

With a hint of strawberry flavour

# The FOOD MAGAZINE

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

Published by The Food Commission

Issue 55 ♦ Oct/Dec 2001 ♦ £4.95

## Health food companies snub FSA warnings

**Food supplement companies ignore warnings of products being illegally irradiated.**

**F**ood Commission tests of food supplements have revealed that health food companies have ignored a series of warnings from the Food Standards Agency, BBC TV and the Food Commission that their products are breaking the law.

Our tests have found irradiated ingredients in several products from the *Good 'N Natural* range (Holland & Barrett), and in *Red Kooga* ginseng capsules (Peter Black Healthcare), all on sale in July. Yet the companies had already been warned several times that irradiated ginseng should not be sold in the UK. Even if it were permitted on sale, the label

### Irradiated products sold in health food shops and high street chemists

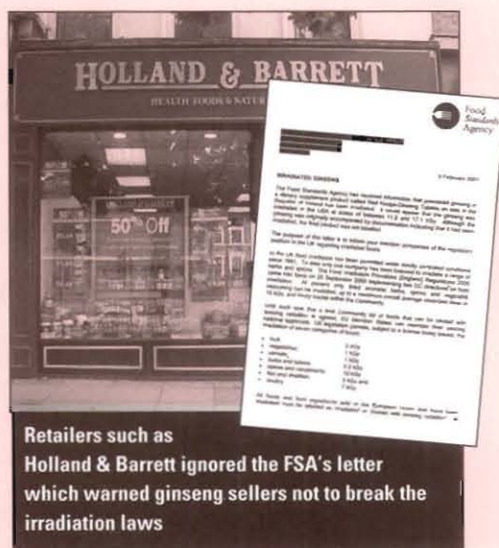
Product	Batch Number	Expiry Date
Good 'N Natural Korean Ginseng	84846.01	11/03
Good 'N Natural Wild Yam Root	49860.01	11/03
Good 'N Natural Ginger Root	47079.02	06/03
Good 'N Natural Echinacea	47700.04	05/03
Red Kooga Korean Ginseng	42269	04/03

must say the product has been irradiated – but we found that none of the labels made the required declaration, and some even said 'Non-Irradiated'.

The story started in February this year, when a letter from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) was sent to health food companies and trade associations, including Holland & Barrett Retail Ltd. This letter informed the health food trade that irradiated Red Kooga Korean Ginseng had been discovered on sale in the Republic of Ireland.

The letter pointed out that in the opinion of the FSA 'irradiated ginseng does not come into any of the categories permitted in the UK, although ultimately this would be a matter for the courts to decide'. The FSA recommended that 'companies selling ginseng check with their suppliers to

**Despite an FSA warning, retailers continued to sell these irradiated ginseng products.**



**Retailers such as Holland & Barrett ignored the FSA's letter which warned ginseng sellers not to break the irradiation laws**

ensure that the ingredients have not been irradiated'.

In April, *The Food Magazine* reported a survey of foods, herbs and spices conducted by trading standards officers and the BBC which also found a Holland & Barrett ginseng product to be irradiated. Tests had been conducted on products bought in February

Continued on page three



### Also in *The Food Magazine* Breakfast bars

The 'wholesome' breakfast bars which are packed with saturated fat and sugar.

### Food additives

A new Food Commission survey finds that food additives are used to enhance the appeal of unhealthy foods far more often than healthy foods.

**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.

Director: Tim Lobstein  
Campaigns & Research Officer:  
Kath Dalmeny  
Office & Subscriptions Manager:  
Ian Tokelove  
Food Irradiation Campaign Network  
Co-ordinator: Merav Shub  
Information Officer: Mary Whiting  
Assistant Research Officer: Louise Davey  
Office Assistant: Sophia Thompson

Cartoons: Ben Nash

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

■ Issue 55 of *The Food Magazine* Oct/Nov 2001. ISSN 0953-5047.  
■ Typesetting and design by Ian Tokelove of the Food Commission.  
■ Printed by Spider Web, 14-20 Sussex Way, London N7 6RS. ■ Printed on recycled paper.  
■ Retail distribution by Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN. ■ Unless otherwise indicated all items are the copyright of The Food Commission (UK) Ltd 2001 and are not to be reproduced without written permission. ■ The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of The Food Commission

**The Food Commission (UK) Ltd**  
94 White Lion Street  
London N1 9PF  
Telephone: 020 7837 2250  
Fax: 020 7837 1141  
email: [enquiries@foodcomm.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@foodcomm.org.uk)  
website: <http://www.foodcomm.org.uk>

## The corporate Left

It isn't just New Labour that has been sponsored by McDonald's (see BackBite, page 24). The *New Statesman* – that journal of the old radical left from decades past – is the latest institution to fall under the spell of junk-food sponsorship.

In this time of agricultural uncertainty, the September issue of the *New Statesman* contained a 32-page supplement on 'How to turn rural crisis into sustainable agriculture and keep consumers happy'.

The contributors to this supplement were a glittering array of stars in the food world, including Minister for Agriculture Lord Whitty, Lord Haskins, coordinator of the government's Rural Recovery programme, Professors Tim Lang, Jules Pretty and Erik Millstone, and Joyce D'Silva, Director of Compassion in World Farming. The Food Commission's Kath Dalmeny also wrote an article for the supplement.

Not aware of a sponsorship deal, the Food Commission was delighted to be asked to contribute an article commenting on how food companies use labels and adverts to boost sales of unhealthy foods. A bitter irony.

On the day that the issue of the *New Statesman* hit the streets (24/09/01), we were called by The *Daily Telegraph* asking 'How do you feel to be sponsored by McDonald's?' 'Ridiculous!' we answered. 'We don't take sponsorship from the food industry.'

But the *New Statesman* does. The front cover of their supplement featured two familiar golden arches, with the words 'Sponsored by McDonald's'. Throughout the supplement, between articles from charities, governments and non-governmental organisations, were four pages of advertorial (that's editorial paid for by an advertiser) written by a freelance journalist hired by McDonald's.

Neither we, nor Tim Lang, nor Jules Pretty, nor Erik Millstone knew of the sponsorship when submitting text. We were all hopping mad. When the Food Commission complained that we did not want to be associated with a company that promoted its junk to children (we had given evidence at the McLibel trial on this point) the *New Statesman* told us 'The *New Statesman* is not promoted as a magazine for children.'

Our request to redirect our fee to the McLibel Campaign was politely declined. Our complaint to the *New Statesman* was not published. But if it had been it would, no doubt, have been on their letters page – a page sponsored by Sainsbury's!

**Advertising Policy.** *The Food Magazine* does not accept commercial advertising. Loose inserts are accepted subject to approval – please contact Ian Tokelove at The Food Commission for details. Call 020 7837 2250 or email [ian@foodcomm.org.uk](mailto:ian@foodcomm.org.uk)

SPONSORED BY



### News

Health food companies snub	1,3
FSA warnings	3
EU stalls on irradiation	4
Children's food put on trial	4
Schools grab 5!	4
All out for organics	4
Lap dog tries to muzzle watchdog	5
Slow Food gains speed	6-7
Caterers turn green	7
Additives make our diets worse	8-9
Advertising	10

### Checkout

GM labels to ignore 1%	11
Breakfast bars stuffed with fat and sugar	12-13

### Opinion

Mary Daly's talkshop	14
Danes wary of 'beneficial' additives	14

### Comment

Anti-sugar group's greatest hits	15
----------------------------------	----

### Marketplace

Books from the Food Commission	16
--------------------------------	----

### Society

Healthier diets cost more	17
School meals should be free	19

### Smart Alex

Alex asks... about food miles	18
-------------------------------	----

### Books

Reviews of books and reports	20
------------------------------	----

### Science

What the doctor reads	21
-----------------------	----

### Feedback

A dip into our mailbag	22-23
------------------------	-------

### Backbites

On the lighter side...	24
------------------------	----

## 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!



## Health food companies snub FSA warnings

Continued from page one

and March, just at the time the FSA's warning was issued.

Following the warnings and the publicity, we assumed there would be no more illegally labelled products on the shelves. On 20 July we bought a range of supplements from Holland & Barrett – where we noticed that many of the 'Non-Irradiated' declarations had been covered with small stickers – and high street chemists to check that the law was being obeyed.

Sadly, it wasn't. Initial results using PSL detection techniques indicated that several products had been irradiated. The findings were confirmed using thermoluminescence tests.

We wrote repeatedly to the companies saying we had found their illegal products still on sale. Holland & Barrett claimed that their products had been 'immediately withdrawn' after the first tests last March. Peter Black Healthcare told us 'It is not our policy to use irradiated raw ingredients'. Neither admitted they were still selling irradiated products.

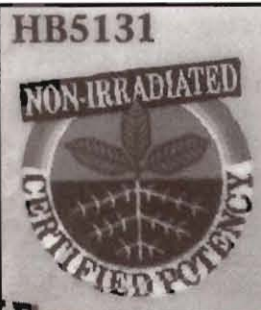
When companies so obviously ignore the law they need to be penalised. The FSA has, in its own words, the responsibility for 'ensuring food law is effective and enforced'. It has, it says, the power of 'inspection and enforcement action to protect consumers'. Let's hope we see some action now.

■ For details of our Food Irradiation Campaign send a stamped self-addressed envelope c/o the Food Commission.

### How irradiated ginseng may break the law

Subject to being tested in the courts, irradiated ginseng may be breaking the law in several ways:

- ginseng is not on the list of foods that may be irradiated and sold in the UK;
- levels of irradiation may exceed those permitted for any irradiated food sold in the UK;
- irradiation may have occurred at a facility which did not have EU authorisation;
- the product label may fail to declare that an ingredient had been irradiated.



**Papering the cracks?** By over-labelling the 'Non-Irradiated' claim Holland & Barrett assumed they would not breach the labelling laws.

**Clearing the shelves?** Good 'N Natural gets a promotional discount after tests show some products are irradiated.



## EU stalls on irradiation...

EU moves to allow more irradiated foods to be traded in Europe have stalled following opposition from consumers and the food industry.

Last year's consultation on extending the list of foods that could be irradiated and traded across European member states resulted in expressions of concern from consumer organisations and outright rejection by trade associations representing meat, fruit and dairy interests.

Food businesses said they were worried that the practice of irradiating products would give an advantage to companies with poor hygiene controls, would reduce consumer confidence in the products and, in the case of meat, would change the taste of the product.

At present EU-wide trade in irradiated food is restricted to herbs, spices and seasonings. As a result of the lack of support for extending the list of permitted foods, the European Commission has said that three options are now possible. The first is to add irradiated peeled shrimps and frogs legs to the list, for which the EC believes a case has been made. The second is to add all irradiated foods that are currently permitted in any of the member states. The third is to leave the list as it is.

The Commission is expected to hold another round of consultations and hearings. Dates have not been set as we go to press.

## ...Codex falters too

As a result of the EU's failure to move forward with a relaxation of the irradiation laws, Codex Alimentarius has delayed its own proposals to ease the international rules on irradiation.

Codex, the UN's standards-setting body for world food trade, has been under pressure to amend its 22-year-old irradiation standard to remove restrictions on the doses that can be applied to foods, and to say that companies 'should' rather than 'shall' comply with the international agreements.

The suspension of Codex action was hailed by the Food Commission's Irradiation Campaign as a victory for consumer pressure on industry. 'Food producers know that irradiation is unpopular with the public, and want nothing to do with it,' said Merav Shub, Campaign Co-ordinator. 'Now at last the message is getting through to legislators.'



# Children's food put on trial

The second phase of the Food Commission's children's nutrition project will examine the promotion of food to children – looking at the best and worst practices and products.

Following the acclaimed report on current problems with children's food, the *Children's Nutrition Action Plan*, the Commission will now award marks to the good, the bad and the downright dangerous among food producers in Britain, highlighting the activities of companies that damage children's health. Good practices will also be spotlighted and encouraged.

'The intention is to give publicity to what helps and what hinders children's health and development,' said Food Commission director, Tim Lobstein. 'We want to encourage the best – and that means awarding good marks to good practices as well as exposing and shaming bad behaviour.'

The campaign will look at a range of activities undertaken by food promoters – including advertising, product design and promotion, school food activities, pressure on parents through checkout displays, even websites targeting children.

'We will need an army of examiners helping us check out all the ways in which food is sold to children. If *Food Magazine* readers see anything they want to bring to our attention – good practices as well as bad – then please do get in touch.'

