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FOOD MAGAZINE

Campaigning for safer, healthier food for all

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GM soya found in one loaf in seven

FSA survey finds 15% of baked goods contain traces of genetically modified soya.

survey by the Food Standards Agency of 203 retail bakery products – bread, cake and pastries – has found 31 products containing GM soya flour. At least three of the products appear to contain levels of GM soya above the 1% level that requires a labelling declaration, but none disclosed the presence of GM on the label.

No brand names were revealed in the FSA draft report as the tests were primarily conducted for laboratory evaluation purposes. The 31 positive samples covered a range of shop-bought goods, including wholemeal bread, pitta bread and walnut cake. Twelve of the positive samples were reported as

containing only 'trace' amounts of rogue GM soya, while 19 were reported as having quantifiable levels (see list, page 3). Of these, three were thought to be exceeding the legal limit of 1% (plus a safety margin) which means the products should have declared the presence of GM material on the label.

Of the twelve products for which a trace of GM soya was detected, one was labelled as organic soya mince, and others included soya milk, Swiss rolls and Scotch pancakes, as well as bread and baps.

Manufacturers of the products have claimed they were using Identity Preserved sources of soya flour, which should ensure that the flour came from non-GM crops. An alternative source of contamination may be the wheat flour used in the products, which could have been contaminated with GM soya during storage or transportation.

The FSA report, of which the Food Commission has seen a draft, also describes a series of laboratory checks on detection methods for bakery goods. It found wide variation in different laboratories' ability to make accurate assessments of the GM content of foods. The FSA 'spiked' some bread and cake with known amounts of GM soya and sent these to five laboratories, asking each of them to test the samples ten times and report their results. In most cases the spiked GM was found, although laboratories reported levels that varied widely from sample to sample within a laboratory, and up to three-fold between each of the laboratories' average figure.

The FSA is recommending that laboratories take steps to improve their testing accuracy and reliability. In the meantime it is proposing to expand its testing regime to include other foods which may contain GM material.

Continued on page three



"They promise that I'll lose ££££££££!"

Slimmers beware: web adverts break the Code

Slimming products are being advertised on the internet in forms that appear to break the British Code of Advertising, according to a Food Commission survey.

If the advertisements were published in print then they would almost certainly be condemned by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Yet the ASA, whose job is to ensure that advertising is 'legal, decent, honest and truthful', has told the Food

Commission that it is not accepting complaints against internet advertising, even if the internet sites are run by British companies, selling goods from British addresses, to British customers.

The Code of Advertising protects vulnerable consumers by restricting claims for slimming foods. But on the internet companies are able to break the Code and get away with it.

See our full report on pages 8-9

Get the facts with the Food Magazine

editorial

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

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

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

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Permission to farm

As we go to press, the long-awaited government report on the future of food and farming is due out.

Rumours from reliable sources suggest that among the proposals will be the suggestion that farming should be a licensed activity. Farmers must show they are competent before being given permission to farm.

We can already see the detractors getting in front of microphones to state that the the government will soon want shoppers to have a licence to shop, by showing they can read a food label. Or consumers will need a licence to eat by showing they can choose wholesome foods.

But such derision distracts us from the reasoning behind the report's proposals - assuming they have not changed in the final draft.

The reasoning is based on the notion that farming is a complex activity which needs skills and knowledge. Farmers need to show that they can protect the environment and have the knowledge to do it. They need skills to ensure high quality stockmanship, and veterinary knowledge to show they can do it. They need skills to provide safe food, and knowledge of hygiene practices, food handling and food packaging.

A license is not unreasonable. Like a licence to drive a car or to extract teeth, a licence to farm would show that the holder has the skills and knowledge to practice their profession with due care and attention - especially as farm produce is now as liable under consumer protection laws as are TVs or washing machines.

If farmers say this will impose an unfair disadvantage compared with farmers elsewhere in Europe, they might note that in France you also need accreditation before being allowed to farm - all newcomers must show they have been trained at a recognised agricultural college.

Is food genuine?

The Food Commission is now a member of the Food Standards Agency's committee which checks the nature of our food: the Working Party on Food Authenticity.

We shall be reporting on the results of the FSA's food testing in future issues of the Food Magazine. We welcome suggestions about food products that need examining. Just drop us a line.

We are in a good position to push your suggestions forward.

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

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BADvertisements!

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

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

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

Mouldy nuts poison peanut butter

As the Food Magazine goes to press, the Food Standards Agency is preparing to release new figures for the levels of mycotoxins found in dried fruit, nuts and peanut butter.

Advance information seen by the Food Commission shows that levels of aflatoxin in peanut butter are as high as they were in the last survey in 1996. Aflatoxins are a cancerlinked mould resulting from storage in warm, damp conditions. Additional analysis for a type of aflatoxin, called B1, shows that six out of 29 products are contaminated at unacceptable levels.

Pistachio nuts showed the worst levels for loose nuts, and commercial sources suggest that much of the contamination arises in crops grown in Iran.

For peanuts and peanut butter, Chinese suppliers have been have been held responsible for some contamination, following an especially bad crop in 1999, but have subsequently shown improved contaminant

levels. Nonetheless, the European Commission is due to require all shipments of Chinese peanuts to be sampled before being allowed into the European Union.

In anticipation of the EC's moves, the UK's FSA has already asked Port Health Authority inspectors to examine all Chinese shipments of nuts for potential contamination. When The Food Commission asked whether there was extra funding to meet this higher rate of inspection, we were told that there is only a budget for increased levels of laboratory analysis. No extra money has been made available for port authorities, implying that the additional work must be done at the expense of current health inspections.

This additional pressure on port authorities comes at a time when they are under fire for failing to control illegal meat imports, such as carcasses in personal baggage at Heathrow airport, which can carry contagious animal diseases like foot and mouth disease.

GM soya found in one loaf in seven

Continued from page one

The FSA's report on GM soya names the five laboratories that participated in the study (four UK and one German) but admits that none of the laboratories would provide specific details of the testing methods, citing 'confidentiality reasons'.

GM: The legal limit

EC Regulation 49/2000 requires foods to be labelled as containing GM soya or maize if the soya or maize in the product is more than 1% GM. The 1% level was chosen for practical reasons: in products such as bread the level of total soya is less than half a percent, and reliably quantifying GM soya at levels of onehundredth that amount approaches the limits of current laboratory technology.

The threshold has been accepted on the basis that a small amount of 'adventitious' GM could have contaminated the ingredient without the manufacturer being aware. To show that it is truly adventitious, manufacturers must show they are trying to avoid using GM ingredients by using only maize or soya from Identity-Preserved (IP) sources.

If manufacturers have not used IPsourced ingredients then no limit applies and, according to the FSA, if any GM soya or maize is present then the product must declare this on the label.

A pinch of GM in every bite?

Although the exact quantities are unreliable, the FSA survey found that quantifiable amounts of GM sova were present in several bakery products. In the case of the three highest levels, the products exceeded the 1% limit (allowing for a safety margin) and should have been declared on the label.

> GM sova as % total sova

Wholemeal rolls0.2
Fruited tea cakes0.3
Fruited scones
White baps
White finger rolls0.4
Hot cross buns0.4
White bread0.5
Walnut cake
Malted brown granary bread0.8
All-butter muffins0.8
Honey and sunflower bread1.0
White snack rolls1.0
Wholemeal baps1.0
White burger buns1.0
Pitta bread
Wholemeal bread1.2
Long-life white bread1.5
Wholemeal batch loaf2.0
Wholemeal bread2.1

Dioxins contaminate **UK** food

In November, the Food Standards Agency announced that a third of the UK population. including toddlers and schoolchildren, may have worrying levels of dioxins in their diets.

Dioxins are persistent man-made chemical contaminants produced by burning chlorinebased chemicals with hydrocarbon. The major sources in the environment are from incinerators burning chlorinated wastes and paper mills using chlorine bleaching processes. Dioxins have been linked to low sperm counts and increased rates of cancer.

