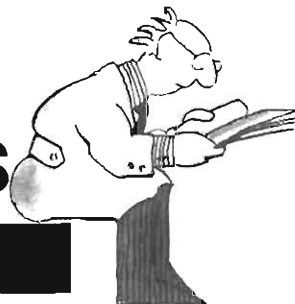
Twenty-six authors have contributed 31 chapters for this book. The result could have been very patchy and scrappy, but good editing has ensured that it isn't. It hangs together well and provides a powerful document for campaigners and students alike.

Martha Crouch, for example, effectively counters the GM-can-feed-the-world argument, while Ricarda Steinbrecher explores the ecological consequences of manipulating genes. Orin Langelle has a look at GM trees (Frankenforests) and Hope Shand examines the corporations that control the 'Life Industry'.

Several chapters discuss human genetics issues, cloning and eugenics and medical science, while the book's last section -- a quarter to the 400 pages -- is devoted to the resistance movement. A solid and worthy book that brings the debate more or less up to date.

What the doctor reads

The latest research from the medical journals



Vitamin C's good prognosis

The level of vitamin C in your blood is linked to the length of life you can expect, according to a study of nearly 20,000 men and women aged over 45, carried out in Norfolk.

The study found that people with the highest levels of vitamin C circulating in their bloodstream were less than half as likely to die than those with the lowest levels, during the four-year study period. The link was particularly strong for deaths due to cardiovascular disease, and applied even after controlling for the effects of blood pressure, cholesterol levels, weight, smoking and diabetes. The relationship still held up after excluding smokers and excluding people who took vitamin supplements.

Vitamin C levels were also associated with reduced risk of death from cancer among men, although not significantly linked to cancer in women, which may be due to the different sites where cancer is common in men (lung, colon and prostate) and women (breast and colon). A separate study of women experiencing breast cancer found that fruit and vegetable consumption during adulthood appeared to have little effect on the risk of suffering the disease.*

The researchers note that levels of vitamin C were closely linked to the amounts of fruit and vegetables eaten by the survey participants, and suggest that it might not be the vitamin C itself - but that other components of fruit and vegetables may be having a strong protective effect. The difference between the lower and higher levels of vitamin C was equivalent to two or three portions of fruit and vegetables per day - suggesting that a large improvement to public health could be achieved through a relatively modest public health programme to increase fruit and vegetable consumption aimed at the whole population.

■ K-T Khaw *et al*, *The Lancet*, 357, 3.3.2001.

* S A Smith-Warner *et al*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285, 14.2.2001

Breastfeeding prevents strokes?

Further evidence of the benefits of breastfeeding have been shown in a study which found that giving breast milk to premature babies led to significantly lower levels of blood pressure in later life.

Blood pressure was measured in children aged 13-16 who had been born prematurely. It was found to be significantly lower among the children fed breast milk compared with those fed formula feeds. The children had been randomly assigned one or the other feed a birth, as part of the controlled study. The evidence supports the suggestion that early nutritional experience before and around birth can 'programme' the later development of chronic diseases.

■ A Singhal *et al*, *The Lancet*, 357, 10.2.2001.

Bone density set by mother's diet

Osteoporosis is a major hazard for older people, and is likely to happen among people with low bone density. Bone density in later years is linked to the bone density gained in early life, coupled with subsequent bone loss. Most bone mass is acquired before the age of 14.

A study of primary school children found that a link between a child's bone density at age 8 was positively linked to the

magnesium, phosphorous and potassium levels in the mother's diet during pregnancy. It was also negatively linked to the fat eaten by the mother during pregnancy.

The authors conclude that influencing a mother's diet, even among well-nourished mothers, may have a role to play in the early prevention of osteoporosis.

■ G Jones *et al*, *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 54, 2000.

Fish oil reduces some strokes

People who eat fish are less likely to suffer strokes, according to some studies but not to all. A new analysis of the types of stroke suffered by a group of 80,000 women showed that eating oily fish reduced the risk of suffering a thrombotic stroke (caused by a blood clot) but did not affect the risk of suffering a haemorrhagic stroke (caused by a burst vessel). Among those women who were regularly taking aspirin, the consumption of fish gave little additional benefit.

The authors suggest that the omega-3 fatty acids in the fish provide the beneficial effects, although other components of fish may also have an influence.

■ H Iso *et al*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285, 17.1.2001.