■ Copies of the *Children's Nutrition Action Plan* are available for £10. For details of forthcoming projects, contact: Children's Nutrition Action, tel 020 7837 2250, email [cnap@foodcomm.org.uk](mailto:cnap@foodcomm.org.uk).

## Arthur Wynn 1910-2001

Arthur Wynn died peacefully on September 23rd. In partnership with his wife, Peggy, Arthur spent the last three decades of a highly productive life campaigning for better nutrition for mothers and children. Several of their papers on nutrition and health have appeared in *The Food Magazine*.

Following a degree in science and mathematics, Arthur took up law and was called to the bar in 1939. The war saw him developing navigational equipment for aircraft and safety equipment for miners. He stayed in mining safety work, becoming a senior civil servant during the post war decades, retiring in 1971.

Busy to the last moment, he was simultaneously developing his website, preparing a study of the legality of using force against terrorists, and re-drafting a paper on the importance of school meals for all children. A summary of this latest paper appears on page 19.

# Schools Grab 5!

Project workers for *Grab 5!* have been trying out a range of novel and engaging methods for encouraging primary school children to eat more fruit and vegetables.

During September, three launch events were held at London schools in low-income areas. *Grab 5!* project workers helped

teachers and parents to provide fruit kebabs, fruit smoothies and basic cookery projects, while other children worked on art and craft lessons based on fruity themes. 'The kids love it,' said *Grab 5!*'s Richard Siddall. 'Very few won't try the fruit that's on offer.' Richard runs fruit taste-tests with 7-11-year-olds, with apples, berries and tropical fruit.

Following the launch events, *Grab 5!* will provide ongoing support for participating schools. One has opted to run a fruit-only tuck shop for one day a week, selling apples for 10p each. Initially, the fruit will be provided by *Grab 5!* to help the school through the setting-up phase. The project has also published educational materials to help schools integrate fruit and vegetable promotion into the curriculum.

■ Details: Tel: 020 7837 1228, website at [www.grab5.com](http://www.grab5.com).



The taste test: schoolchildren discover the pleasures of 'five a day'.

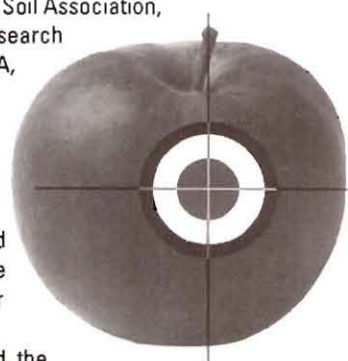


# All out for organics

A mass rally will be held in London on 23 January, 2002, to lobby Parliament in support of organic food and farming. The rally is the culmination of three years' work by the Organic Targets Bill Campaign, supported by Sustain, The Soil Association, Elm Farm Research Centre, HDRA, RSPB, WorldWide Fund for Nature, Friends of the Earth and UNISON: The public sector union.

If enacted, the Organic Targets Bill would put a duty on government to ensure that 30% of land in England and Wales to become organic by 2010. The campaign is calling for public and MP support to help ensure that the Bill becomes law.

■ Details: OTB Rally, Sustain, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Tel: 020 7837 1228; email: [otbrally@sustainweb.org](mailto:otbrally@sustainweb.org), or fill in the on-line rally registration form at [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org).





# Lap dog tries to muzzle watchdog

**The government's Food Standards Agency (FSA) tried to suppress our story on soy-sauce contamination by accusing us of 'factual inaccuracies'. But, reports Tim Lobstein, the only inaccuracy was in the FSA's own statement.**

In an unprecedented departure from its normal comments on Food Commission stories, the government's Food Standards Agency issued a Press Statement on the eve of publication of our last *Food Magazine* stating that our feature was 'factually inaccurate' – but then failed to show any substantive factual error.

The only figures they claimed we had got wrong were later shown to be correct, and based on the FSA's own data!

Our story concerned the amounts of 3-MCPD, a carcinogenic contaminant getting into a wide range of foods, and found at

especially high levels in some brands of soy sauce. We were worried that the total amounts in the UK food supply coming from low levels in common foods came to more, in total, than the amounts coming from high levels in a few soy sauces. A new law, brought in by the European Commission last March and to be enforced from April 2002, will make 3-MCPD at levels over 20 mcg/kg in soy sauce illegal, but it will not apply to other foods.

When the FSA announced the removal of soy products from shop shelves last June, we felt that the response was not sufficient. We felt that if other foods contained levels of 3-MCPD above 20mcg/kg, then they should have been removed from the shelves. But only soy sauce products were withdrawn from sale.

The FSA got wind of our feature article and broke our embargo. It did its best to spike our story by issuing their undeserved attack before our report came out.

We do not take lightly the damage the FSA has tried to do to our reputation. If we had



The contamination story that upset the FSA

£10,000 to spare we might consider prosecuting. But the Agency have a budget of over £100m of the public's money to play with, as well as several solicitors on the staff.

Why did the FSA feel it needed to take this action? Who put it under pressure to rubbish the Food Commission in such a silly way?

The FSA knows that groups such as the Food Commission are part of the democratic dialogue that keeps the Agency on the spot. As a public interest watchdog, it is our job to keep snapping at the FSA's heels.

The FSA is aware of this. It uses our participation in FSA consultations to show that it is listening to consumers and public interest groups. The FSA knows we must raise issues of concern just as the Agency must act as a responsible government body – not as a bruiser for the food industry.

## To justify their accusation of 'factual inaccuracy' the FSA claimed...

*That we ignored the fact that some people consume a lot of soy sauce.* ● We didn't ignore this: the fourth paragraph of our front page feature explicitly noted the problem for 'people who eat soy sauce frequently', a phrase adopted from the FSA's own documents.

*That we hadn't attended a meeting of theirs last February.* ● So what? We did attend the next meeting on the subject in June, and contributed to the debate.

*That our story was misleading because we did not refer to actual dietary intake by individuals.* ● We don't think anyone was misled. The facts remain unchallenged: more 3-MCPD is in our food supply from bread, burgers and biscuits than from soy sauce.

*That we exaggerated the problem by saying that 32 soy sauces in the June survey were found to be contaminated when only 22 were.* ● We showed the FSA its own survey, and it subsequently admitted the figure was 32, not 22.

*That some soy sauces had 3-MCPD levels many hundreds of times higher than other foods.* ● Yes, we said the same thing in our article.

*That our claim of one law for soy sauce and one for other foods was untrue.* ● The EC Directive specifies 20 mcg/kg for soy sauce and HVP, while other foods are unregulated. This came into effect in March 2001, and must be enforced from April 2002. The FSA's own papers describe this.

## The FSA then claimed...

We complained to the FSA. In response, the Agency sent a further letter, making more claims of our inaccuracies.

*That we were wrong to say that other foods were above recommended levels as there are no recommended levels for other foods.*

● Dh yes there are! Several scientific advisory committees have made recommendations for levels for 3-MCPD in

foods generally. The FSA's own documents describe them.

*That our subheadline about soy sauce taking the blame while other foods carry more contamination could imply that the other foods had higher 3-MCPD concentrations.*

● Press reports all understood that we were referring to the total food supply, not individual biscuits, loaves or burgers. To say an

implication is incorrect is not the same as to prove factual inaccuracy.

*That we were wrong to say that there is one law for soy sauce and another for other foods, because isn't 'another' law on 3-MCPD in other foods.* ● This is nit-picky nonsense. There is a general law requiring foods to be safe to eat and a special law for soy and HVP regarding 3-MCPD.



# Slow Food

**M**ost *Food Magazine* readers will have heard something about Slow Food and been amused, at least, by this witty Italian riposte to Fast Food culture. Slow Food, you may recall, is the organisation set up in 1989 by journalist Carlo Petrini, who (so the standard media account goes) was so incensed by the arrival of a branch of McDonald's at the foot of the historic Spanish Steps in Rome, launched the Slow Food Manifesto. Endorsed then by delegates from 20 countries it vowed to 'rediscover the flavours and savours of regional cooking and banish the degrading effects of Fast Food' adopting the snail as its symbol.

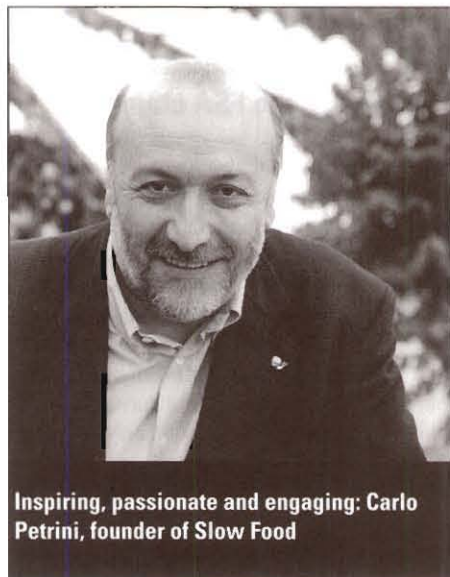
In Italy, there is a tradition of lampooning those with grandiose plans who take themselves too seriously and initially, Slow Food could be mistaken as a lighthearted and marginal foodie attempt to roll back the inexorable march of debased industrial food. But that would be underestimating the huge, ongoing achievement of what has turned into an impressive, sophisticated and highly effective international movement which is now active in 45 countries around the world with some 65,000 members, 550 'Convivia' or Chapters and national offices in France, Germany, Switzerland, Greece and the USA.

Petrini is still very much at the helm, (as I discovered when I dropped into Slow Food's nerve centre in the small town of Bra, south of Turin), an inspiring, passionate and engaging character who has developed the organisation that he acknowledges began as 'a gourmet food and wine appreciation club' into a dynamic force (employing some 80 full time staff in Italy alone) to 'counter the degrading effects of industrial and fast food culture that are standardising taste and promote the deliberate consumption of nutritious locally-grown indigenous foods'.

The movement's original Italian title was *Arcigola*, a tough word to translate which has some of the nuances of a 'worker's day out' in

**The Italian Slow Food movement is going global. This summer, Joanna Blythman paid it a visit...**

English. But it soon became apparent to Petrini, whose political roots were in the Communist Party, that Slow Food had to change. 'As 2000 approached, we were facing a risk of disappearance of diversity in huge proportions. To take a purely gastronomic approach to this was ridiculous; it didn't take on board the issues. It was clear that it was impossible to be a gourmet and not an environmentalist. A gourmet who isn't interested in environmental issues is pathetic. Equally an environmentalist who doesn't appreciate good food is sad. Slow Food unites the two,' says Petrini.



Inspiring, passionate and engaging: Carlo Petrini, founder of Slow Food

So in 1995, when 'anti-globalisation' was an unfamiliar concept and names like Naomi Klein and José Bové were still unknown, Slow Food launched 'The Ark of Taste' – a sort of Noah's Ark aimed at pinpointing and documenting threatened foods that form part of an irreplaceable heritage of traditional products. 'It was a metaphorical protest, a way of defending local artisan food culture against the deluge of mass-production,' says

Petrini. 'The situation was grave. Thousands of cured meats, cheeses, fruits, vegetables animal breeds and plants risk disappearing altogether due to the standardisation of taste and the excessive power of industrial companies.'

By 1999, the Ark filled up with foods from around the world. 'Sometimes all it takes to conserve a product is to bring together surviving producers and make them visible, helping them to communicate the gastronomic excellence of their products and fetch more remunerative prices for them,' says Petrini.

To this end, every two years in Turin, Slow Food holds the fascinating 'Salone del Gusto' event, the largest artisan food and wine event in the world designed to showcase small-scale producers. But sometimes, he says, structural interventions are necessary, the building of an abattoir for example, the restructuring of an oven or repairs to the dry stone wall of a vineyard.

Slow Food also looks beyond the defensive Ark to another concept introduced in 1999; 'the Praesidia' a special sort of protection for endangered artisan foods that involves financial support and other types of assistance to beleaguered producers. The latest advance here is the 'Slow Food Award' which – following worldwide investigation of nominations and the scrutiny of 500 journalists, scientists and NGOs from around

**'A grave situation... due to the standardisation of taste and the excessive power of industrial companies.'**

the globe – is given, along with a 10,000 Euro prize, to projects which 'protect and enhance food culture and help safeguard and promote biodiversity'. Last year, the 13 winners included people fighting to re-establish a threatened freshwater fish in Mexico and

**An impressive, sophisticated and highly effective international movement**



# gains speed

others breeding endangered heirloom varieties of fruit tree in Switzerland.