Contaminated food accounts for up to 95% of all human exposure to dioxins, with the highest levels in fatty foods such as liver and oily fish. In recent European negotiations, proposals to set limits for dioxins in food were rejected after the UK's Food Standards Agency and four other countries objected to measures intended to bring public dioxin exposures within health-based guidelines. The FSA pointed to 'serious problems of enforcement' and 'disproportionate cost'.

However, in November, the European Council approved a regulation setting legally binding limits on dioxins and other contaminants in human food and animal feed, which will now come into effect on 1 July 2002. Figures show that some toddlers in the UK are currently being exposed to five times the new limits recommended by the European Council.

As an Environmental Data Service report suggests, 'The FSA now has no fig leaf with which to hide its confused advice to consumers who may wish to take precautionary action to reduce exposure."

Source: The ENDS Report, 320, 322.

No thaw in the GM freeze

A report on the Labour Government's record on genetically modified food has been issued by the Five Year Freeze Campaign, a coalition of 120 national organisations (including The Food Commission). The report says that despite Tony Blair's claims to be pro-health when it comes to GM foods, the Government has done little to take a precautionary approach.

A moratorium on the commercial growing of GM crops in the UK is still needed, says the report.

■ The report is available for £10 (£5 to individuals and non-profit organisations) from: The Five Year Freeze, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Tel: 020 7837 0642.

Food Irradiation Campaign earns worldwide support

The Food Irradiation Campaign, launched just eight months ago, is quickly gathering momentum. An international network of consumer and health organisations has been established, with members launching information networks and campaigns in their own countries. Meray Shub reports on highlights of the campaign so far.

Food Irradiation Campaign

In October the Food Commission's Food Irradiation Campaign held a highly productive meeting in Brussels. An international panel of speakers included representatives from Public Citizen (US), the Swedish food standards agency, the European Commission and the German Green Party. The meeting also featured the demonstration of a portable food irradiation detector, and a campaign planning session. Delegates from NGOs from many countries attended, including the US, Eire, Finland, Denmark, Italy, Greece and the UK.

Legislative developments

Doubts were expressed during last year by EU consumer and food industry groups over whether there are clear benefits or technological needs for irradiating food. These concerns led the European Commission to delay extending its list of foods permitted for irradiation and trade within the European Community, and now the list may not be extended at all. While this would be a victory for consumer groups, the fear is that continuing pressure from the irradiation industry and legislators outside Europe will still bring about the widespread use of this technology.

A proposal to amend the international Codex standard governing food irradiation, including a removal of the current maximum irradiation dose limit and the weakening of several other aspects of the standard, is still in progress. A meeting in Rotterdam in March will attempt to further this proposal. European consumer groups, including a representative of the Food Irradiation Campaign, will be attending to voice consumer concerns.

News from around the world

In the United States...

In recent months test-marketing of irradiated foods in the United States has continued. Some companies have persisted in avoiding use of the term 'irradiated' in favour of more consumer-friendly euphemisms. The San Diego-based company SureBeam, an affiliate of defence contractor Titan Corp, continued to call their irradiation process 'electronic pasteurization' even though the US government says this phrase is misleading. The Federal Trade Commission launched an inquiry into advertising practices, following a complaint filed by the NGO Public

Citizen. As well as promoting food irradiation within the US, SureBeam is expanding its operations to places such as Brazil, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

In Australia...

Australia's tenyear ban on food irradiation ended in September with the first authorisation, to irradiate herbs, spices and herbal infusions, was granted by the Australia New

Zealand Food Standards Council. In the wake of these developments SureBeam Australia Pty Ltd has made an application to irradiate tropical fruit as a treatment against fruit fly and other quarantine pests. These irradiated fruits would be destined for export to the US, New Zealand, Japan and Europe. Steritech, the only commercial irradiation company in Australia, wants to set up an irradiation plant near Brisbane, in a large fruit-growing area. The federal minister has given the go-ahead. A campaign to alert consumers has been launched and has received many enquiries.

In Denmark...

The Danish Consumers Organisation has been working with the Food Irradiation Campaign to identify irradiation facilities and to test for irradiated food products on sale in Denmark. The Danish media has shown interest, and hopes are high for a successful campaign.

In Japan...

Consumer groups in Japan have expressed grave concern about the spread of irradiation technology to their area, especially after the recent national scare following an accident at a nuclear power plant. A Japanese consumer organisation has enquired about campaign materials and will be working closely with the Food Irradiation Campaign to ensure the consumer voice is heard.

In Italy...

Following the Food Irradiation Campaign's international meeting in October, an Italian consumer group has been busy - alerting the

> media, policy makers and campaign groups to problems posed by irradiation. The consumer group says that Italians are especially

keen to maintain fresh, local supplies of food rather than globally traded and irradiated food products. The Slow Food Movement has been informed of the campaign.

In Israel...

In Israel, a country that depends on agricultural exports of fresh produce, and which already uses irradiation, a new campaign group has been launched to raise the Israeli public's awareness of food quality. The new group is keen to work on food irradiation and is being assisted by the Food Irradiation Campaign with advice and information.

In Europe...

The Brussels-based Association of European Consumers will be adopting the Food Irradiation Campaign's position statement on food irradiation. The organisation, of which the Food Commission is now a member, will work to ensure that consumer concerns about food irradiation are voiced at European legislative meetings concerning food standards.

For further details of the developing campaign, contact: The Food Irradiation Campaign, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF. Tel: 020 7837 9229; Fax: 020 7837 1441. email: irradiation@foodcomm.org.uk.

Junk is the easy choice

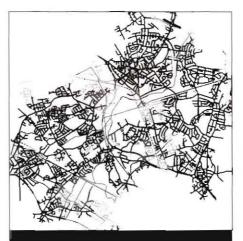
How near are you to a shop selling sweets, crisps, soft drinks or ice cream? And how near to one selling apples or bananas?

A recent mapping exercise in Sandwell, West Bromwich, demonstrated the sorry story: that the unhealthy choices are the easier choices to make.

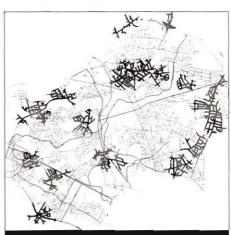
The researchers mapped all houses that were within 500 metres of a shop selling any type of food (see map A, right). They then remapped the area showing all houses within 500 metres of a shop selling fresh fruit and vegetables (map B). The first map included around 90% of households. The second map

 Measuring Access to Healthy Food in Sandwell. Details from Dave Rex, Sandwell Health Authority, tel: 0121 500 1630.

email: david.rex@sandwell-ha.wmids.nbs.uk.



Map A: Houses within 500 metres of a shop selling any type of food



Map B: Houses within 500 metres of a shop selling fresh fruit and vegetables

Food poverty: two new reports

Food poverty affects millions of people in the UK. For these people, trying to maintain a good diet can be a source of stress, anxiety and social exclusion. Physical and mental health can suffer as a result of the poor nourishment as well as the daily struggle to obtain food. Many people experiencing food poverty also report a sense of having failed, and of feeling they are to blame for their situation. Yet, far from blaming the individual, we should be looking for structural solutions to food poverty, which is caused by lack of money, transport, skills, knowledge or access - factors largely outside the control of the individual.

A report from Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, takes a new look at the policy developments in the last four years on food poverty, and asks how things have changed since the organisation's previous review, and what still needs to be done.

The review looks at over 120 proposals for tackling food poverty made by different groups and agencies. It includes ideas arising from communities experiencing food poverty, and puts the ideas in the context of the current debate around food poverty.

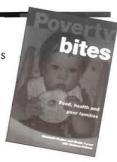
■ Food Poverty: Policy options for the new millennium is available for £20 (£10 to Food Poverty Network members) from Sustain, tel: 020 7837 1228. fax: 020 7837 1141; email: sustain@sustainweb.org.



Poverty Bites is a new book from the Child Poverty Action Group. In it, the authors look at current thinking on the determinants of our food choices, and the consequence of these choices in terms of nutrition and health inequalities. Like the Sustain review of policy options, the CPAG book reviews the various approaches to resolving food poverty through income-raising measures, through local

initiatives, and through national policies such as school meals and food benefit schemes.