Sweet drinks lead to obesity

Surveys of children in America have found that around 11% are obese, a figure which has doubled since 1980. In a carefully controlled study of children's diets conducted over nearly two years, researchers have found that the strongest dietary indicator of weight gain was the consumption of soft drinks.

The risk of becoming obese was found to rise by 1.6 times for every additional can or glass of sugar-sweetened drink habitually consumed daily. As might be expected, the link was not found for diet drinks, but that may have been influenced by children trying to lose weight.

In most studies of weight gain, foods eaten between meals tend to be

compensated for by reduced consumption at meal times. The authors suggest that if food is consumed in liquid form there may be less compensation. Previous studies have found that energy from drinks tended to add to total energy intake rather than to displace energy from other foods.

Consumption of soft drinks in the USA has risen 500% in the last 50 years, with adolescent boys consuming on average over half a litre per day, equivalent to nearly 60 grams of sugar from this source. This amount is around the maximum sugar recommended for the entire day for average adult males.

■ D S Ludwig, *et al*, *The Lancet*, 357, 17.2.2001.

feedback

letters from our readers



Balsamic vinegar

Some people seem to think there is nothing to beat balsamic vinegar when it comes to making salad dressings. It seems very sweet to me - but the labels on the ones in my supermarket do not give an ingredients list.

Can you tell me, please, what is in balsamic vinegar?

Lisa Littlejohn
East Finchley, London

Like wine, balsamic vinegar is treated with some reverence by aficionados, and like wine it can vary considerably from your Chateau-bottled to your Algerian plonk. And also like wine, it does not need to declare its ingredients.

We had heard a rumour that you make balsamic by colouring ordinary vinegar, but we didn't believe it until one day we came across a fancy bottle of ready-made Italian vinaigrette dressing. The label boasted balsamic vinegar, and the ingredients list admitted what that meant:

Ingredients: Extra virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar (wine vinegar, grape must, dye E150d, antioxidant E220), rosemary, chilli peppers, salt.

We are not sure why the sulphur dioxide is needed, as the vinegar and salt should be enough to preserve the food. A clue may lie in the description of sulphur dioxide as an antioxidant. When a dye oxidises it loses its colour. We suspect the sulphur dioxide is being used just to stop the added colouring from fading!

I'm a label-holic

Am I alone in finding labels fascinating? When I watch other people shopping, it seems hardly anyone stops to look at the label, apart from checking that they have the product they want.

I can spend hours in a supermarket, reading the smallprint and fuming against the tricks and lies that companies try to put over on us. That's why I love your magazine so much. Perhaps other people get the same pleasure from spotting a marsh pipit in Salford, or watching Portillo lose his parliamentary seat on election night.

What worries me is that, if I am one of very few people who read labels, then labels will cease to be informative. Nobody cares so they will fade away. What do you think?

N Laker
Brighton, E Sussex

Fear not. Labels will provide you with fevered pleasure for years to come, thanks to the European Union. A survey of hundreds of

people in each of the 15 European member states found that the UK ranked near the bottom (13th) in the proportion of the population who 'always or sometimes' read food labels. Only Ireland and Portugal were less inclined to look at their packs, while in Luxembourg and the Netherlands a healthy 80% of interviewees said they were label lovers.

Legislators like labels, too. Instead of requiring food to have certain standards - such as defining how much tomato there should be in a ketchup - the law can be abolished and companies simply required to state the amounts they use on the label. Additives that cause problems for some individuals aren't banned, but warnings are put on the labels. It's a bit tough if you aren't literate, but it cuts the red tape for the companies and legislators.

So we believe labels, with plenty of satisfactory smallprint, will be here for some time to come.

Food Standards Agency defended

I should like to reply to the numerous references to the Food Standards Agency in your January/March issue. Unfortunately the extent of the coverage was not matched by a similar degree of objectivity or accuracy on your part.

I can happily confirm that your story that the FSA puts its advice in draft to Ministers is not merely 'unreliable' but wholly untrue. As anyone who has attended a public meeting of the Agency will know, our Board attaches the greatest importance to maintaining the independence of the Agency's advice and they would certainly not countenance such a procedure.

Your comments about Dr George Paterson, Director of FSA Scotland, are similarly wide of the mark. George has indeed demonstrated a great commitment to openness and consumer involvement since joining us. This of course includes giving balanced risk assessments which is precisely what FSA Scotland has done in relation to farmed salmon and GM rapeseed. Nothing in your description of the Canadian BST saga constitutes personal criticism of George. He, like me, is strongly of the view that serious differences of view on safety questions should be brought into the public domain.