Increasingly Slow Food is extending the Praesidia to developing countries. 'We go along and learn, talk to people and then ask them, what can we do to reinforce your efforts to maintain your native foods and defend biodiversity?' says Petri.

Already, Slow Food has a project up and running called 'Friendly Tables', food aid initiatives that include a canteen in a hospital for Amazonian Indians, the building of canteens in schools in Novigrad and Sarajevo and removal of land mines from Nicaraguan farm land.

What one cannot appreciate from outside Italy, is just what a significant opinion-forming force it is within its native land. As part of its mission to support small shops and local producers, Slow Food 'encourages tourism that respects and cares for the environment'. That's why every Italian bookshop and even newsagent will be well stocked with publications from the organisation's publishing wing, Slow Food Editore, now a major publishing house.

There is an invaluable annual Slow Food Guide to osterias throughout Italy which conform to Slow Food's principles plus definitive guides to wine and cheese and regional and city guides which tell you not only where to find that beautiful castello or historic church, but also where to buy wood-fire-baked sourdough bread, or traditional breeds of meat, or lovingly crafted handmade chocolates.

Shops and restaurants approved by Slow Food all display, with great pride, the snail symbol. Each weekend, the daily newspaper, *La Stampa*, carries a 10 page Slow Food supplement and Petri writes regular editorials which include excoriating denunciations of the latest food industry tricks or highlight Slow Food initiatives such as its campaign against transgenic vines. To add to its lobbying weight, Slow Food has just opened up a Brussels office.

In Italy, Slow Food has evolved into a mindset and broad cultural force capable of making alliances in many spheres. It has moved into town planning, for example, setting up the Slow City International Association, a growing list of cities and towns (including Orvieto, Greve, Positano and Bra) which promote struggling local producers and

shops through a series of planning and fiscal measures.

Slow Food's latest project is the setting up of a European Taste University at the Savoy royal family's former estate of Pollenza in Piedmont. This – like everything else to do with Slow Food – will happen. Part of Petri's great skill is to translate what may sound like arcane unrealisable demands, into concrete results.

Sometimes in the UK, it is easy to see the march of industrial agriculture as unstoppable. Slow Food supplies a shot in the arm, the realisation that Italians (and other Europeans) have ceded much less ground to agribiz than we have here and will fight tooth and nail to defend and extend their artisan food heritage. We could do the same, albeit from a narrower base.

The genius – and I think it is genius – of Slow Food is not only that it has launched a popular critique of industrial agriculture that resonates around the world but that it has moved on to build a viable, attractive alternative that galvanises people.

It is an overwhelmingly optimistic approach powered by Petri's conviction that industrial farming has proven to be a 'hopeless disaster' and that a Slow Food solution is THE only alternative. 'Our ideas,' says Petri, 'are becoming a reality'.

● [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com) is an extensive and fascinating website with an English language version.

● UK membership of Slow Food costs £33 (regular), £43 (family), £17 (charity) which includes many services such as a quarterly magazine, newsletters and attendance at Slow Food events.

● For more information: email [international@slowfood.com](mailto:international@slowfood.com) or phone 00 39 0172 419611.

## Slow Food Awards

The Slow Food Movement is taking online votes for its Slow Food Awards.

Descriptions of the inspiring life stories and outstanding achievements of the nominees are available on the website at: [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com).

## Sustain campaign turns caterers green

Catering organisations are to be targeted in a new campaign to improve the sustainability of the UK food supply.

Public sector catering – in schools, hospitals, care institutions, prisons, government agencies and local authorities – represents a significant proportion of the national food supply. The caterers responsible for this food should be thinking green, according to a new consortium of environmental and food groups including the Food Commission.

'Caterers' purchasing policies can greatly influence the rest of the food sector,' said Vicki Hird, policy director at Sustain and co-ordinator of the new campaign. 'Moves to develop local and sustainable food supplies for public sector caterers are an ideal

opportunity to strengthen the local food economy, improve the environment, provide healthier and fresher food supplies, and help educate and inform consumers such as children at school.'

The campaign will be calling for changes to the law on food procurement by public bodies to allow process and production methods to be considered when negotiating supply contracts. The contract price should take into account the hidden costs of agriculture and transport, including environmental damage and impact on health.

■ Details from Vicki Hird, Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, tel: 020 7837 1228, e-mail [localfood@sustainweb.org](mailto:localfood@sustainweb.org).



# Additives make

**Manufacturers say that additives make food palatable and pleasurable. But a new Food Commission survey has found that in more than 70% of cases the foods that use additives are the foods that encourage poor diets.**

**F**ood additives are hard to avoid. Most packaged food has been processed, and most processes involve the use of food additives.

From childhood we are exposed to hundreds of additives, and we become used to the artificial flavours and the exotic colours. These encourage us to eat a diet of processed foods. Fresh foods have a hard time competing against the additive-laden processed alternatives.

Manufacturers justify their use of food additives by arguing that additives are safe, that they are necessary (e.g. by preventing food going bad).

Food campaigners and public health workers, however, fear that food additives are not safe for everybody, that they are rarely truly necessary (food should be eaten before it is old enough to go bad).

Public health workers are also worried that additives give unhealthy food an eye-catching, taste-enhanced appeal, encouraging poor diets. But proving this has always been difficult.

When the Food Commission reviewed children's food last year, we found added colourings and flavourings – the 'cosmetic' additives – in many products aimed at children. Comparing the nutritional quality, we found that higher-quality foods tended to use fewer additives:

- of the foods that contained low levels of sugar, salt, total fat or saturated fat, none of the products contained additives;
- of the foods with high levels of one or more of these 'bad' ingredients, more than two-thirds contained such additives;
- and of the foods that contained high levels of at least three of the 'bad' ingredients – e.g. sugar and fat and saturated fat – three-quarters contained cosmetic additives.

This implied that such additives were indeed being used to help sell just those foods which children should be eating less of. It appeared additives were playing a counter-nutritional role, undermining public health.

Now a new Food Commission survey has confirmed these findings for a wide variety of foods. In our latest research, we took each E number additive and asked: In which foods is the additive most commonly used? How do these foods rate in terms of nutritional health – should we be eating more of them or less of them?

In order to answer the first question, we took the technical handbook *Essential Guide to Food Additives* (Leatherhead Food RA, 2000) which lists for each additive the foods in which they are typically used. The only exception are the flavourings, which have no E numbers and are not usually named in food ingredient lists. In order to assess the foods listed for their nutritional quality we took *The Composition of Foods* (The Stationery Office) and the government Foodsense advisory table on what is 'a lot' and 'a little' sugar, salt, fat and saturated fat.

## What we found

In virtually every category of additives we found that more than half the foods mentioned as typically containing one or more of the additives were unhealthy – i.e. contained high levels of sugar, salt, fat or saturated fat. The only exception were the gas additives, used for example in salad and meat packs as well as instant creams.

The table shows the numbers of foods containing 'a lot' of the undesirable ingredients, according to government health guidelines, compiled for each E number additive in each category.

Because of the design of this survey, equal weighting is given to each additive, whereas in reality some additives will be used to a far greater extent than others. Also, additives will be used in combinations, with some foods containing only one or two and others containing a dozen or more. The figures should therefore be taken as a first-order estimate of the true state of affairs.

For the record, we also judged the additives as being either generally accepted as safe, or as presenting a possible problem, either for sensitive people, or in high doses, or because more research was needed. The results showed that both safe and potentially risky additives were being used in a wide variety of foods, and helped equally to promote unhealthy foods.

### What sort of foods use additives? Mostly the fatty, salty or sugary ones.

	Number of additives	Number of foods typically using each additive	Proportion of foods with a lot of sugar, salt, total fat or saturated fat
Colourings (E100-E180)	58	246	87%
Preservatives (E200-E297)	33	216	65%
Antioxidants (E300-E321)	17	54	80%
Emulsifiers etc (E322-E495)	125	780	72%
Acids, bases etc (E500-E529)	34	119	70%
Anti-caking agents (E530-E585)	21	58	62%
Flavour enhancers (E620-E640)	13	78	64%
Glazes & improvers (E900-E928)	10	28	64%
Gases (E938-E948)	4	21	43%
Sweeteners (E950-E967)	11	69	74%
Miscellaneous (E999-E1518)	19	92	75%
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>1761</b>	<b>72%</b>



# our diets worse

## The law protects the additive addicts

Under European food law, restrictions have been put on the amounts of additives that can be used and the categories of food that they can be added to. But the lists are broad and many EU member states have been forced to accept more additives in greater quantities than they allowed before harmonised food laws were in place.

The effect is to weaken local food standards which had prohibited some additives or restricted their use, and to open their markets to food manufacturers who use additives extensively.

Also, by legitimising a list of additives and the foods that they can be put into, the additive-using manufacturers are effectively protected from being held liable for any harm they may cause by using the permitted additives.

However, there is one legal hurdle that manufacturers must overcome. This is the requirement that companies must show that

there is a *need* for the additive. The relevant law on the justification for using an additive is based on the European Directive, 89/107/EEC, Article 2, which says that additives will only be approved if:

- a technological need can be demonstrated and the purpose cannot be achieved by other reasonable means;
- there is no health hazard to the consumer at the proper level of use;
- their use does not mislead the consumer.

In defining 'technological need' the Directive says that additives would only be approved if they serve one of the following purposes 'beneficial to consumers':

- to preserve the nutritional quality of the food;
- to provide necessary ingredients for foods for people with special dietary needs;
- to enhance the keeping quality or stability of a food or to improve its organoleptic qualities;

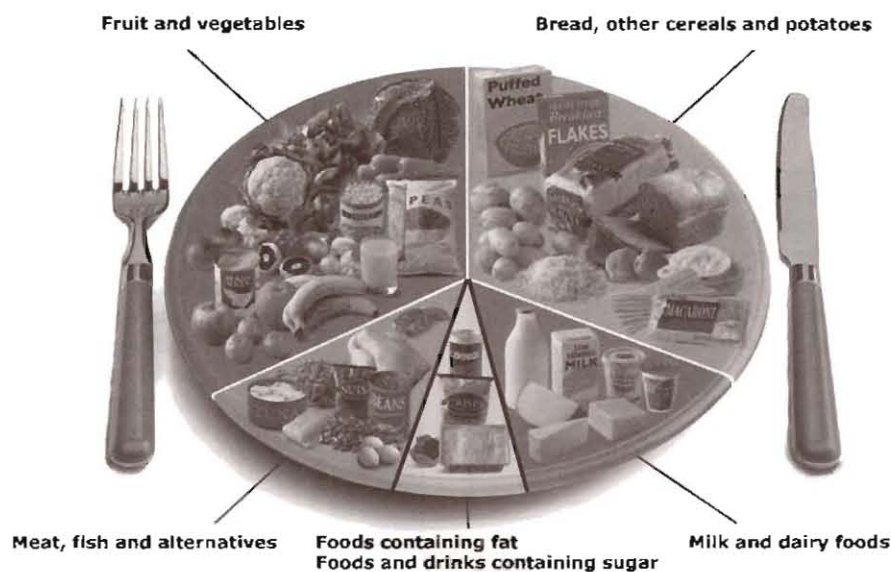
- to aid the manufacture, processing, preparation, treatment, packing, transport or storage of food.

In all cases additives:

- should not be used to mislead the consumer;
- should not be used to hide the use of unsound raw materials or unacceptable practices or techniques.

There are several catch-all phrases in this definition which allows great flexibility in the use of additives. Improving the 'organoleptic qualities', for example, means enhancing the taste, texture or other sensual experience of the food. Adding a red dye to sausage-meat, so that the fatty content looks like lean meat, may seem fraudulent to consumers, but is considered acceptable because it adds to the sensory experience of the product. Adding polyphosphate to fish fingers, ham and bacon so they hold extra water may seem fraudulent to consumers, but again the water can be deemed to add to the succulent texture of the product.

## The Balance of Good Health



There are five main groups of valuable foods

## Unfair advantage?

Additives are used to enhance the appeal (and sales) of one category of foods above all others – the sweet and fatty foods which, the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency tell us, we should eat less of.



## New poster!

We've just published a brand new poster – **The Food Commission Guide to Food Additives**. The poster is packed with useful information, including a list of all the suspect additives, special boxes on artificial sweeteners and flavourings, and a look at how additives can be used to deceive consumers.

Get your copy now by sending £2.50 to The Food Commission, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Post & packing are free.