■ Details from Child Poverty Action Group, tel: 020 7837 7979, email: staff@cpag.org.uk.



BADvertisement

'Pure' water with ten added ingredients

In a recent survey, 36% of consumers said that they thought Scotland has the purest natural mineral water out of all European countries. France came second (16%), followed by Wales, England and Ireland, Hardly surprising, then, that many bottles of mineral water are now sporting tartan packaging, pictures of misty Highland glens and Gaelic-sounding names such as 'Highland Spring', 'MacB' and 'Purely Scottish'.

Scottish Border Springs Ltd boasts of its 'Purely

Scottish' mineral water: 'Our water is filtered naturally through ancient sandstone creating crystal clear mineral water'... which the company then combines with the following ingredients: citric acid, flavouring, artificial

sweetener, acidity regulator, preservative, antioxidant, niacin, pantothenic acid, vitamin B6 and folic acid. Words such as 'pure', 'purely', 'natural' and 'naturally' appear ten times on the bottle. One for each added ingredient!

Tetley uses charity to make a health claim

Tetley Tea would have you believe that when it comes to eating for a healthy heart, drinking tea is the next best thing to eating a piece of fruit. Tetley says that tea is rich in antioxidants, 'just like fruit', and makes the point visually with a leaflet showing an orange that looks oh-so-similar to the cup of tea featured inside the leaflet (see right).

In the past few months, Tetley has also launched a partnership with the British Heart Foundation, which now appears prominently on packs of Tetley Tea bags. The British Heart Foundation says that this is simply a fundraising exercise - the charity will receive £200,000 from Tetley for research into heart health, plus the opportunity to promote its heart-healthy eating message to millions of tea drinkers.

The trouble is that Tetley has used the British Heart Foundation's logo as an opportunity to give the impression that drinking tea is good for your heart, without actually saying so. Advice from the British Heart Foundation, on the side of the pack, says 'antioxidants... can help maintain a healthy heart as

part of a healthy lifestyle' and Tetley says, on the top of the pack, 'Tetley Tea is a rich source of antioxidants.' Neither organisation makes the direct connection between the two statements, but the implication is there.

However, the British Heart Foundation's antioxidant advice is linked to fruit and vegetable consumption, not to an increased consumption of tea. Confused? Misled? Well, this was just the sort of implied health claim that got Shredded Wheat into legal trouble in 2000 - also in a marketing partnership with the British Heart Foundation. Summing up after a

court case, the magistrate said he thought a normal consumer would think that the combination of claims,

> heart images and wording would mean that Shredded Wheat was good for your heart.

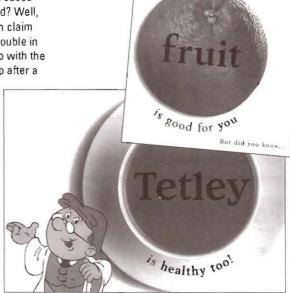
It's a pity Tetley isn't really committed to heart health. One week after we first picked up a packet of British Heart Foundationbranded tea bags. we came across the poster (left) showing you how Tetley suggests you drink

your daily cuppa - with a whopping great salty bacon butty in white bread.

Even if it gives money to charity, we don't think Tetley has its customers' best health interests at

Everyone knows

heart



Tetley claims that its tea is healthy, just like fruit - but then ignores its own healthy eating message by suggesting we drink the tea while munching on a not-so-healthy bacon butty!

Identical chickens

The American National Institute of Science and Technology is funding research into cloned chickens to support more efficient factory farming. A pharmaceutical research group and a medical technology organisation are joining forces to work out how to produce billions of chicken copies to fill battery farms across the world. These could be cloned from traditionally bred or genetically engineered chickens. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) expressed concern that the technology could be used to mass-produce fast-growing poultry with maximum meat or egg production without regard to the birds' health or welfare. Scientists warn that cloned flocks of chickens might be more vulnerable to disease.

Source: New Scientist

Pesticide salad dressing

Enjoy Good Value

£1.60

Farming minister Lord Whitty has announced increased inspection and prosecution of UK lettuce growers following growing evidence of the illegal use of pesticides.

The annual report of the government's Pesticide Residue Committee shows UKgrown lettuces to be among the worst for exceeding maximum residue levels. Illegal levels of pesticides were found in 8% of lettuces sampled. Five successful legal cases have been brought against growers for their illegal use of vinclozolin, a banned 'gender bender' endocrine-disrupting chemical.

Source: Environmental Health News

Watered-down meat content

A Food Standards Agency survey of restaurants and take-aways has found that some serve 'chicken that only contains 54% chicken'. This, said the FSA, was due to manufacturing techniques in which processing agents such as water, salts, sugars, flavourings and hydrolysed protein are added to bulk up the chicken breasts and increase their weight and sale price. In the worst case, a 100g portion of chicken breast was pumped up to 182q. Nearly half of the samples had a meat content between 5% and 26% less than that declared on the packaging. In addition, two chicken samples were found to be contaminated with pork.

Source: The Food Standards Agency

GM remote control

Signs of the spread of genetically engineered plant traits have been found in a remote area of Mexico. Maize plants from the Oaxaca region were tested for signs of two Monsanto products - GM Bt Maize, and GM Roundup Ready Maize. Five out of seven samples tested positive, despite a moratorium on growing GM maize since 1998. Friends of the Earth stated that The remote location of the wild maize strains suggests that cross-pollination may have taken place over considerable distances, which calls into question the rules on separation distances in the UK.

Source: Nature

Kellogg's flakey 'health' claims

In the previous edition of the Food Magazine (FM55), we reported on the high fat and sugar content of breakfast bars, comparing them to a healthier low-fat breakfast such as a bowl of Rice Krispies with semi-skimmed milk.

Twelve products featured in our survey were from Kellogg's, who make more cereal bar products than other manufacturers. As the market leader, Kellogg's cereal bar sales are worth £109 million. More than four million bars are sold every month.

Kellogg's responded to our report, saying 'cereal and milk bars have significantly less fat and sugar than other snack options'. In fact, our survey showed that products such as a Kellogg's Coco Pops Cereal & Milk Bar have more calories from sugar than you would find in milk chocolate (a CocoPops bar has 50% sugary calories against chocolate's 42%).

Kellogg's also said that that their breakfast bars 'are a snack option' and were not marketed as a healthy breakfast replacement.

So how does Kellogg's explain its advertisement (see right) for 'healthy' cereal

Among the products featured is Kellogg's Frosties Cereal & Milk Bar, which contains the most saturated fat of any bar that we examined. Nearly one third of its calories come from saturated fat.

The Special K bar in this advertisement wears a fetching tape measure to imply that this could be a suitable snack for slimmers. Yet one Special K bar has more calories than a large apple (weight for weight, it has over seven times as many calories). Why? Because a Special K bar is 40% sugar.

Yet Kelloog's describes Special K bars, Nutrigrain, Nutri-grain Elevenses, Frosties Cereal & Milk Bars and Rice Krispies Chocolate Caramel Squares as 'five healthy snacking ranges'.

This Kellogg's advertisement (right) appeared in a special advertising supplement of The Grocer magazine, designed to persuade shopkeepers to stock products for customers who are increasingly demanding healthier options. But are they getting them? We think



Most cereal bars contain pesticides

Pesticide residues have been found in 64% of cereal bars tested as part of a survey for the government's Pesticides Residue Committee.

The survey, published in December, examined 45 cereal bars and showed that many, such as Kellogg's Nutri-Grain bars, Mars Tracker bars and one sample of New Yorker Breakfast Bars, contained residues of the pesticide chlormequat, which at high levels can give toddlers a stomach ache. One sample of Kellogg's Nutri-Grain

Elevenses was found to contain propargite, a pesticide used against mites, and the subject of restricted use because of its hormone-disrupting and potential carcinogenic effects.

One sample of Sultana & Honey Break, manufactured by Jordans, contained residues of an organophosphate, chlorpyrifos. This is a neurotoxin that is subject to severe restrictions in the US, and is listed by the German Federal Environment Agency as a potential hormone disrupter.