Your comments about both farmed salmon and processed beef products seem to be based on the idea that the food chain can be managed on the basis of zero risk. In

fact the Phillips Inquiry is quite clear that this is not the case and that the objective is to 'reduce risk to a level which should be acceptable to the reasonable consumer'. On the basis of our published studies and risk assessments, the Agency's view is that both these products currently meet this criterion. Indeed a meeting held with consumer organisations on the risk from imported processed beef produced a consensus around our position that the risk fell within an acceptable level and consumers would wish the products concerned to continue to be available. We will continue to promote measures to reduce risks to the food chain, where these are practicable, both nationally and in Europe.

On fibre labelling. Our consultation with consumers showed clearly that they wanted a consistent approach. The reality is that this will not be achieved if the UK continues to use a different method than that employed by all our major trading partners.

Finally, the deceptive labels you cite with regard to food irradiation are certainly that but also illegal. We will rigorously pursue any evidence you provide of their use. Many consumers do indeed wish to avoid irradiation, whatever the balance of advantage, and the Food Standards Agency is a strong supporter of consumer choice in this as in other areas.

Geoffrey Podger, Chief Executive
Food Standards Agency

feedback

letters from our readers



Keep on writing
but please keep
your letters

short! You can fax us on 020 7837 1141

TV metabolism

Your Backbits section in the last magazine stated that 'People burn fewer calories while watching television than during any other activity, including sleeping.'

This seems extraordinary, and I wonder if you have the figures wrong.

J Erlichman
Haringey, London

The statement was based on research published in 1993 showing that children watching television had a lower metabolic rate than when they were resting (Klesges et al, Paediatrics, 91, 281-6). But other research papers have found TV watching to maintain or even raise resting metabolic rates, so perhaps the jury is still out. Either way, TV-gazing won't exactly make you slim.

Red alert

Please renew my subscription, and here is a small donation towards your invaluable work exposing just what is in our food.

Is it possible to start some opposition to chemical colourings in food? I recently ate a red jelly when in hospital and found my mouth and lips covered in vivid red dye. So many of these dyes seem unnecessary.

M D Yates
Woking, Surrey

The FM bonus

Keep up the good work. You are my voice when it comes to telling the government that we want normal food – with no additives, GM food or anything artificial. That's why I am giving you a donation. The *Food Magazine* is a bonus. I'm more interested you get our message across.

The information you send me, although sometimes depressing, also reassures me that someone is saying 'No! We don't want it!' Thanks a million.

S Harvey
Swanton Novers

Nutritious meat

Why is it you class the real food of mankind as 'junk' food?

Our ancestors have been eating red meat and animal fat for millions of years. Indeed animal fat has been a highly prized source of energy throughout man's pre-history and history.

Could it be that 'complex' carbohydrates, grains and sugars which have only been in our diet for the past 10,000 years (and only in the vast quantities we eat nowadays for the past 150 years or less) be the cause of so much illness?

M Waters
Carnforth, Lancs

Calcium foods for babies

I have a six-month old baby, and I'm giving her weaning foods which I make myself.

My baby book suggests giving foods with lots of calcium for growing bones, foods such as cottage cheese and tinned sardines. But I am worried that these foods have a lot of salt in them. What do you think?

J Beeton
Pudsey, Leeds

We agree that some rich sources of calcium, such as cheese and tinned sardines, are also high in salt. Babies shouldn't be given salty foods in the first few months, and even adults should avoid excess salt as it encourages high blood pressure and, ironically, weak bones.

When shopping, look out for low salt varieties, and use other sources of calcium, such as milk and yogurt. Fish is good for loads of reasons besides the calcium, so look out for low-salt fish products, too, such as tuna canned in water or oil with no added salt.

Local food and health conference

The Foundation for Local Food Initiatives, in partnership with Groundwork UK and Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming are organising a national conference to explore principles, policy and practical local solutions for sustainable food and public health.

Tuesday 12th June 2001 at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Bristol Road, Birmingham. £125 for funded agencies/business, £65 for individuals/voluntary sector

Contact the Foundation for Local Food Initiatives at PO Box 1234, Bristol BS99 2PG tel: 0845 458 9525 email: mail@localfood.org.uk



"It's either staphylococci, nurse, or strawberry pavlova!"



Used scientists

Who checks the safety of genetically modified (GM) foods?

The government does, of course, based on advice given to it by the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (the unpronounceable ACNFP).