## Legal, decent, honest and true?

### The latest decisions by the Advertising Standards Authority challenge food companies' misleading statements.

**X McFlurry misleads.** Complaints against a poster for McDonald's Cadbury's Caramel McFlurry were upheld by the ASA. The poster showed a pack shot of the dessert and Cadbury's Caramel and McDonald's branding. The ASA said that the Cadbury logo in the advert implied that Cadbury's Caramel was an ingredient in the dessert. Because it was not (it was a McD version), the ASA concluded that the advert was misleading. It asked the advertisers to take more care when portraying the ingredients of their puddings in future.

**X 'Identical' isn't the same.** A magazine advert for an 'Only Natural Products' flavoured tea claimed 'The best taste... naturally... With no artificial colourings or preservatives, no added sugar, no caffeine and five calories or less.' The company said that the tea blend was made mostly of natural products, supplemented with nature-identical flavourings, maintaining that nature-identical flavourings were not artificial

flavours, but manufactured copies of flavourings found naturally in the environment. The ASA considered that consumers were likely to interpret the claim 'the best taste... naturally' as implying the products consisted of wholly natural ingredients. Because they did not, the ASA concluded that the claim was misleading.

**✓ Limited freedom.** Complaints against an advert for the RSPCA's Freedom Food scheme were thrown out by the ASA. The advert stated, 'The Freedom Food scheme rests on five freedoms: Freedom from fear and distress; from pain, injury or disease; from hunger and thirst; from discomfort; and freedom to express normal behaviour,' which the complainants believed to be misleading. The RSPCA asserted that it was unrealistic to expect the Five Freedoms to be absolute – it was impossible to keep every animal free from all suffering. The ASA accepted that the Five Freedoms were an ideal that the RSPCA was striving towards, and concluded that the advert did not imply the animals were always free from fear, distress, pain, injury or disease, hunger, thirst or discomfort.

**X Milk risks exaggerated.** A leaflet campaign by the pressure group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was criticised by the ASA.



The ASA ruled that PETA's campaign exaggerated the link between dairy milk and acne.

The 'Milk Suckers'

leaflets were handed to children outside schools, carrying cartoon images of: Spotty Sue (a girl squeezing her spots); Chubby Charlie (a fat boy); Windy Wendy (a flatulent girl); and Phlegmy Phil (a boy with a web of mucus). The ASA noted that there was some evidence linking dairy milk and the conditions of acne, obesity, flatulence and excess phlegm in some children, but said that claims such as 'Recipe for throat crud: Add milk to throat' exaggerated the risks. The ASA considered that the cards implied that dairy milk was harmful to most children and concluded that the claims were unacceptable.

**X Booklet is an ad.** In a booklet, the company American Natural Health & Longevity claimed that its vitamin supplement Gerovital H3 'tightens loose skin... keeps hearts and eyes healthy...' and also helped to alleviate age spots, depression, chronic fatigue syndrome, ulcers, wounds, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, loss of sexual drive, cerebral arteriosclerosis, heart arrhythmia, and Parkinson's and Alzheimer's Diseases. The company attempted to define their advert as a 'book', and hence escape ASA adjudication, which applies only to print adverts. This was thrown out by the ASA. The ASA told the

company that adverts for vitamin and mineral supplements should not imply that they can be used to prevent or treat illness, elevate mood or enhance normal performance, and ruled that the advert should be withdrawn.



The added sugar in Volvic Touch of Fruit means that it contains up to 15% more calories than an apple, not 15% fewer, as Danone's advert claimed.

**✓ Food Commission vindicated.** The Women's Food & Farming Union (WFFU) objected to a leaflet for *The Food Magazine* which stated that BSE (mad cow disease) and foot and mouth disease have devastated livestock and ruined small farmers across the UK, that pesticides have wiped out native species of birds, insects and mammals and that the food which we eat and a lack of exercise has left 32% of women and

46% of men overweight, leading to 31,000 premature deaths each year. The WFFU said the facts were exaggerated and could cause undue distress, but none of the complaints was upheld.

We welcome the ASA's rulings on these matters, which will allow us to continue to raise issues that are so important to the health of people and wildlife.

**X Dodgy Danone.** The Food Commission submitted a complaint against Danone Waters for a claim that appeared in adverts and on the label of its 'Volvic Touch of Fruit' flavoured water. Danone claimed its sugared water 'contains 15% fewer calories than an average apple', but our calculations, based on MAFF figures for the average size of apples, showed that

the drink contained up to 15% more calories than an apple. The ASA upheld our complaint against Danone's dodgy arithmetic.

We're pleased to see that Danone has done the honest thing, and withdrawn the claim from their bottles as well.



# CHECKOUT

Our reporters bring you the latest on GM labelling and investigate the murky world of food additives.

## GM labels to ignore 1%



"I'll have 99% of the tomato soup"

In UK law, a food must be labelled if it contains detectable DNA from genetically modified (GM) material. But a contentious proposal from the European Commission will allow foods to contain up to 1% GM material from unapproved crops, yet the label need say nothing.

With GM crops now grown around the world, particularly in the Americas, there is a high risk of cross-contamination unless whole production lines and transport systems are dedicated to either GM or non-GM varieties. In response to consumer concern, and requests from industry to clarify the rules, the European Commission (EC) has proposed two directives, one on GM Food and Feed, and one on GM Traceability and Labelling. Their key features are:

- A broadening of GM regulations to include (for the first time) an authorisation process for: GM animal feed; food and feed additives; flavourings, and highly processed derivatives;
- A 'one stop shop' procedure with a single approval process covering both the environmental risk and risks to human and animal health of new GM food and animal feed;
- Compulsory labelling for GM animal feed, but not for meat from animals that have been fed on GM feed;
- The extension of the current threshold level of 1% for the amount of contamination by GM crops that will be

tolerated before a food must be labelled as containing GM ingredients, to include GM crops that have not been through the full European approval procedure for human and/or animal consumption.

The FSA Board were unable to reach a position on the contentious issue of allowing 1% contamination by GM varieties that are not fully approved within Europe for human and/or animal consumption. Instead the FSA is supporting the idea of pan-European rules for the use of 'GM Free' claims, an approach that has caused a stir among consumer groups.

'GM Free' foods would be tailored to a niche market, for customers able to pay the extra for the reassurance of traceability.

### BADvertisement

## Drink this to get thin!

We're used to seeing slimming pills with dramatic names such as 'fatburner', 'fat absorber' and 'fat terminator' – mostly in the rulings of the Advertising Standards Authority, as they slam companies for exaggerated or unsubstantiated claims. Now here's a fizzy drink from Multipower Fitness and Nutrition, available in health-food stores, which claims to be 'fat metabolising'. The active ingredient is 1,000mg of carnitine, an amino acid derivative that can enhance the work capacity of muscles. Which is why the manufacturer advises us to use this drink 'in conjunction with a training regime'. What does this advice add up to? You might lose some fat if you start doing some exercise. No surprises there. We don't need an artificially sweetened, flavoured, coloured and preserved drink to tell us that.



### What is one percent?

In a can of baked beans there are on average 440 beans.

The beans in the can pictured here aren't GM, but if there were an accidental contamination of 1% unapproved GM beans, there could be four GM beans (nearly a teaspoonful) without the manufacturer having to declare it on the label.



A large bottle of ketchup contains 1kg of sauce. The product pictured should not have GM ingredients but if it did, up to two teaspoons could be unapproved genetically engineered material without any labelling requirement.





# CHECKOUT

## Breakfast bars stuffed with fat and sugar

**Replacing breakfast with a 'breakfast bar' could do your health no good – as our latest survey reveals.**

'Make time to eat breakfast' is key advice given by nutritionists to adults and children wanting to improve their diets. Breakfast sets you up for the day, improves your concentration, and limits snacking on fat-rich chocolate biscuits before lunch. Healthy breakfast items such as wholegrain

cereals, wholemeal toast with some dairy foods and fruit provide valuable nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre.

Yet all over Europe, consumers are spending less and less time on breakfast, often missing it altogether or eating it 'on the hoof' or at their place of work.\*

The snack industry has stepped into the breach with new 'breakfast substitute' products designed to be eaten on the move. These are the breakfast bars and cereal bars that have elbowed their way onto the breakfast-products shelf-space in supermarkets. They are also heavily marketed as 'ideal for school lunchboxes', for parents keen to find healthier snacks for

their children. According to marketing reports, cereal bars form the fastest growing category of breakfast products, with sales rising 18% in 1999 and another 12% last year.

Whilst a bowl of porridge, muesli, or low-sugar cereals topped with reduced fat milk would receive a thumbs-up for good nutrition, it's unlikely that any of these breakfast bars would deserve the same approval.

A regular breakfast is low in fat, but the substitute products are typically 10-20% fat (by weight), and some are also high in unhealthy saturated fat. In a survey of 18 cereal bars being marketed as breakfast

Product name	Manufacturer	% calories from fat	% calories from saturated fat	% calories from sugar	quote from packet
<i>Bowl of Rice Krispies with 125ml semi-skimmed milk</i>		13	8	20	
Raisin Brunch Bar	Cadbury's	<b>33</b>	na*	na*	'wholesome'
Fruit & Nut Break Breakfast Bar	Jordans	25	6	<b>22</b>	'wholesome'
Sultana & Honey Break Breakfast Bar	Jordans	20	3	<b>34</b>	'wholesome'
Coco-Pops Cereal & Milk Bar	Kellogg's	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>41</b>	'cereals with milk'
Cornflakes Cereal & Milk Bar	Kellogg's	<b>31</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>	'cereals with milk'
Caramel Flavour Coco Pops Cereal & Milk Bar	Kellogg's	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>41</b>	'cereals with milk'
Frosties Cereal & Milk Bar	Kellogg's	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>29</b>	'cereals with milk'
Rice Krispies Cereal & Milk Bar	Kellogg's	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>33</b>	'cereals with milk'
Nutrigrain Apple Morning Bar	Kellogg's	20	4	<b>32</b>	'with calcium'
Nutrigrain Blueberry Morning Bar	Kellogg's	20	4	<b>32</b>	'with calcium'
Nutrigrain Chocolate Flavour Morning Bar	Kellogg's	24	5	<b>29</b>	'90% fat free'
Nutrigrain Strawberry Morning Bar	Kellogg's	20	4	<b>36</b>	'with calcium'
Nutrigrain Tangy Orange Morning Bar	Kellogg's	22	4	<b>29</b>	'with calcium'
Mueslix Bar, Milk Chocolate	Kellogg's	<b>37</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	'wholesome'
Mueslix Bar, White Chocolate	Kellogg's	<b>33</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>35</b>	'wholesome'
Tracker Breakfast Bar – Banana	Mars	<b>43</b>	na*	na*	'wholesome'
Tracker Breakfast Bar – Strawberry	Mars	<b>43</b>	na*	na*	'wholesome'
New Yorker Breakfast Bar – Cranberry	Renshaw Scott/Hero	22	<b>11</b>	<b>30</b>	'nutritious'

\*na means that information on the saturated fat and sugar content of the product was not given on the label.

Figures in bold show a 'high level' in comparison to levels recommended for healthy eating.



# CHECKOUT



One of the fattiest: 43% of the calories are from fat.

The sweetest: more calories come from sugar in this bar than you would find in pure milk chocolate.



The most saturated: nearly a third of the calories are from artery-clogging saturated fat.

substitutes, we found that all products also contained high levels of sugar – anything from one fifth, to nearly half (49% by weight) sugar in the case of Kellogg's Coco Pops Cereal & Milk bars.

While sugar eaten in a bowl of cereal tends to get washed away by the milk, when present in sticky cereal bars they encourage the maximum damage to teeth.

For our survey, we compared a bowl of Rice Krispies with semi-skimmed milk (the

sort of breakfast a teenager or office worker might eat) with the nutritional content of a range of breakfast bars. Taking the healthy eating guidelines of diets having not more than 30% calories from fat, 10% calories from saturated fat and 10% calories from extrinsic sugars, we estimated the caloric contributions of the products available.

## The results show

- Ten of the 18 products we examined had high fat levels – over 30% of the calories from fat.
- Over half the products had high levels of saturated fat – over 10% of the calories from saturates. Some products did not disclose their saturated fat content, making it hard for consumers to make an informed choice.
- All of the products had high levels of sugar – over 20% of calories from their sugary ingredients (including non-extrinsic sugars). For three products the figures were not available, but the ingredients list suggested a high sugar content.