Over-priced vitamins

The European Commission has imposed record fines on eight vitamin-pill companies which were found to have been operating secret market-sharing and price-fixing cartels throughout the 1990s, resulting in over-priced vitamins and other supplements. The companies were fined more than £526m, with Swissbased pharmaceutical company Hoffman-La Roche taking the biggest hit at £284m for being involved with 12 separate cartels. The European Commission criticised the companies for unfair trade practices.

Source: British Medical Journal

Less salt, please!

The Chief Medical Officer, in his recent report on blood pressure, has endorsed recommendations for reducing salt in the whole of the UK population to 6 grams per day. Current intake is around an average of 10-12 grams per day. The campaign group CASH (Consensus Action on Salt and Health) says manufacturers of processed foods should now reduce salt in their products, since processed food accounts for 70-80% of all salt intake.

Contact CASH on 020 8725 2409; fax: 020 8725 2959; email: cash@sghms.ac.uk.

BADvertisement

Despite the prolific pictures of oranges on Del Monte's Fruit Burst Juice Drink, this product is only 9.6% fruit juice. The line on the picture illustrates just what 9.6% looks like. Judge for yourself whether this product matches up to Del Monte's claim of 'Bursting with fruitiness'.



Slimming scams

Slimming companies are making claims on the internet that would be condemned if they put them into print.

hile most of us are rightly sceptical about the exaggerated claims made for slimming pills and potions, there are vulnerable people who lack the knowledge to sift bad claims from good. Some people are so desperate for a solution to their weight problem that the claims for slimming products may prove irresistible.

Such vulnerable people include teenagers and young women who are obsessed with body image, trained by the media into thinking that super-thin is beautiful. Many will be too easily impressed by endorsements from famous stars, by pseudo-scientific statements of efficacy, and by fantastical claims for quick weight loss in record time.

But while exaggerated claims in newspapers, magazines and leaflets are subject to codes of practice, the same (or worse) claims published on internet will go unregulated, and vulnerable people are left unprotected.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has long recognised that claims for slimming products pose special problems. In some cases, people's health may even be put at risk by companies encouraging them to selfdiagnose illness rather than seek proper medical attention.

The ASA, in accordance with an Advertising Code* that prohibits misleading claims and exaggeration, regulates adverts published in newspapers, magazines and leaflets, with special restrictions on adverts for slimming products (see page 9, bottom).

However, adverts published on the internet are a grey area. The Code applies to electronic as well as printed material, including 'nonbroadcast electronic media', but the ASA has told the Food Commission that it does not intend to investigate complaints against company-based internet sites promoting

products, even when these clearly break the Code.

This weakness in the controls on slimming adverts has been exploited by manufacturers. If you enter a commercial web site you should be aware that what you are reading may not be legal, decent, honest or true, and that no one is checking the facts. Indeed, the material may clearly violate specific requirements of the Code - but the only UK body capable of acting on this has said it will do nothing. How bad is the situation? We looked at slimming adverts in women's magazines, selected some commonly advertised products and then looked up the manufacturers on the internet to see what their web site said. We checked whether statements on their web sites complied with the Code requirements, or whether there was a cause for complaint.

* British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion, Committee of Advertising Practice, c/o The Advertising Standards Authority, 2 Torrington Place, London WC1E 7HW

Research: Alison Books



Thermokick

'Bad health, illness, inactivity or years of dieting can cause a lazy thyroid...' states the web site www.maximuscle.com.

'Thermokick is a potent formula, using the Indian herb Gugglesterone, which has excellent research showing how it can restore the normal functions of thyroid, by increasing T3 and T4 levels, the metabolic hormones, responsible for speeding up the fat burning process... shifting stubborn fat once and for all...

'A double-blind study found that just four of these ingredients in less dosages than in Thermokick decreased fat by 9.4lbs and as opposed to 1.9lbs in a placebo group in just 6 weeks - 400% more effective than diet alone!"

The Code states that adverts should not contain general claims that precise amounts of weight can be lost within a stated period. The website gives no references for the double blind study. The claim that the ingredients 'can restore the normal functions of the thyroid' could be a medicinal claim, requiring the product to have a Medicinal Licence, of which no mention is made on the site. If you suffer from poor thyroid function - a condition called hypothyroidism - you should consult your doctor instead of taking matters into your own hands.



Fattack

The web site www.maximuscle.com also claims 'painless dieting' to those who take Fattack, with an ingredient that the maker dubs Absorbitol which, it claims, helps the body to excrete fats.

'A recent double-blind placebo study found that the group, who followed a low calorie diet whilst taking Absorbitol, lost 17.6lbs in one month, compared to 4.4lb of the group that followed exactly the same regime, yet used a normal Chitosan supplement. To reduce your calories starting from tomorrow, just take 6-8 capsules daily, split over 2-3 meals. This should result in a calorie reduction of between 500-600 calories each day. Over a week, this will result in a healthy 1-3 lbs of lost body-fat."

Clinical studies show that Absorbitol, when compared with 24 other fibres and regular Chitosan, is 5 times more effective.'

The Code states that adverts should not contain general claims that precise amounts of weight can be lost within a stated period. No reference is cited for the double-blind placebo study on the company website. However, a reference is given to an evaluation of Chitosan for helping in weight loss, which actually found Chitosan to be ineffective. Absorbitol's effect, therefore, is presumably five times nothing!

on the web



Xenadrine

The website www.weightloss-diets.co.uk cites 'clinical studies' in which users of the product Xenadrine lost seven times as much weight as controls while undergoing minimal

exercise and despite 'no significant changes' in their eating habits during the study. The site also shows Stacey, who lost 33 lbs in six weeks, and Bill Leahy, who shed '28 lbs of body-fat' in just 21 days.

The Code states that advertisers must not give the impression that people can eat as much as they like and still lose weight, and states that

claims that individuals have lost exact amounts of weight should be compatible with good medical and nutritional practice, and should not be based on unrepresentative experiences. The website says (in small print) that the case studies are not typical results, but doesn't provide more typical cases.

Water Balance

The web site for the product Water Balance, www.jessup.co.uk, says that 'When slimming alone is not enough to keep you trim, Water Balance is a herbal remedy that can help maintain a normal body fluid balance and reduce water retention.' The site claims 'Water Balance is a UK licensed herbal medicine' but warns that it is

unsuitable for people under age 12.

The Code states that slimming adverts should not to be targeted at, or appeal to, people under 18.

Also, a licensed herbal medicine is not the same as a licensed medicine, and will not have undergone the same degree of clinical testing of a licensed medicine.



AppleSlim

AppleSlim, a product promoted at the web site www.goodnessdirect.com, is a combination of 'concentrated apple vinegar and B-vitamins'. The site lists AppleSlim under Slimming Products, and says that it 'influences fatty acid metabolism, helps keep the digestive system healthy and may help you feel less hungry for sweet, salty and fatty foods'.

> The Code states that vitamins do not contribute to weight loss. Is apple vinegar slimming? No reference to clinical trials is given, although the Code expects that claims should be backed 'by rigorous practical trials on people' and adverts should explain how the products work.

Advice on slimming products and food supplements

In the course of our trawl for slimming supplement web sites, we came upon a valuable antidote to the hype and the bias on company sites.

Run by a group of health workers, www.supplementwatch.com offers advice on the good, the bad and the ugly among supplements.

Although we cannot endorse their material, and cannot guarantee that the site is, as it claims, free of commercial bias, it does appear to offer a better source of information than you will find in most health food shops.

New complaints to the ASA about slimming advertisements are made every few weeks. For the latest batch of rulings, see page 10.