Members of ACNFP are recruited under 'Nolan rules', meaning that they must declare any financial or personal interest in any items on ACNFP's agenda. The description of ACNFP says 'No current members of ACNFP are employed by the biotechnology industry'.

But when consumer representatives pressed the Food Standards Agency on what this meant, the FSA admitted that some members did act as consultants to the industry.

The FSA said a person would have to be on a salary or work full time for the industry to be described as 'employed'.

'We're used to the food industry making unsubstantiated health claims,' said one consumer representative. 'But now it seems the FSA is making unsubstantiated ethical health claims for its activities.'

NB The latest annual report from the government's most senior food advisors, the Food Advisory Committee (FAC), has just arrived in our mailbox.

The FAC has 16 members. Eleven admit to being consultants, employees, shareholders or research contractors with commercial food interests.

Picnic time at the FSA

Those chaps at the Food Standards Agency have set up a Task Force on *E.coli*, based in Scotland, which has just published its report.

Their recommendations tell us a lot about the shape of the countryside to come.

Even without the problems of foot and mouth disease, the Task Force tells us that picnics have to be well planned. In order to reduce the risk of catching *E.coli* from cattle manure on pastures, the FSA tells us to ensure that farm animals have been kept off fields used for picnics for at least three weeks before the picnic.

We should also be sure to check that any visible cattle or sheep droppings have been removed from the field, preferably at the start of the three-week period. Grass should be mown, and the clippings removed from the field before the picnic.

And anyone still wanting to have a picnic in these circumstances should always remember to wash their hands before eating, drinking or smoking.

If you don't follow the guidance, well, it's your own silly fault if you get ill.

Dirtytricks.gov

A favourite trick of campaign groups is to register a website name that is oh-so-similar to one they want to attack. But this is not a technique we'd expect to be used by government... or is it?

The Organic Consumers Association website in America promotes all things organic at www.purefood.org. But add an 's' to make www.purefoods.org and you're whisked to a site called The Pure Fools Campaign, with articles denouncing organic food and organic companies.

The author of this anti-organic website prefers to remain anonymous, giving no contact details. But visit the WHOIS site where website owners are listed, and you'll find something very interesting. Purefoods.org is registered to a Mr Frederick Curran at 1800 M St NW Box 33433, Washington DC 2003. Which just happens to be the address for the United States Department of Agriculture.

No wonder Mr Curran wanted to remain anonymous.

Pocket money profits

Trade magazines tell you much more about a company than their public advertising does.

Here's Nestlé telling grocers why they should stock up with 'the new bottle format' of their strawberry and chocolate flavour drinks, Nesquik.

It's the 'perfect impulse purchase' says the company.

And it is 'great for when your young customers are on the go'. Perfect for whom? The customer or the shop keeper?



Competition

The Food Standards Agency has circulated a memo asking for help in naming olive oil.

Under international trade rules, there are only three types of olive oil for public sale: 'extra virgin olive oil', 'virgin olive oil' and 'olive oil'. The FSA says that under the rules, 'olive oil' is a blend of virgin olive oil and refined olive oil.

The agency wants to know if consumers are happy with these definitions, or whether they would prefer that the third category should be clearer – e.g. 'standard olive oil'.

The industry are a bit unhappy about the word 'standard'. So what should the non-virgin variety be called?

Answers on a postcard to *the Food Magazine*. And no rude words please.

McDonald's vs Monsanto

It would be an intriguing wrestling contest, to see the might of the burger chain McDonald's matched against the powers of the biochemical giant Monsanto.

But in the humdrum world of potato production it appears that this has already been the case – and McDonald's has won.

Monsanto issued a little-noticed press release in March stating that it was withdrawing from commercial sale its NewLeaf genetically modified potato which contained a built-in toxin against Colorado beetles. NewLeaf was the biotech company's first commercial product, launched in 1995 and heavily advertised to farmers as a crop which would cut their insecticide bills. Take-up was slow, but by 1999 about

55,000 acres of North America were planted with the GM NewLeaf potato.

Then McDonald's announced it was going GM-free. It instructed all companies supplying their burger stores with French fries to be sure they were complying with the new edict. A letter went out from the main supplier, J R Simplot, telling farmers to drop the NewLeaf variety.

By last year NewLeaf plantings had halved, and this year should see the last of them.

'Potatoes are a great niche product,' said Monsanto spokeswoman Lori Fisher. 'We hope some day we can come back to it.'