With the most heavily advertised breakfast cereals tend to be the sweeter ones, getting children to eat a healthy breakfast can be hard enough. If children miss their breakfast what are they being offered instead?

It is important that breakfast substitutes offer the healthiest alternative, rather than a worse option still.

Sadly, we could not recommend any of the products we examined.

We urge manufacturers to think again about where their responsibilities should lie – and give us something healthy and nutritious, and tasty, too!

\* The European Breakfast Food and Drinks Report, Leatherhead Food Research Association 2001.

## BADvertisement

### Economical with the fat facts

This offer currently appears on Burger King windows.

'Only 301 calories' in a Chicken Flamer sandwich, proclaims the poster. '85% fat free', with 'reduced fat mayo'.

Leaving aside the fact that 85% fat free means 15% fat, take a look at the

Bacon Double Cheese Burger that is included in this offer. Funnily enough, the fat and calorie content of this product don't feature on the poster. At 506 calories, 29g fat and a hefty 3g of salt, it doesn't have much to boast about.







# Mary Daly's *talkshop*

### We need impartial advice, says health visitor Mary Daly.

I was driving home from work on the 15th of August when my attention was drawn to an item on the radio concerning the withdrawal of SMA Infant formula milks by the Food Standards Agency. An infant had become ill with botulism and the source of the infection had been traced to the SMA formula milk the baby had been consuming. The news item advised that any concerned parents should call the SMA Careline.

Anticipating a demand for information I visited the Food Standards Agency website and an informative Q and A accompanying their press release answered most of my questions. The next morning, as soon as I got to work I received calls from clients. Could I reassure them that other batches of the milk did not contain the dangerous bug? How sure was I that other formula milks were safe? Surely baby would be safer on ordinary milk?

By 10pm I was armed with half a dozen questions and called the SMA Careline. No, my

Customer Care adviser could not tell me if other batches had been tested for the deadly bacterium or how many samples of the affected batch had been found to contain the botulism bacterium. The request for my contact details prompted me to inquire whether or not my details would be retained on a database. My Customer Care adviser did not know. I was however urged to reassure families that other batches were safe and that botulism is widely circulating in the general environment.

My professional association, the Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association, was equally unhelpful. They advised me that 'SMA will be giving the most comprehensive advice possible to parents to allay their fears'.

My call to the Food Standards Agency proved to be much more fruitful. The affected infant formula milk was made in the Republic of Ireland and the Irish Food Standards Agency was responsible for microbiological standards in the factory. No other batches of SMA had been tested by the UK Food Standards Agency. The bacteria had been found in two additional samples of the batch being withdrawn.

To my amazement I received, within days of the SMA scare, a letter from Heinz Farley offering me advice on how to handle the SMA scare in the first two paragraphs, and a further five paragraphs telling me about how superior Heinz Farley milks are. This was followed by a communication from Cow and Gate highlighting the great number of scientists involved in ensuring that their formula milks are safe.

Infant formula milk is not just any old processed food but a specialist milk for infants. I have been left with the distinct impression that the infant formula industry is not ready to put commercial consideration before infant health.

Parents have a right to objective advice, not just a company information line. The Food Standards Agency had the information in a format which was easy to understand. This was what I needed, not company leaflets and Carelines. Sound advice should have gone out to Health Visitors and Midwives, who will act in the public interest. We have time to act now. After all the next health scare may be more serious.

## Danes are wary of 'beneficial' additives

A Danish Parliament-sponsored conference on food fortification gave the thumbs-down to any change in their local laws which currently permit only a few foods to be fortified.

Danish Consumer Council representatives believed that allowing unfettered marketing of foods with added vitamins and minerals could be misleading to consumers about what constituted a healthy diet, and would undermine the healthy eating messages to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, etc, and cut back on sweet and fatty foods.

The head of the Danish Nutrition Council also rejected the practice, stating that the main problems in Denmark (as in the UK) were heart disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity – and adding nutrients to sweet and fatty food might only make these problems worse if it led to an increase in the sales of such products.

Food industry representatives gave a favourable view of food fortification, along with a representative of the European Commission Scientific Committee for Food – Professor Albert Flynn of Cork University – who suggested that fortification was popular

among the public, and could benefit some sections of the population who showed deficiency in nutrients – e.g. teenage girls deficient in iron intake.

However, what the Danes decide may be irrelevant if the European Commission pushes ahead with moves to harmonise the regulations across Europe on fortification, and permit the wide range of fortified foods permitted in countries such as the UK. As a Food Commission representative demonstrated to the conference, the UK market boasts fortified snacks and crisps, fortified ice lollies, fortified soft drinks and fortified confectionery.

Such a liberal approach to fortification could be imposed on Denmark under harmonisation regulations. Denmark's borders would then be open to fortified foods manufactured anywhere in Europe, unless Denmark could make a case for a derogation of the rules or could prove that the products constituted a health hazard.



'Yumm – vitamins' says the caption, raising questions on whether Denmark should accept fortified junk food.



## Anti-sugar group's greatest hits

**The campaign group Action & Information on Sugars is retiring from the field, passing its good will to the Food Commission.**

**Jack Winkler, AIS's chair, takes a fond last look.**



**A**ction & Information on Sugars was unique. No equivalent exists anywhere – a network of specialists focused on the problems and politics of sugar. Its major achievement, while sugar became a non-issue elsewhere, was to help keep the health consequences of excessive consumption in the public eye and on the government agenda in Britain for almost twenty years.

AIS is going out with a bang. Its most recent success is also its most visible. After a three-year battle, our independent testing proved Ribena ToothKind's claim to dental safety was false. Sales have fallen 15% so far.

More importantly, it became a test case about health claims made for functional foods. AIS uncovered the slippery methods GlaxoSmithKline used to 'substantiate' its assertions, and established more rigorous standards of proof for the future.

The case illustrates AIS's two-pronged style. Everything the group did was based on sound science. Yet the public persona was blunt, exposing industry malpractice with maximum publicity, naming brand names. AIS was threatened with lawsuits many times, but never had to retract or amend anything.

Much of AIS's campaigning was not so dramatic: responding to government and EU consultations, mounting conferences, writing briefing papers, answering professional and student enquiries. But there were other high points:

- Our 'Chuck Sweets Off the Checkout' campaign removed sugared products from till displays in all major supermarkets.
- We exposed and blunted the Sugar Bureau's attempt to put industry promotional materials into all 24,000 primary schools, disguised as a teaching pack on 'science and technology'.
- Product-by-product research on 2,000 label claims by sweet foods shamed companies into renouncing useless hype, especially 'no added sugar'.
- AIS forced withdrawal of misleading ads, including campaigns by Kellogg's, Boots, Glaxo (twice) and Milupa. Regulators rejected our complaint that a Mars Bar cannot simultaneously help you 'work, rest and play' – but the company never used the slogan again.

There were broader achievements too. When AIS began, the Sugar Bureau was a high

profile lobbying and propaganda organ for Tate & Lyle and the British Sugar Corporation. But they lost the public debate and retired. Now, the Bureau only commissions 'defensive research' for its paymasters.

Similarly, in our early days, the British Dental Association had no policy, recommendations, committee or even report on sugar. AIS provoked them to concern for public health as well as dentists' pay.

Alas, not always wisely. In suspicious circumstances, the BDA endorsed Ribena. Public humiliation not only forced reorganisation of their accreditation scheme, but exposed the increasing greed of professional associations selling their logos.

AIS's most enduring triumph was the Baby Drinks Campaign, against the sweetened drinks that, served in baby bottles, cause rampant tooth decay, forcing tens of thousands of extractions under general anaesthetic every year.

We stimulated 30 television programmes and hundreds of articles on the problem. They led to the withdrawal of virtually all fruit concentrates, herbal teas, chocolate night-time drinks, and toddlers' drinks. Every product was relabelled to warn parents of the risks. Sales of the whole category fell by 30%.

The 21st century brings new sugar-related health issues: the 'protective' components added to drinks which may (or may not) make them safe for teeth; sugar's direct relation to obesity through its effect on insulin; and the link between sugar and cancer.

### BADvertisement

## Absolutely feeble!

When a carton of juice displays the phrase 'Fabulously fruity' you might expect it to be just that. However, we'd like to suggest a new description for Sainsbury's White Grape & Peach Juice Drink: 'Feebly fruity'. With the biggest ingredient water, and with added sugar and flavourings, this product is only 40% juice. No wonder the 'serving suggestion' on the front of the box proposes you have some real peaches and grapes to accompany this drink!



### BADvertisement

## Miserly margarine

One of the reasons organic products can sell at a premium price is that they usually contain high quality ingredients. Sainsbury's Organic Olive Spread, at £1.49 for a 500g tub, sells at up to 40p more than Sainsbury's non-organic olive spread. The tub says 'Olive oil is traditionally associated with the



healthy Mediterranean lifestyle. Low in saturates and high in mono-unsaturates, it is ideal for all the family.' A worthy claim, but this product contains a miserly 4% olive oil. The main ingredients are a mixture of un-identified vegetable oils and water. Does this spread really deserve its premium price? We think not!





## The Food Our Children Eat – 2nd edition

How can you bring up children to chomp on clementines rather than cola chews? Award-winning author Joanna Blythman's book is an inspiring guide for parents. From weaning a baby to influencing a teenager, she explains how to bring children up to share the same healthy and wide-ranging food tastes as you. No more tantrums, fights and refusals: her strategies are relaxed, low-effort – and they work. £8.99 inc p&p.

## Fast Food Nation

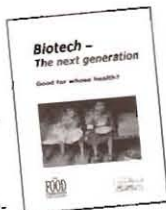
A bestseller from the US, this myth-shattering book tells the story of fast food, from its origins in 1950s southern California to the global triumph of a handful of burger and fried chicken chains. In a meticulously researched and powerfully argued account, Eric Schlosser discovers how scientists re-create the smells and tastes of cooked meat and fresh strawberries; talks to workers at abattoirs; explains where the meat comes from; and looks at the way the fast food industry is transforming not only our diet but our landscape, economy, workforce and culture. Amusing, scary, and fascinating reading. Available at a special price of £9.99 (p&p is free).



## Biotech – The next generation

Published by The Food Commission and Genewatch UK this report examines the 'second generation' of genetically modified crops – those with 'enhanced nutrition'.

The report surveys the GM products under development, evaluates their claimed benefits and considers the safety, regulatory and trade issues. £10.00 inc p&p.



## Back issues of The Food Magazine

Back issues usually cost £3.50 each but we're selling a full set of available issues (approx. eighteen issues from 1996 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.



## The Chips are Down

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.



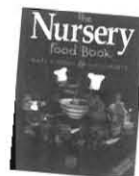
## The Shopper's Guide to Organic Food

Lynda Brown explains all that you need to know about organic food and farming in this indispensable guide, which includes an A-Z guide to organic foods. £8.99 inc p&p



## The Nursery Food Book – 2nd edition

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



## GM Free – A shopper's guide to genetically modified food

What we know and 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



## Poor Expectations

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



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

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; help you see through deceptive packaging and marketing claims and examine the contentious issue of food additives. Each poster costs £2.50 inc p&p.



## order form

### publications

The Food Our Children Eat	£8.99	<input type="radio"/>
Fast Food Nation	£9.99	<input type="radio"/>
GM Free – A shopper's guide to GM food	£5.70	<input type="radio"/>
Full set of available back issues of <i>The Food Magazine</i> .	£30.00	<input type="radio"/>
The Chips are Down	£15.00	<input type="radio"/>
The Shopper's Guide to Organic Food	£8.99	<input type="radio"/>
The Nursery Food Book – 2nd edition	£13.99	<input type="radio"/>
Biotech – The next generation	£10.00	<input type="radio"/>
Poor Expectations	£5.50	<input type="radio"/>
Poster – Genetically Modified Foods	£2.50	<input type="radio"/>
Poster – Children's Food	£2.50	<input type="radio"/>
Poster – Food Labelling	£2.50	<input type="radio"/>
NEW Poster – Food Additives	£2.50	<input type="radio"/>
List of available back issues	free	<input type="radio"/>

### subscriptions

Individuals, schools, public libraries	£20.00	<input type="radio"/>
OVERSEAS Individuals, schools, libraries	£25.00	<input type="radio"/>
Organisations, companies	£40.00	<input type="radio"/>
OVERSEAS Organisations, companies	£45.00	<input type="radio"/>

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

### payments / donations

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

Payment ☐

Donation ☐

Total ☐

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

☐ Please debit my Visa or Mastercard

My credit card number is:

Card expiry date:

Signature:

Name

Address:

Postcode:

Date:

Send your order to: **Publications Dept, The Food Commission, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Tel: 020 7837 2250. Fax: 020 7837 1141.**

Email: [sales@foodcomm.org.uk](mailto:sales@foodcomm.org.uk)

Delivery will usually take place within 14 days.