Slimming adverts: the rules for newspapers, magazines and leaflets... but not for web sites

Printed material that promotes slimming products should comply with the general terms of the British Code of Advertising, and in addition, several specific requirements, including the following:

Take

Water Balance and measure the

- Slimming adverts should not be directed at anyone under 18.
- Obesity requires medical attention and treatments should not be advertised to the public unless they are to be used under qualified supervision.
- Slimming adverts should not suggest that being underweight is desirable.
- Before claims are made that weight or inch loss can be achieved by expelling water or speeding up the metabolism, they must be

- substantiated with scientific evidence of the method's effect on people. Combining a diet with an unproven weight loss method does not justify making slimming claims for the method.
- Advertisers should be able to show that their diet plans are nutritionally wellbalanced. This will be assessed in relation to the kind of subjects who would be likely to be using them.
- Vitamins and minerals do not contribute to weight loss, but may be offered to slimmers as a safeguard against any shortfall when
- Adverts for diet aids should make clear how they work. Prominence must be given to the role of the diet and adverts should

- not give the impression that dieters cannot fail or can eat as much as they like and still lose weight.
- Adverts should not contain general claims that precise amounts of weight can be lost within a stated period or that weight can be lost from specific parts of the body. Claims that individuals have lost exact amounts of weight should be compatible with good medical and nutritional practice, should give details of the time period involved and should not be based on unrepresentative experiences.
- Source: British Codes of Advertising and Sales Promotion (section 51), October 1999.

advertising

Legal, decent, honest and true?

Over the past few months, successful complaints have been made against four more manufacturers purporting to sell pills and potions that could help slimmers lose weight.

Try it, it works!
In November, the Advertising
Standards Authority took action
against Health Laboratories of North America,
following almost 150 complaints about a
promotional mailing for a slimming product
that appeared to have been sent by a friend or
relative.

The Food Commission's director, Tim Lobstein, received one of the mailings. The advert arrived in an envelope with his address made to appear as if it had been typed by hand on an old-fashioned typewriter. Inside was an advert for a slimming product, seemingly torn from a newspaper. At the top of the page was a handwritten message: 'T, try it. It works!'

Besides being a gratuitous slur upon Tim's body image, it also made several claims that appeared to break the advertising code. The advertisement read: 'Teacher loses 70lbs. in only eight weeks... This is how over 1 million people have safely lost over 10 million pounds! NO calorie counting! NO hunger! Guaranteed to work for you too!'

Describing this friendly but fake endorsed advert as 'one of the most flagrant and deceitful breach of the rules we have ever seen', the ASA has issued an 'Ad Alert' to media owners in the UK – a warning not to distribute the mailing without taking prior advice. It is also investigating a similar mailing by the same company for a product claiming to provide pain relief.

Low-calorie fat?

A magazine advertisement for Goldenfields spray-on cooking oil claimed: 'Waist away ... with just one spray'. The manufacture, Associated Oil Packers, claimed that 'a 0.2ml spray is equal to just one calorie!' but scientific tests showed that it was not possible to activate the spray for a short enough time to dispense only 0.2ml of oil, nor to achieve a one-calorie serving. The ASA asked the advertisers to amend the advert for future use.

It's only natural

Planet Health got into trouble with the ASA over an advert for a miracle dieting pill with 'fat fighting power' called Lypofene ACV. Users, the manufacturer claimed, lost pound after pound of fat, averaging a 20lb loss in just four weeks without diets or caloriecounting. All this from a pill made from an extract of apples: 'There is nothing safer or more natural.'

Despite Planet Health's claim that its product was 'proven to work', it failed to respond to the ASA's enquiries and failed to substantiate the claims.

The ASA told the company that it should consult the Committee of Advertising Practice before advertising again.

Fat-burning fantasy
The advertiser of Super Fat Burner slimming pills was criticised by the ASA for failing to submit evidence to substantiate its claims.

The press advert read 'Lose 3-6lbs per week. Going to a party & need to get into that special outfit? Our Super Fat Burner tablets are totally naturally made from Herb & Plant extracts and simply stimulate your body's natural system to work more efficiently, burning away those unwanted fat cells.'

CGS Distribution asserted that the product stimulated the body's natural metabolism, but did not send evidence to the ASA to support the claims and were told to check before advertising again.

BADvertisement

Top marks for honesty

We'd like to congratulate these confectionery manufacturers

for helping children to make the connection between eating too much sugar and dental decay. We can only suppose that the sugar toothbrushes were made to remind children to brush their teeth after eating them,

but we really don't agree that children's gums will have 'fun' if

they do eat these sweets.

Why do we include
Twix? Well, we're
giving Twix top marks
for honesty. In their
recent promotion
featuring the National
Society for the
Prevention of Cruelty
to Children, their
happy cartoon kiddies
had... no teeth!







food miles



Long-distance food transport wastes fuel and pollutes the atmosphere.

ong-distance transport of our food has doubled in the last 30 years, and globalisation is set to double the figure again as Asia and Latin America gain more affluent consumers. More than ever, our food supply relies on petroleum - for air and road freight particularly - with all the pollution, noise, accidents and declining oil reserves that inevitably follow.

This special three-page extract from the new report Eating Oil highlights the contribution that transport now makes to our daily dinners. The report shows that in many other ways, too, we are not only reaping the harvests of natural production, but eating up the world's natural capital too.

Transporting food long distances is energy inefficient. The report, published by Sustain and the Elm Farm Research Centre, shows that more energy is put into our food (in terms of non-renewable fossil fuels bringing the food from around the world) than we get out from the food itself (in the form of food calories). Flying carrots from South Africa, for example, will cost 66 calories in fuel for every single calorie of food energy.

In domestic terms, the fuel used to fly each bottle of New Zealand wine to the UK is equal to boiling a kettle 268 times. Every 500g punnet of strawberries flown from the USA uses the same energy as leaving a 100-watt light bulb burning for 4 days.

Trucking in Europe

Road transport of goods in the European Union (15 member states) has risen more than three-fold since 1970. Food and animal feed account for a 30% of all goods moved.

••	millions of tonne-kilometres	
1970	412	
1980	626	
1990	933	
1999	1318	

Long distance transport also emits carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas which adds to global warming. Driving to the supermarket is polluting enough, but the food miles flown by the basket of food a family typically buys in a week will lead to fifty times as much pollution and global warming as that car journey.

Fossil fuels create large amounts of carbon dioxide. For every litre of aviation fuel burnt, 2.5 kilograms of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere. Burning a litre of diesel fuel releases 2.7 kilograms of carbon dioxide.

The energy used in different forms of farming is also a significant contributor to fossil fuel consumption. Growing cabbages organically uses less than a third of the energy needed for conventionally grown cabbages. Organic dairy farming can use as little as one fifth the energy used by conventional dairy farming.

Eating Oil is published by Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming (tel: 020 7837 1228) and Elm Farm Research Centre (tel: 01488 658298). It costs £30 (£12 to individuals and non-profit organisations).

The cost of food

Every pack of food we buy has been transported to the shop. But some products burn more fuel, and create more carbon dioxide (CO₂) than others. Long distances, combined with high volume or weight, will create the greatest environmental burdens.

Product	Distance (km)	CO ² emission (kg)
Danish butter (500g)	1,200 (sea)	0.024
Spanish peppers (600g)	1,540 (road)	0.058
New Zealand wine (bottle)	22,990 (sea)	0.280
US Washington apples (2kg)	16,300 (sea)	0.320
Kenya mangetout (250g)	6,800 (air)	0.970
Guatemala broccoli (450g)	8,780 (air)	2.250
South African baby carrots (1kg)	9,622 (air)	5.480
New Zealand wine (bottle)	18,840 (air)	12.800



Eating Oil: Food supply

In the period between 1968 and 1998, international food trade increased by 184%, meaning more and longer food journeys by ship, road and air. With increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, the climate change consequences

Food miles by road

Up to 40% of all UK road freight is food. Over 98% of all movements of foodstuffs in the UK are by road. This uses 1.6 billion litres of fuel, resulting in 4.1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. Road transport also contributes to ill health through accidents and air pollution. The government estimates that between 12,000 and 24.000 people die prematurely every year as a result of exposure to air pollution, mainly from vehicle emissions.

From 1989 to 1999, roadfreight of food and drinks products increased by 90%, and travelled 51% further





The great food swap

Rather than importing what they cannot produce themselves, many countries appear to be 'swapping food'. In 1997, the UK imported 126 million litres of milk and exported 270 million litres.