# Healthier diets cost more than ever!

**Shopping for healthier foods can cost you a packet, reports Louise Davey.**

**S**ix years ago the Food Commission compared the cost of a basket of regular foods with the cost of a basket of healthier equivalents – such as low fat, reduced salt and wholemeal versions. It found that shoppers would have to pay an average of more than a third more for the healthier variety. Now we find that the health 'premium' has risen to more than 50%.

The Food Commission's 1995 survey was itself a follow up to an earlier comparison of shopping baskets undertaken in 1988. That first survey found that healthier foods were typically about a fifth more expensive (see table below). At the time, that extra cost was considered a significant disincentive for people with a tight budget. Now, it appears, only the seriously rich can choose the healthier options without a thought for the cost.

	Regular basket	Healthier basket	Average extra cost of healthier foods
1988	£9.78	£11.56	18%
1995	£11.04	£15.11	37%
2001	£12.72	£19.19	51%

We went shopping for two baskets of food. In one we put a selection of foods available in most shops and likely to be bought by a family watching their pennies. In the other basket we put equivalent foods which were healthier versions and could be used without a significant change in dietary patterns.

Basket costs were calculated on 500g of each item, based on the cheapest available brand at a weight nearest to 500g. We went to a range of different types of shop – corner shop, late-night shop, popular supermarkets and discount stores, in Camden, Dalston and Peckham. Then we added up the bill and compared it with our earlier surveys.

The total cost of each basket in the current survey should not be compared directly with the total costs for the previous surveys as we have had to change our shopping list to match

what is available and considered healthy. But the premium you have to pay to purchase the healthier products is based on the average prices, and so can be compared across the years. As the table shows, the premium now exceeds 50%. How many families would be able to pay the extra?

The cheapest shops were the discount stores, but their ranges were narrow and often excluded the healthier options. We found that shops in low income areas tended to have fewer of the items in the healthy basket. Of the four shops in poor areas, Atlantis did not have 4 of the 20 healthier items, Londis did not have 6, Netto did not have 9 and Lidl did not have 14.

If you have the time and energy to traipse around several shops in different parts of London you can save money (assuming you have a bus pass). A bargain hunter could buy all the products in the regular basket for as little as £7.15.

Shopping carefully for the healthier versions also brought the price down – but only to £13.39. Comparing the cheapest possible of the two baskets gave rise to a health premium of 87%!

As in previous surveys, we noticed that the larger shops have the wider range, and the better choice of pack sizes. Discount stores often sold only large pack sizes, which may be cheaper per unit item but which require the

Shopping basket	Healthier shopping basket
Whole milk	Semi-skimmed milk
Full fat cheddar	Edam
Cheese spread	Cottage cheese
Soft margarine	Low fat margarine
Lard	Vegetable oil
White bread	Wholemeal bread
Cornflakes	Wholewheat cereal
White rice	Brown rice
White spaghetti	Wholemeal spaghetti
White flour	Wholemeal flour
Baked beans	Baked beans reduced sugar
Peaches in syrup	Peaches in fruit juice
Minced beef	Low fat minced beef
Pork sausages	Low fat pork sausages
Beefburgers	Low fat beefburgers
Potato crisps	Low fat potato crisps
Mayonnaise	Low fat mayonnaise
Tinned peas	Tinned peas, no added sugar or salt

shopper to pay the initial higher cost, as well as to carry and store the extra quantity.

We also noted an interesting trend among some discount stores: they have stopped selling staple foods which need preparation, such as flour and dry pasta, in favour of ready-cooked foods such as cakes, sauces and tinned pasta. And, as we have noted in past surveys, the range of fresh fruit, vegetable and salad items in small corner shops and in discount stores is very poor.

## Food Justice: An end to food poverty

The Food Commission is supporting a parliamentary campaign to end food poverty. Food Justice is a coalition supporting a Food Poverty (Eradication) Bill, to be launched on 14 November 2001. The bill would put a legal duty on the government to take steps to reduce food poverty in Britain.

■ **Contact:** Ron Bailey: 020 8698 3682; email: enquiries@foodjustice.org.uk

## Food poverty online

Sustain's Food and Low Income database, available in print and in searchable format online, is to be updated and extended.

The web-based service has received help from the Health Development Agency.

■ **Contact:** Sally Cavanagh, Sustain, tel: 020 7837 1228; email: sally@sustainweb.org. The database is available at: www.foodpoverty.heal.org.uk.



# Alex asks... about food miles



One morning, Alex was having breakfast. Looking at his drink - a glass of Dino D-Lite strawberry milk - he wondered how it had started life. Where

were the strawberries grown? What countries did the sugar and milk come from?

Alex fished the bottle out of the bin and took a look at the label. 'Made in Germany,' it said.

But when Alex looked on the company's website he found that it boasted 'Finest ingredients. Strawberries from Spain. Milk from Switzerland. Traditional cane sugar.'

'They must have taken all those things to Germany,' he thought. But what about these other ingredients - carrageenan, guar gum, flavouring and carbo... carbo... carboxymethylcellulose. Wow! I need help.'

Alex's geography teacher looked in his books and said: 'Well the strawberries travelled a thousand miles to Germany, the milk several hundred, and the sugar - I guess that came from the Caribbean or Southern Africa - say five thousand miles. Then all those things came here from Germany - that's hundreds more miles.'

'As for these additives, let's see.' It took some time, but between them, Alex and his teacher tracked down guar gum to the seed pods of an Indian tree, and carrageenan was a seaweed known as Irish Moss - but most of it these days came from the Philippines. 'Say ten thousand miles.'



They were stumped by the carboxy... whotsit, but luckily the chemistry teacher was passing by.

'That's easy,' he said. 'It's a by-product from the cotton industry. They use it to thicken up the milk so it's more like a frothy shake.' Another few thousand miles were added to the list.

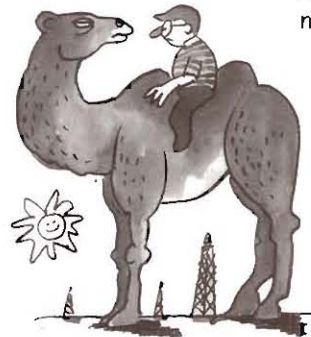
'As for the plastic for the bottle, and the printer's ink, too - those are made from oil - we get that from the Middle East. So another two thousand miles wouldn't be far out.'

But Alex was daydreaming. He was in Arabia, riding on a camel through the desert. 'Using so much oil makes me hot,' he thought. 'I think it's called the Greenhouse Effect.' The camel looked at Alex.

'What's a greenhouse?' she said.

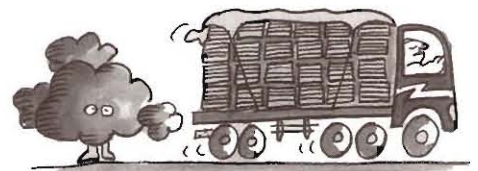
By now, Alex felt that he didn't understand why his bottle said 'Made in Germany' when the ingredients and packaging came from somewhere else. He sent the company an e-mail asking them why they did it - and they told him to visit the UK importer.

'Kid, you've got to think global,' said Dino D-Lite sales manager, Mr Gloop. 'One hundred years ago, you couldn't have bought a drink that contained ingredients from five continents, delivered to every supermarket in Europe. Would



you like to see our warehouse? You'll be impressed.'

In the Dino D-Lite warehouse, Alex saw hundreds of plastic bottles filled with glowing pink liquid, packed into boxes and loaded onto hundreds of waiting trucks. 'What about the Greenhouse Effect?' coughed Alex, as the trucks roared away.



'Greenhouse?' said Mr Gloop. 'Sure - I have a greenhouse. I call mine a conservatory, where I read my newspaper in the morning and study the international prices of sugar.'

Still coughing, Alex set off home. 'There's so much traffic,' he thought. 'Just to bring stuff from a long way away.'

'That's it! If I bought fruit from near my home, we wouldn't need so many of those horrible trucks,' thought Alex. 'The streets would be safer, and my breakfast wouldn't be helping to make the world hotter and hotter.'

Filled with enthusiasm, Alex asked his mum for some blackberries - it was autumn - to add to some milk and a little honey. He whizzed them all together in a food mixer and poured himself a glass.

'Delicious,' said Alex. 'Much better than Dino D-Lite!'





# School meals should be free like education

**Arthur and Peggy Wynn put the case for improving school food services.**

**T**he school years are the years outstanding in the whole human life cycle when governments have a unique opportunity to provide nutritious food, to influence eating habits and to teach the importance of good food for good health. In particular the school years are the years when a government can safeguard the nutritional status of the young women who will one day bear the nation's children.

In the United Kingdom, a 1944 Act required all local educational authorities to provide school meals 'suitable in all respects for those pupils who want them'. By the mid-1970s some five million children – 68 per cent – ate a lunch provided at school.

In 1980, however, the Education Act removed all obligation to provide school meals except for pupils whose parents received social security benefits. The 1980 Act was followed by a sharp decline in the number of meals provided each day, from 4.8m (1979-80) to 3.1m (1989-90).

New regulations came into effect in April 2001 reversing the effect of the 1980 Act, and requiring schools to offer a school lunch to all pupils.

The regulations do not specify nutritional standards for the food, although they do state some of the menu requirements, such as offering meat three times a week, and fish once a week. The regulations do not require any monitoring of school lunches.

This is not the case in the USA. There, all States are required to provide meals, not only for lunch but for breakfast, snacks and after school, and these must be consistent with Recommended Dietary Allowances. Standard recipes and servings with known nutrient content must be used. Bread, pasta and rice must be wholegrain, or enriched to the composition of wholegrain.

The latest survey of the nutritional intake of British schoolchildren, published in 2000 but conducted in 1997, shows that a large number of children are falling short of

adequate nutrient intakes. Over 90% of children are getting inadequate amounts of one or more essential nutrient (see table 1).

The definition of inadequate diets depends on the recommended levels for health. The UK's recommended intake levels (Reference Nutrient Intakes) for children are among the lowest in the world: the USA, the World Health Organization and many EU member states recommend higher levels – and using their figures British schoolchildren

includes disabilities and other forms of chronic ill-health, as defined by the child or their parents. The figures show an increase in such ill-health from one in twelve children in 1972 to one in five children in 1998 (see table 2).

Inadequate diets and greater incidence of ill health is commonest among lower income families. Families living on low incomes have increased in number from 10% of all households in 1979 to 34% in 1997/8. The number of children in low income families rose from 1.4m to 4.4m in two decades.

It is much cheaper and more cost effective to feed children at school than to increase family incomes to levels at which nutritional adequacy results. The cost to families for paid-for school meals varies in different educational areas, but averages around £1.30 a meal. This suggests a rough estimate of £2.6bn a year to provide all children with a free lunch, say £3bn to increase the quality.

This compares with the current Department of Social Security budget of some £100bn and should reduce the number of claimants and increase the numbers of mothers at work. Fewer children would need to see the doctor. Financial benefits would accrue as healthy children left school to become healthy adults.

Free school meals would not only be a present benefit but would be an important investment, like all expenditure on the right education.

**Table 1**  
**Widespread deficiency**

**The vast majority of children aged 11-14 are failing to reach recommended (RNI) levels for intakes of selected vitamins and minerals**

	% below RNI	
	girls	boys
<b>minerals</b>		
potassium	97	88
magnesium	97	86
zinc	96	84
iron	96	60
calcium	79	79
<b>vitamins</b>		
A	74	65
B2	40	25
C	20	14
folate	50	33

DoH (2000)

would show even worse shortfalls in nutrient intake. For example, according to the UK RNIs, teenage boys should consume a daily average of 700mcg vitamin A, but USA and French authorities put the figure at 1,000mcg vitamin A.

Chronically low levels of nutrients can lead to a variety of ailments. The last quarter century has seen a dramatic increase in the prevalence of long-standing illnesses among children in Britain. Long-standing illness

**Table 2**  
**Increasing ill health**

The number of children (aged 5-15) with long-standing illnesses has risen substantially in the last quarter century.

	girls	boys	all children
1972 (%)	6%	9%	8%
1998 (%)	19%	21%	20%
1998 (no.)	0.7m	0.8m	1.5m

OPCS/NSO (series)





# books

## Private Planet

Corporate Plunder and the Fight Back. D Cromwell. Jon Carpenter Publishing, Alder House, Market Street, Charlbury, OX7 3PQ, 2001, ISBN 1 897766 62 9, £12.99.

Books on global capital and its impact are likely to look dated following the abrupt

shift in political struggle and political language that has occurred since the atrocities of September 11th. Fighting globalisation looks uncomfortably like fighting the

American way of life, and can easily be misinterpreted as, at best, distasteful or, at worst, pro-terrorist. World trade is crudely identified with the World Trade Centre.

Although written and published before last September. David Cromwell's book is an important reminder that the issues are not ones that will evaporate during a political crisis. The book's first target concerns the ownership of the media – how the control of the news and the political analysis of world events is held in the hands of a few large corporations – so that even our thinking is subject to distortion and bias.

Thus Williams helpfully reminds us that nice-sounding terms are used to deceive us – for example 'free trade' is used where 'forced trade' would be more accurate.

Williams goes on to look at the global control over sources of energy, the ownership and exploitation of the environment and the control over the world's genetic resources.

His text is well referenced and reasonably well indexed. His concluding chapter encourages us to 'say no' and hopes that the struggle for control of the planet will be a non-violent one.

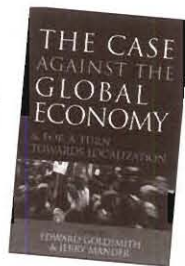
As do we all.

## The Case Against the Global Economy

E Goldsmith and J Mander (eds), Earthscan [www.earthscan.co.uk], 2001, ISBN 1 85383 742 3, £14.95.

Goldsmith and Mander's book, also published earlier this year and based on a 1996 edition, turns on some 20 authors' contributions to the analysis of the effects of globalisation, and the steps we need to take to 're-localise'. It is less thoroughly referenced, less evenly paced and more haphazard in its voice and tone, compared with the Williams' book – but this adds to the stimulation as one keeps tripping across nuggets of information and inspiration.

The chapters are short and the text littered with cross heads, creating a dynamic like a good conference, a mix of analysis and enthusiasm. The arguments for community self-sufficiency and the strengthening of the 'social economy' at local level give the necessary positive spin to the book, helping to ensure its message survives the months and years to come.

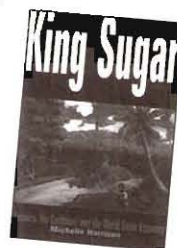


## King Sugar

M Harrison, Latin America Bureau [www.lab.org.uk], 2001, ISBN 1 899365 38 9, £10.99.

Africa (see above) is not alone in its problems, of course. The islands of the Caribbean have also been colonised, neo-colonised and exploited for cash crops. Notable among the crops is sugar, number one export for several of the islands. This book looks at the effect of such cash-cropping in both economic and social terms – the dependency of the islands on their trading agreements, and the dependency of the inhabitants on low wages and little land of their own.

Despite its light-hearted headings and neologisms (Sugar and Strife, 'plantocracy', Bitter Prospects) the book is a wealth of well-researched material on the legacy of colonialism and the modern pressures that affect the region's workforce. But rather than protect the sugar trade, it may be time to abandon it. The challenge, says Harrison, is to let the industry die and to build something better.

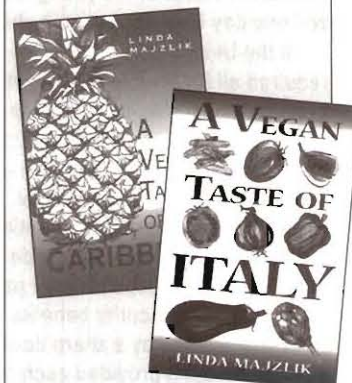


## Also received:

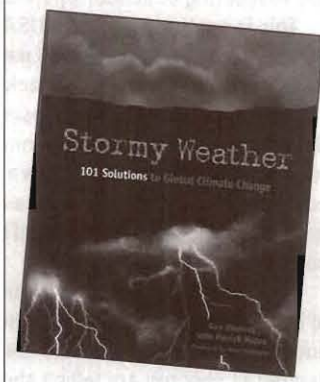
Michael van Straten's *Organic Living* (Frances Lincoln, £19.99) – a lovely coffee-table guide 'from greens and garlic to shampoo and sheets' on how to be organic at home and work.



Liza Majzlik's *A Vegan Taste of Italy* and *A Vegan Taste of the Caribbean* (Jon Carpenter, £5.99 each) – dozens of tasty recipes that avoid animal-derived ingredients.



Guy Dauncey and Patrick Mazza's *Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change* (Jon Carpenter, £14.99) – a Canadian-inspired, fact-packed book on how bad things are, how bad they may get, and what we can do about it. Good teaching resource material.



## All of Africa's Gods are Weeping

E G Vallianatos Race & Class, vol 43 (1), Institute of Race Relations [www.irr.org.uk], 2001, ISSN 0306 3968, £20 p.a. (individuals).

We don't normally review journals, but Professor Vallianatos' article in the recent edition of *Race & Class* merits a wider audience. The titles of his two previous books tell you where he is coming from: *Fear in the Countryside: the control of agricultural resources in the poor countries by non-peasant élites* and *Harvest of Devastation: the industrialisation*

of agriculture and its human and environmental consequences.

In his latest piece he reviews the colonial and neo-colonial control of African land. He notes the loss from Africans' daily diet of nearly 2,000 varieties of indigenous grains, roots, fruits and other food plants – varieties which may not only make African agriculture sustainable and prosperous but which would help improve the diversity and productivity of crops in much of the world. And he calls for an end to cash-crop plantations and a return to sustainable forms of peasant-based farming.





## What the doctor reads

The latest research from the medical journals



### Exercise reduces diabetes risk

Half an hour's moderate exercise — such as brisk walking — every day can dramatically reduce the risk of developing diabetes, and is more effective than treatment with the drug metformin. Combining exercise with a low fat diet led to a reduced diabetes risk of nearly 60% among people who are overweight and already showing symptoms of impaired glucose tolerance.

The trials were stopped early in order that the control groups could benefit from what proved to be such a clear effect. 'Type 2 diabetes is not inevitable,' said the research authors. 'The process is reversible, at least in some people for some period of time.'

www.nih.gov (see *The Lancet*, 358, 18.08.01)

### Diet and the menopause

Eating soya or other rich sources of phytoestrogens may have little effect on the symptoms of menopause, according to a meta-review of the scientific literature. Most studies have shown no significant difference from taking a placebo, in other trials there were serious faults in the design, or a substantial loss of participants.

Until better trials are undertaken the conclusion should be cautious. Women experiencing mild menopausal symptoms may gain relief by reducing smoking, cutting alcohol and caffeine intake, stress management and increased exercise.

S Davis, *British Medical Journal*, 323, 18.08.01.

### Pancreatic cancer linked to obesity and lack of exercise

Links between obesity and a raised risk of diabetes are well-established, but links between pancreatic cancer and obesity or diabetes have been harder to establish — in part because it is not easy to determine whether a tumour may itself be causing

impaired metabolism, leading to diabetes and obesity.

New evidence from an analysis of over 150,000 men and women over a 20-year period shows that being obese increases the risk of pancreatic cancer. Smoking increases the risk, but taking exercise — walking for a couple of hours each week — appears to decrease the risk by as much as 50%, especially among those who are overweight.

DS Michaud et al, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 286, 22.08.01.

### Oily fish cuts prostate cancer risk

A study of over 6000 Swedish men over 30 years showed that those who ate no fish were more than twice as likely to develop prostate cancer compared with those who ate a moderate or large amount of fish. Only those fish rich in n-3 fatty acids (oily fish) were likely to lower the risk. The link was even stronger when smoking, alcohol consumption, overweight and socio-economic status were allowed for.

P Terry et al, *The Lancet*, 357, 02.06.01.

### Peppers help with weight loss

Eating peppers and drinking coffee may help keep your weight down, according to a review of the effects of these dietary ingredients on energy balance. Spicy foods may increase energy expenditure through heat loss, and caffeine increases heart rate.

Consuming both in every-day amounts led to an increase in energy loss and, more importantly, a reduction in food intake among a group of men observed over two days. The average difference between those who consumed the peppers and coffee compared with controls was a remarkable 950 kcal — around a third of total calorie intake. Large doses of caffeine, however, may induce heart irregularities.

M Yoshioka et al, *British Journal of Nutrition*, 85, 02.01.

### Eating out causes food poisoning?

An analysis of people presenting at a hospital outpatients with food poisoning symptoms showed that they were more likely to have recently eaten food outside the home, e.g. from restaurants, take-always and sandwich bars, compared with controls.

The finding raises the question about appropriate hygiene education. Telling people to clean their fridges and wash their hands may be less important than requiring caterers to train their staff in safe food handling practices.

P Leman and D Strachan, *The Lancet*, 358, 04.08.01.

### Coffee cuts cirrhosis risk

Further good news for coffee-drinkers: If you are a heavy alcohol drinker then you are at risk of developing cirrhosis of the liver, but coffee can inhibit the development of the disease. Other caffeine-containing beverages are not effective.

G Corrao et al, *Annals of Epidemiology*, 11, 10.01.

### Superbugs are falling

Using antibiotics on animals increases the risk of creating 'superbugs' that are resistant to antibiotic treatment and which may infect humans. Banning antibiotics in animals has now been shown to dramatically reduce the presence of antibiotic resistant bacteria carried by the animals.

In the case of avoparcin, an antibiotic banned in 1995, resistance rates have fallen from 73% to just over 5%. With virginiamycin, banned in 1998, resistance rates have nearly halved in just two years from 66% to under 40% in 2000.

*Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy*, July 2001 (see *JAMA*, 286, 08.08.01).





We welcome letters from all of our readers

but we do sometimes have to shorten them so that we can include as many as possible (our apologies to the authors). You can fax your letters to us on 020 7837 1141 or email to [letters@foodcomm.org.uk](mailto:letters@foodcomm.org.uk)

# feedback

letters from our readers

## 'C' without citrus

Because of her arthritis my wife has been advised to avoid citrus fruits. These were her preferred way of obtaining vitamin C in a 'fresh' state. How do some of the 'new' fruits, such as mangoes, star-fruit and kiwis, compare as sources?

Ken Jenkins, Crewe

*Ed: We can't verify the role of citrus fruit in aggravating arthritis, but we can help you find good alternative sources for vitamin C. Several of the tropical fruits are indeed good sources, and so are many vegetables.*

Fruit	Vitamin C per 100g edible parts, raw
Guava	200mg
Kiwi fruit	59mg
Lychees	45mg
Mango	37mg
Papaya (Paw-paw)	60mg
Passion fruit	23mg
Pineapple	12mg
Oranges	54mg
Strawberries	77mg
Blackcurrants	200mg
Broccoli	87mg
Brussel sprouts	115mg
Cabbage	49mg
Red/green peppers	130mg
Watercress	62mg

## Meat privatisation

I am appalled at the prospect of meat inspection carried out by the meat industry itself (FM53). All food inspection must be undertaken by independent public bodies.

I note that the inspectors and their unions are campaigning against it, but any campaign by the workforce is dismissed as 'protecting workers' jobs'. There must be a national campaign also, e.g. writing to MPs, which I intend to do.

M D Yates, Woking.

## Freedom's limits

In a previous edition of *The Food Magazine*, you mentioned that Pret A Manger meat comes from Freedom Farms approved by the RSPCA. Unfortunately, Viva! feels that consumers are extremely misled by the term 'freedom foods' as it implies that the animals are 'free range' when in fact in most cases they are factory farmed. Viva! recently found animals kept in horrific conditions in a 'Freedom Foods' approved farm.

Kat Koukourakis, Viva! Campaigner,  
[www.viva.org.uk](http://www.viva.org.uk)

*Ed: See also the ASA rulings on page 10.*

## Organic plus

Re: Standards need to be stronger (FM51): No single label can guarantee a perfect product. 'Organic' will not save the earth, but it is an excellent starting point and the fact that people are responding intelligently by buying organic products is encouraging.