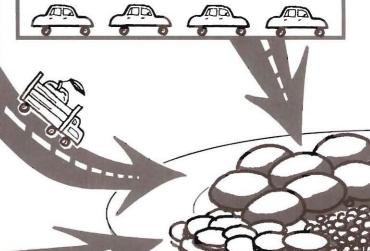
Transport of animals - food misery miles

In 1998, 12.3 million pigs, cattle and sheep were traded live within the EU. Despite animal welfare regulations, many animals die on route while others are in a pitiful state when they arrive at their destination, after hours in miserable conditions. Transporting live animals and meat products increases the risk of spreading disease,

such as Foot and Mouth, which resulted in an estimated loss of £9 billion to the UK economy, with over four million animals being slaughtered.

Going shopping

We are driving further to shop, and more frequently, including for our food. Between 1985/86 and 1996/98 average distances increased 57% (from 14 to 22 kilometres) and from 1.68 to 2.42 times a week. Supermarket planners calculate that people will drive up to 35 kilometres, and back, just to go shopping.





Farm diversity

We now rely on just a few species of plants and animals to provide most of our food. More than 700 breeds of farm animals have become extinct and 32% are under threat.

Two-thirds of oil reserves lie in the Middle East, and concerns remain that the political situation could mean an abrupt increase in price or shortfall in sup-

ply. Since 1973 there have been oil crises in 1980, 1991 and 2000, when oil prices doubled or trebled, always due to events in the Middle East.

The full report, Eating Oil, is published by Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, tel: 020 7837 1228, and Elm Farm Research Co

in a changing climate

could be catastrophic. The 1990s was the warmest decade, globally, since instrument records began (in 1861). Droughts, floods, rising sea levels and ecological disasters are predicted to increase in frequency and spread. We need act now to curb climate change.

Food packaging

Most of the 80 million food and drinks cans we use every day are not recycled, but buried in increasingly scarce landfill sites. We use 12 billion plastic carrier bags every year, (an average of 323 per household). Despite the potential to recycle or compost around 70% of household waste, the UK's current recycling rate is only around 9%.

Food miles by air

Some types of food will always have to be imported, but some forms of freight transport are much less environmentally damaging than others. Shipping is one of the best options, since road transport generates six times more CO² and

airfreight 50 times more. Despite aviation causing more environmental damage than road transport, there is no tax on aviation fuel. In November 2000, a motorist paid 80p for a litre for fuel. Airlines paid 18p.

Agricultural inputs

Farm machinery, fertilisers, pesticides and feed all require huge infusions of energy, mainly in the form of fossil fuels. Trade in pesticides increased by 160% and and fertiliser use increased by 18% between 1980 and 1998. The manufacture of nitrogen fertilisers is particularly energy intensive, which itself increases greenhouse gas emissions.

Food quality

The nutritional value of food has reduced due to a longer time between harvesting and eating, as food supply chains extend. Some nutrient losses, in particular vitamin C. vitamin A. riboflavin, folate and vitamin E, will occur even with excellent storage conditions.

Graphics: Kath Dalmeny, Joe Short and Angela Paxton

Organic food and farming

Organic food uses less energy in production than non-organic food. Non-organic milk, for example, needs five times more energy per cow than organic. But because 75% of the organic food we consume is imported, we cancel out one of the key environmental benefits of organic food. When organic produce is imported by plane from New Zealand, the transport energy consumption is 235 times greater than the energy savings of organic production.

drapines. Ratir banneny, see short and Angela Faxton

Poorer countries in the South are encouraged to grow food for export, but world prices for these cash crops have fallen by 50% over the past 20 years. A UN report

on the world's 48 poorest countries shows that although these countries have opened up their economies, they have been driven deeper into poverty.

re, tel: 01488 658298. It costs £15 (£12 to individuals and non-profit organisations). These pages can be photocopied for educational purposes.

Food in schools – the chips are down

In too many schools, for too many years, classroom teaching on food and school dinner menus have contradicted each other. Now, argues Joe Harvey, we have an opportunity to integrate nutrition and food into a whole school policy.

hree years ago David Blunkett
announced policies to secure the future
of the school meals service and
upgrade its quality. Today we are seeing the
implementation of major changes to that
service – the most radical since 1980 (when
nutritional standards and the requirement for
Local Education Authorities to supply a paid
meals service were removed).

New measures coming in now include:

Minimum nutritional standards

These have been established, taking effect from April 1st this year. Though not as rigorous as some would like, they do require a balance and variety to be available on all menus, and take children's tastes into account.

A duty to provide a meals service

All authorities must provide school dinners. Without this duty, there is little doubt that the concept of a universal school meals service would have disappeared rapidly over the next few years as the trickle of local authorities opting out has been growing to a flood.

■ The delegation of school meals budgets This means that all secondary schools now hold the budgets for the provision of meals. Primary and special schools can also have that responsibility if they request it.

Taken together, these initiatives offer exciting opportunities for schools to create a quality catering service that is in harmony with the healthy eating messages taught in the curriculum. The measures can be linked to the pastoral and welfare needs of pupils. Schools are now accountable for the range of services

they provide, and can no longer argue that they can do nothing about poor or inappropriate services.

Being responsible for the standards of catering, schools can promote their high standards as an attraction to parents and children. If a good service is not in evidence, the more perceptive may well ask themselves: What else about the school is not up to standard?

Food policy for a change

An increasing number of schools are adopting whole school policies on food and nutrition, often by forming a school nutrition action group (SNAG).

A SNAG is a school-based alliance of teachers, pupils and caterers, supported by health and education professionals. SNAGs not only ensure a holistic approach by looking at all of a school's food-related policies and activities, but they also involve young people in decision making about the services they use, itself an educational process for those involved.

SNAGs are more than a forum for airing views. They make proposals for change. The school's management will need to be involved if real changes are to take place.

There are many areas under headteacher control which directly affect the eating experience for pupils, such as:

- Timetabling of the lunch hour to allow for a civilised eating environment
- Administration of the meals service, including high quality supervisio;
- Ensuring that the curriculum messages and the food service are in tune and that the food service supports the pastoral care in the school

However there are other, perhaps stronger reasons for food and nutrition moving further up a school's list of priorities. Increasing evidence shows very positive links between children who are well-fed and improvements in:

- Learning
- Pupil attendance
- Pupil behaviour
- Marketing the school in the community



Td rather have double veg than double maths'

Time to invest

Having transferred accountability, the government needs to indulge in a little 'levelling of playing fields'.

Twenty years of savage under-investment means that many school kitchens and dining areas are in serious disrepair. Catering equipment may be totally inadequate to meet the demands of new practices — plenty of capacity to deep-fat fry, but little or none to grill or bake.

Local Education Authorities (LEAs) who took advantage of deregulation in 1980 to destroy the universal entitlement to a paid meals service and strip out their school kitchens now leave those schools with a major problem – they have a 'duty to provide' but none of the necessary resources to do so.

So it is essential that money is made available to bring the worst schools up to an acceptable standard so they can meet the new statutory requirements.

Free school dinners

Free school meals are a crucial benefit to those families entitled to them, yet there is a disturbing gap – typically 20% – between entitlement to a free school meal and take-up, and the gap widens among older children. Although stigma, sometimes exacerbated by

opinion

insensitive administration, is certainly one cause of this, others shown as significant by pupil surveys are the quality of the food, the eating environment, and customer service.

There may now be minimum nutritional standards, but as yet there are no minimum standards for the value of a free school meal. The notional value can vary widely from as little as 85p to as much as £1.50.

There are a number of reasons to argue for further change:

- The value of a statutory benefit should be the same for all families.
- Without the imposition of a clear minimum standard the present fluctuations are likely to get worse.
- Variance of cost results in similar variance in meal quality. Meal quality is a key reason for low uptake, especially among older children.
- For many schools in deprived areas, the majority of meals served are free and thus set a poor quality standard for the whole service.

To provide a two-course meal and a drink of acceptable quality the government needs to regulate for a minimum value of a free school meal at: £1.50 for secondary schools and £1.30 for primary schools.

Water, water, everywhere...