Global resources, fair trade, food miles, packaging, promotion, marketing – and yes, nutrition – are all important issues which the public need educating about. 'Organic' should contribute to this education, but not be forced to encompass these considerations at all times.

Gina Purmann, London

## Latest look at vCJD

The papers are reporting that the number of people who have vCJD – mad cow disease – has passed one hundred. These are all tragic and regrettable, but the numbers are small compared with food-related cases of cancers and heart disease. I don't want to disrespect the victims of vCJD and their families, but are we getting too alarmed about a relatively minor problem?

W Adams, Preston

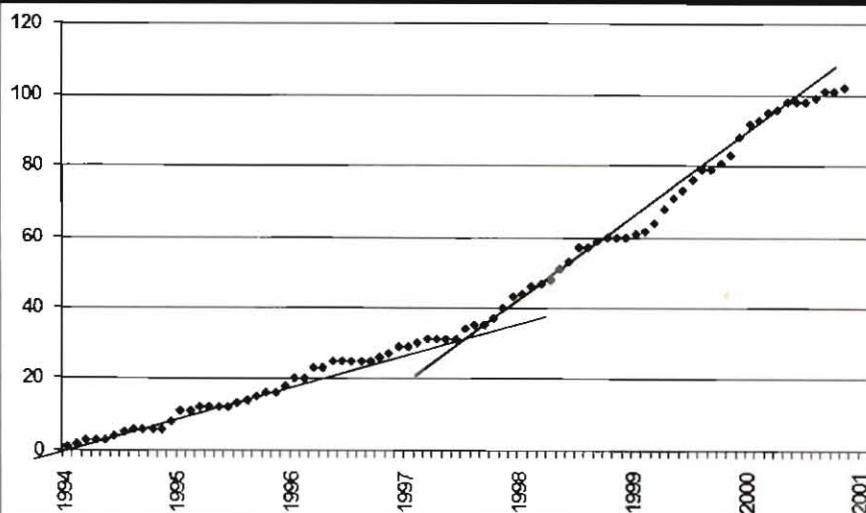
*Ed: In terms of death rates, of course the big killers are heart and cancer diseases, and food plays a role in these as do other lifestyle-environmental factors. The issue with BSE and vCJD is the link between the animal disease and the human form (although this is disputed by some – see letter opposite) and our unknown exposure. We are now either carrying the disease or not, and there is little we can do about it. Losing weight, eating fruit, giving up smoking – none of these (it is assumed) would*

*prevent us from developing vCJD if we are already carrying it.*

*How many of us will get the disease is still unknown and unknowable. So far, all the victims have a particular genetic make-up, found among less than half the UK population. The remainder of us presumably have a longer incubation period (this has been found with another form of the disease, kuru). No-one knows how much of the disease we were exposed to in the 1980s and 1990s. All we can say is that the trend in terms of the discovery of new cases shows a modest acceleration in the last few years.*

*The graph below shows the cumulative number of cases of vCJD each month, according to the date of onset of the disease (when it was first apparent to the families). The figure indicates a gradual rise during the period 1994 – 1997, then an increased rate of accumulation during 1997 – 2000, and a recent easing back – but this will be due to new cases not having been diagnosed yet.*

vCJD in humans: accelerated rate of accumulation of cases in recent years





# feedback

letters from our readers

## Quite contrary, Mary

I am writing to dispute the facts and tone of Mary Daly's talkshop article in the last issue of *The Food Magazine*.

Mary Daly claims our journal, *Community Practitioner*, is 'crammed with advertising for infant milks'. The facts tell a different story – the journal carries a maximum of 35% advertising in its pages, compared with 65% editorial. With our revised *Community Practitioner's* and *Health Visitors'* ethical policy (June 2001), a new restriction means that a maximum of two-thirds of advertising can be from artificial milk companies.

Advertising revenue helps ensure that *Community Practitioner* continues to be a first-class quality publication, which provides valuable professional articles and advice to community practitioners. The majority of specialist publications would fold without advertising revenue.

Milk companies, along with other organisations, including the voluntary sector, sponsor the CPHVA's annual professional conference. Only 18% of the 2000 conference revenue came from milk companies. We would like it to be less but this would have an obvious impact on members' subscription rates.

In accepting advertising from commercial companies the CPHVA is not endorsing the product and every edition of the *Journal* clearly and emphatically states that.

Our aim is to make information available to our members so that they know how

## Ancient quiche

Enclosed is a box from Tesco's. Note the expiry dates – food for timetravellers, obviously.  
**Jill Sutton,**  
**Faversham**



**Tesco's long shelf-lives? Just a few years before 1202 King John divorced his first wife Isabel of Gloucester (a popular queen) to marry Isabel of Angoulême, although she was already betrothed. He must have been after the recipe...**

these companies market themselves to the public. We require that claims made for a product should be scientifically proven and are referenced so that our members can read the articles for themselves and make their own judgements. I have every faith that CPHVA members have the ability to process and critically analyse information regarding baby milk companies.

**Obi Amadi, Lead Professional Officer,**  
**CPHVA**

**Don't forget to send in any examples of good or bad promotion of children's food – see our news item on page 3 – Children's food on trial.**

## Food irradiation: a lighter touch

You talk about food products being irradiated but don't mention that there are two types of radiation used on food products.

The term 'radiation' covers all wavelengths within the electromagnetic spectrum. The radiation that you write about is ionising radiation (associated with radioactivity) and is electromagnetic energy with a wavelength shorter than X-rays. As you rightly point out, by using this technology it is possible to disinfect a wide range of products. Radioactivity is lethal to all living organisms, including humans. Operators of this type of technology have to be licensed by the government to be allowed to operate.

Apart from the emotive aspect of ionising radiation, and fears over its safety, one of the main problems associated with ionising radiation is that it may reduce the nutritional value of the products, as you discuss.

The second form of 'radiation' is non-ionising radiation – all wavelengths above

the X-ray region including ultraviolet (UV), which has been widely used on food and water for a long time. It has none of the problems associated with ionising radiation.

The food industry is now using UV as a non-contact, non-chemical, method of reducing the levels of micro-organisms (bacteria, viruses and moulds) on the surface of food products, packaging & conveyors. UV leaves no residual taste, smell or chemicals and there are no genetic changes to products that have been UV treated.

We certainly endorse the fact that all forms of disinfection techniques are in no way a substitute for proper and effective hygiene management. Correctly applied, UV technology can enhance hygiene levels and help promote safe and healthy food.

**Andrew Langford, KK Water Purification Ltd;**  
**web: [www.kkgrouppint.com](http://www.kkgrouppint.com)**

## Positive farming

I have long admired the work of the Food Commission and *The Food Magazine*, which is normally excellent, but I was rather disturbed to read your article 'Alex asks about his food' in issue 54. I'd like to take you up on some points:

Mad cows are, of course, most unfortunate. But that they are the cause of vCJD has yet to be proven.

I hoped tomatoes with fish genes had not caught on. It seems to me that farmers sometimes carry the can for genetic engineering, but it is the scientists who should be stopped.

It is often repeated that British animals get hormones. They don't. It is illegal.

I am not happy about the testing procedures for sprays, but calling them 'poison' is a bit strong. As for spreading abattoir waste and sewage, I have never heard of a farmer who does this.

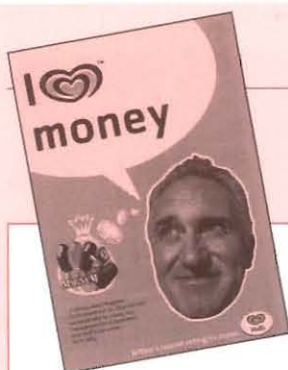
It would be nice if people would campaign for the survival of all the decent farmers who want to look after their animals and their countryside properly but find they can no longer do so. Either they have to become more intensive than they want to be, or they go out of business and leave food production to those with no scruples.

My and my son's way of life, and that of many, many farming families is threatened – we are totally dependent on food production for a living. We cannot all live by selling niche products in farmers markets.

If there is not a sea change Britain will become wholly dependent on factory-produced food, mostly imported, and the countryside will disappear under brambles and scrub. We will not be the only ones to suffer.

**Pippa Woods, Family Farmers' Association**





# backbites



## God save our lolly!

Hot on the heels of this summer's revelation that New McLabour received sponsorship money from McDonald's, the BBC found that Wall's ice cream is to be one of the sponsors for the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations next year. A spokesman for the jubilee organisers said that the ice-cream manufacturer is showing its patriotic duty. But a Wall's advert from *The Grocer* (shown above) is probably more truthful.

## Crazy caffeine claims

Every day we get company promotions for 'health-giving' properties of food such as sugar, chocolate, butter and even, recently, silk! So we were sceptical when opening a mailing from the British Coffee Association. 'Now what?' we wondered.

Coffee, they said, can reduce gallstones, enhance memory, reduce suicide rates, help you recover from a cold, save the lives of diabetics, and fight cancer, coronary heart disease and asthma... we found the claim: 'Strong coffee may be just what a person needs in a nuclear war.' Really?

Whilst caffeine may help protect the livers of heavy drinkers (see page 21), it would hardly save someone from the effects of nuclear fallout. Or maybe they mean you could put a lead-lined coffee pot over your head?!

## Bang goes biotech!

In the biotech industry's efforts to give genetic engineering a good image, a new wave of GM plants are being touted as the answer to the world's problems. One is a TNT-absorbing GM plant designed to cleanse soil of dangerous explosives. The other is a GM plant whose leaves fluoresce in the presence of land mines. All very well, but who's going to be foolhardy enough to plant the seeds? Simple, says the biotech industry. Helicopters. Highly expensive, fuel-hungry machines only available to rich countries – where mines aren't usually a problem.



## Fruit sauce

It is unsettling when charity workers stop you on the street and ask for a donation to help buy a brain scanner for the local hospital. Surely such equipment should be part of the NHS budget, paid for out of taxation?

It's equally unsettling when the National Lottery uses money to support statutory services – especially government services which, one feels, should really be paid for by the government.

The National School Fruit Scheme is a laudable effort by the government to improve children's consumption of fruit. The Public Health and Education Ministers, Yvette Cooper and Jacqui Smith, received some praise when they said 'A healthy childhood provides the foundation for health later in life. That is why the government is committed – through the NHS and the Healthy Schools Programme – to investing in improving health.'

That was a while ago. Now the scheme has been evaluated and found worthy, so the Department of Health released a welcome news statement this October when they announced that a further £52 million was going to be spent on the National Fruit Scheme over the next two years. This looked like quite a significant 'investment in health' on the part of the government. A worthy use of taxpayers' money.

Only by reading the details did one realise that the money was coming not from the government at all but from – yes – the Lottery's New Opportunities Fund.

## What's in a name?

The Food and Health Network used to be a group of parents and nutritionists interested in improving people's health. This group has since become part of the UK Public Health Association. Now a new Food and Health Network has now been launched by the Institute of Food Research.

Funded largely by tax payers through the BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council) and registered as a charity, you might expect an initiative of the Institute of Food Research (IFR) to have charitable objectives. But the IFR newsletter tells a different story. It says that the Food and Health Network will 'contribute to wealth creation'. It will be 'a forum to improve knowledge transfer and develop the science in areas where it can make a real contribution to industrial profitability'. One of its primary aims will be 'Facilitation of academic knowledge transfer

into wealth creation.' This group should really be called the Food and Wealth Network.

Readers might also remember the SAFE Alliance – Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment – a non-profit organisation which produced policy recommendations and research, including the first Food Miles report. Now the name SAFE has been taken by a consortium of European research bodies, including the ubiquitous IFR, providing information to the food industry.

Is any non-profit organisation safe from having its name nicked? The Food Commission narrowly missed competition over its name this summer, with the launch of the government's Food and Farming Commission to review food and agriculture policy following the Foot and Mouth crisis.

Personal territory aside, we think there's a problem with name adoption. It's a form of re-

branding that can be used to give an organisation a sense of moral authority it may not deserve. The veterinary drug industry likes to group itself under the title NOAH – the National Office of Animal Health. Just last year, the British Agrochemical Association renamed itself the Crop Protection Association, sounding like a group of benign, friendly farmers. And biotechnology companies in their annual reports and advertisements insist that the phrases 'biotech' and 'genetic engineering' be replaced by 'life sciences'.

What's in a name? For starters: reputation, credibility, a measure of reliability and independence and a sense of purpose – all conveyed to the public or government who receive the organisation's advice. Whenever responding to public consultations, we think all organisations should have to state where they get their money and who they're answerable to.