It is the shameful truth that the majority of our schools have a lack of facilities for offering access for children to drinking water. It is worse than Dickensian.

- Well over half of all pupils must put their mouths around a tap in the toilets or drink from cupped hands. How many of their teachers or parents would tolerate such conditions in their workplace?
- Most schools forbid water bottles in the classroom and forbid a child to leave a lesson for a drink.
- Almost 10% of schools have no drinking facilities at all.

Access to palatable drinking water is a basic human right and the government must move quickly to ensure our schools supply this simple but vital resource.

The role of Ofsted

There is one other crucial obligation for the government to address. The National Healthy Schools Standards programme with 'whole school approaches' and 'inclusion' as key components, emphasises the importance of connecting the curriculum, the pastoral care system and the school food service. It is essential that Ofsted check that such policies are in place as a standard element of their inspections.

Bringing in Ofsted will:

- Set a universal level of expectation for headteachers and governing bodies to address.
- Make it clear that the definition of a successful school is wider than the league tables of SATs results and GCSEs grade A-C.



'Sorry love, if you want water with your meal it will cost another 60 pence.'

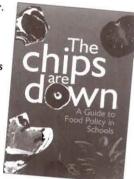
Next steps

The government initiatives on food and nutrition in schools were timely and are to be applauded. However, they will not achieve widespread benefit (and may well cause some real hardship) unless they are tidied up. With a modicum of additional regulation and some robust indication of the importance they attach to this agenda, much more will be achieved.

Joe Harvey is the Director of the Health Education Trust and editor of the School Nutrition Action Groups

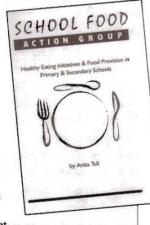
(SNAGs) Newsletter.

The Chips Are Down: A guide to food policy in schools is available for £15 from The Food Commission, see Marketplace on page 17 for further details.



A review of Healthy eating initiatives and food provision in primary and secondary schools has

been published by the Common Cause Cooperative. Drawing on a survey of over 100 UK schools, and four detailed casestudies of self-managed schools, the publication gives a thorough and hands-on account



of the ways healthy eating is being promoted in schools around the country. It reports on projects such as catering initiatives, incentive schemes, breakfast clubs, healthy tuck shops, vending machines and food co-ops, and includes recommendations from the schools involved about practical ways to implement improvements in children's nutrition through a variety of approaches. The report costs £15, and is available from: Common Cause Co-operative, The Green Room, 20 North Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2PE. Email: comcause@commoncause.fsnet.co.uk.

marketplace



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 how the fast food industry is transforming not only our diet but our landscape, economy, workforce and culture. Often amusing, sometimes scary, and always fascinating reading. £9.99 (p&p is free).



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 bene-

> > fits and considers the safety, regulatory and trade issues. £10.00 inc p&p.



Back issues of the Food Magazine

Biotech

Back issues usually cost £3.50 each but we're selling a full set of available issues (approx. seventeen 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, 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 food issues such as 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.

Poor Expectations 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 pap.

Children's Nutrition Action Plan

The Food Commission's action plan details what UK children are eating and the health problems that are likely to arise as a result of their diet. The action plan maps the measures advocated by governmental and non-governmental organisations to bring about change, and highlights key policies that could make a real difference to children's health and well-being. £10.00 (pap is free).

Posters: Genetically Modified Foods, Children's Food, Food Labelling & 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 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	0
Fast Food Nation	£9.99	0
Children's Nutrition Action Plan	£10.00	0
Full set of available back issues		
of the Food Magazine.	£30.00	0
The Chips are Down	£15.00	0
The Shopper's Guide to Organic Food	£8.99	\circ
The Nursery Food Book - 2nd edition	£13.99	0 0 0
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Poster – Genetically Modified Foods	£2.50	0
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books



The Edible Container Garden: Fresh food from tiny spaces

Michael Guerra, Gaia Books Ltd, 2001, ISBN 18 5675 0892, £11.99.

If your garden space is a balcony, a roof garden or a window sill, this

inspiring book is stuffed full of ideas to help you grow food in small spaces. Michael Guerra estimates that for a healthy crop of herbs, vegetables, soft fruits and salad, you should only have to put in about four hours of work a week (although from the look of some of the projects, you'll also need good DIY skills!)

The book contains charts showing handy information such as which depths of pot different plants will thrive in, a list of edible flowers to brighten up your salad, and good companion plants to attract insect predators and deter others, to help you avoid using chemical pesticides.

This is an excellent reference book and is full of lovely colour photographs to inspire you into getting a pot, some soil and some seeds and setting to work.

The Tomato in America

GARDEN

Early history, culture and cookery, University of Illinois Press, 1325 South Oak Street,

Champaign, IL 61820, USA. [www.press.uillinois.edu], 2001, ISBN 0 252 07009 7, £11.00.

The study of foods has often proved to be a rich source of material for economic and cultural historians, and this book shows that

tomatoes are no exception. In this tasty tome, US historian Andrew Smith from the University of Illinois examines how rapidly a new food can become one of the mainstays of a nation's diet.

The story starts with the introduction of a strange red vegetable-like fruit into America in the early 1800s which, some believed, had to be boiled for three hours to destroy its poisons. At first, a few creative individuals found novel uses for tomatoes. Did you know, for instance, that if you rub a green tomato vine on your bedstead you could ward off bedbugs? Or that consuming a chemical extract of tomatoes in a special pill could make you 'much less liable to an attack of cholera'? Luckily, within a decade or so, Americans had found more familiar uses, in a wave of what



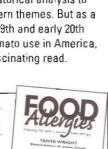
Smith calls 'tomato mania', with a proliferation of tomato-centred cookbooks, gardening and seed catalogues, medical journals and recipes in women's magazines (a nice touch is that some of these recipes from the early 19th century are included in the back of the book), setting the scene for tomatoes to become one of the most popular foods in America. By the end of the 20th century, Americans devoured more than 12 million tons of tomatoes annually - that's about 88 pounds each, in fresh and processed form.

A final chapter brings the tomato history into the modern age, mentioning genetically engineered tomatoes and the recognition of tomatoes as a keystone of modern nutrition policy. It's a shame that Smith didn't take more time to apply his detailed historical analysis to these modern themes. But as a history of 19th and early 20th century tomato use in America, this is a fascinating read.

Protect or Plunder?

Understanding intellectual property rights. V Shiva, a Global Issues Title from Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, 2002, £9.99.

Veteran environmental and indigenous-rights campaigner Vandana Shiva holds forth in this thought-provoking book on a critical issue of our time intellectual property rights. Written in a lively style interweaving evidence with analysis and opinion, Shiva finds a focus for her obvious ire in the patenting of seeds, especially those grown for food and medicine. Arguing that the ownership of such common resources is ethically suspect and an extension of an imperialist paradigm, she goes on to rip apart the 'myths' of modern economics that would like to paint intellectual property rights as a foundation stone of human creativity and progress. The thrust of the argument isn't new, and anyone familiar with Vandana Shiva's work will not be surprised by her conclusions. But what this book does do is draw the arguments into a coherent and concise form, infused with life by the inclusion of stories and examples illustrating the profitmaking madness that has beset our species. This is a book to set policy makers and activists on track in protecting long-term human health, the earth's resources and the age-old knowledge of people around the world.



Food Allergies: Enjoying life with a severe food allergy

T Wright, Class Health Publishing, [www.class.co.uk], ISBN 185959 039 X, £14.99. Tel: 01752 202301

Written by a State Registered Dietitian working at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, this book is a level-headed guide to how to enjoy life if you have allergic reactions to certain foods. Warning that taking advice from some poorly qualified nutritionists could mean severely restricted food choices for yourself and your family, the book explores ways to seek out healthy and tasty foods by

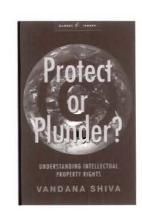
following some simple rules when buying and preparing food. There's also a useful section on allergy prevention when weaning infants.

Tanya Wright's message is: Don't stop enjoying good food just because you're worried about having an allergic reaction.

Drawing upon her own experience of suffering from a severe allergy to milk and eggs, she offers advice on how to read food labels (including lists of brand-name items you can seek out or should avoid), what to look out for in restaurants and when

you're on holiday, and who to speak to for reliable advice

when problems occur. An extensive list of contact details at the back of the book will help you explore the subject further, and find manufacturers that make food without using ingredients that cause common adverse reactions. This is thorough and comforting read for those who need to think carefully about what they eat.



More book reviews on page 19

smart alex

Alex asks... about fish

ne lunchtime, Alex was eating fish fingers at his grandma's house neor the seaside. As he munched, he gazed at his grandma's goldfish swimming round and round in its bowl, and began to wonder why the goldfish didn't have fishy fingers...

Slipping into a daydream, Alex thought he saw the goldfish lift his head out of the water and say, 'I have thousands of cousins in the wild, but not as many as there used to be. You should

find out more... You could help us survive.

Alex finished his lunch ond wandered down to the busy seafront. 'This is a seaside town,' he thought. 'There must be someone who can tell me about fish.'

Alex saw a small fishing boat coming in from the sea with nets of shining fish, slipping and sliding and slithering over one another. 'They don't look like fish fingers, thought Alex. 'None of them have orange crunchy skins."

'These are herring and cod from the North Atlantic Sea, said one of the fishermen. 'Our town used to be famous for its herring and cod. Not any more - this is a very small catch.'



With a great 'Too-oo-oo-oot!!' a huge trawler drove past with fishing nets trailing behind it, followed by a cloud of screaming seagulls. The fisherman looked cross. 'That's why there are hardly any

fish left, he said. See those nets? They drag along the bottom of

the sea and gather up every living thing, leaving the sea bed like a desert

'Those trawlers take too many fish so not enough are left to breed next year. They

leave nothing for the fish or other creatures to eat, and kill many creatures they don't even want to catch,' said the fisherman sadly. 'It's like destroying a whole forest, only nobody sees it happening.

Alex watched as men in bright plastic suits used a crane to move enormous boxes onto a lorry. 'What's in the boxes?' asked Alex. 'Hundreds of tonnes of cod,' said the fisherman. 'They're going to the fish-finger factory."

'Perhaps I shouldn't eat fish fingers.' said Alex, 'if this trawling is so bad for the fish and the fishermen, and for all those sea creatures."

'Then what would happen to the other fishing people and to this town?' said the fisherman. We could carry on catching fish and making a good living, if we did it more carefully. And eating fish is good for your health - just ask my friend the Professar. She's usually down at the beach."

You're quite right, said the Professor, who Alex found taking off her shoes and socks and rolling up her trousers. Your brain needs to be quick and flexible to send complicated signals to control your body and help you to think. Eating the oils in things like seeds and fish (called very long chain polyunsat-

> urated fatty acids) helps keep your brain healthy and alert.

> > Wading into a pool, the Professor pointed to shellfish on the rocks. 'I believe that millions of years ago, people's

brains started getting cleverer when the people lived by the sea and ate lots of fish and shellfish, said the Professor. 'What could be easier than wandering down to the shore and picking up a handful of brain food?'

Alex felt confused. 'So I should eat fish... and I shouldn't,' he thought. He started to daydream again. In his mind, he could see a TV show, but the contestant was a clever-looking cod, and the host was the Professor.

The Professor said: 'Why are fish stocks so low? Is it: A: The creatures fish eat are killed by the sea-bed trawlers:



more books



B: Not enough little fish are left to breed for next year;

C: Global warming makes the sea too warm; or

D: Too many fish are being caught?' The Fish said: 'A, B, C and D: All of them!

The Professor: 'Correct.'

The Professor: 'Why do humans carry on fishing? Is it because.

A: Fish tastes delicious;

B: Fish is good for us, and health experts says we should eat more;

C: People make their living from fishing; or

D: We haven't thought enough about helping fish survive into the future." The Fish: 'A, B, C and D: All of them!'

The Professor: 'Correct.'

The Professor: 'Fish, your final question. What should we do about this problem? The Fish: 'I don't know. Can I call a friend? I'd like to call Alex!"

As the daydream faded, Alex had an idea. 'That's it!' he thought. 'If we humans want to stay healthy, we should make sure that the fish stay healthy too. I could make sure I only get fish from someone who doesn't trawl along the sea bed, and who leaves

enough fish for next year. Hurrying home, he thought, 'I bet there's a telephone number on that fishfinger box. I'm going to call the makers and tell them to take more care about how

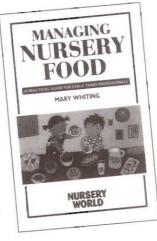
they catch their fish!

Managing Nursery Food

A practical guide for early years professionals. M Whiting, Nursery World [www.nurseryworld.com), 2001, ISBN 1841220159, £9.99.

This friendly and accessible book is packed with information and ideas for nurseries planning the provision of food for young children. Containing a summary of the current state of children's nutrition, and a cautionary note on the poor quality of processed products sold as children's foods, it demonstrates clearly why nursery organisers should take seriously their influential role in developing children's tastes and relationship with food. As Mary Whiting points out, healthy food provision shouldn't be seen simply as a legal duty, but also as an opportunity to help children take pleasure in food and eating together, for the benefit of their long-term health and enjoyment. She includes many

suggestions for how to plan, cook and serve healthy foods in an attractive eating environment. This is backed up with detailed charts of foods that contain essential nutrients, and what vitamin and mineral



requirements apply for different ages of children. The book also contains helpful items such as a sample nutrition policy and tips for how to deal with the numerous birthdays that take place throughout the nursery year. An excellent resource book for early years professionals.

Farmer Innovation in Africa

A source of inspiration for agricultural development, C Rheij and A Waters-Byer (eds), Earthscan [www.earthscan.co.uk], 2001, ISBN 1 85383 816 O. £18.95.

For people working to support sustainable and productive agriculture in the developing world, this book will surely, as the subtitle suggests, be a source of inspiration. It consists of a series of case studies of local agricultural projects in Africa, often developed by and for the very poorest of communities. Written

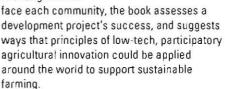
mainly by African agricultural researchers

and edited by Chris Rheij of the International Cooperation Centre in Amsterdam, and Ann Waters-Byer, an agricultural sociologist, the book reflects both technical and cultural considerations. At the heart of each project is a farmer or community with expertise and dedication, but also with problems to overcome:

poor water resources; barriers to women's participation in how

land is used; or a lack of good opportunities for communicating new agricultural ideas.

Setting each case study in a broader context of the economic. social and environmental challenges which



This is a specialist book for people who want to (or ought to) look below the surface of mainstream development theory to find a better way forward.



■ To find out how to buy fish from sustainable supplies, contact: The Marine Conservation Society, 9 Gloucester Road, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 5BU. Tel: 01989 566017; website: www.mcsuk.org.

■ Cartoons by Ben Nash. This cartoon strip may be photocopied and distributed for non-commercial purposes.

Loopy Label - Antirust and Trickly

Reader Simon Wright sent us this ingredients list from a pack of Spanish halva. It contained: 'Almond, sugars, honey, albumin, antirust (E-300) and trickly (E-471)'. Our additives dictionary

tells us that E-471 is Glyceryl monostearate. 'Trickly' sounds much more tasty. E-300 is vitamin C, so if you're ever in danger of rusting, then eat an orange!

INGREDIENTES: Almendra, azuçares, miel, albumina, antioxidante (E-330) y

INGREDIENTS: Almond, sugars, honey, albumin, antirust (E-330) and trickly

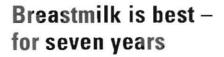
INGRÉDIENTS: Amande, sucres, miel, albumine, antioxydant (E-330)

BORNASH



What the doctor reads

The latest research from the medical journals



Research published last summer, suggesting that breastfeeding in infancy increased the risk of adult cardiovascular disease, has been strongly criticised in the medical press. The original paper had received extensive coverage in the popular press, potentially deterring women from choosing to breastfeed, and critics of the paper were anxious that this publicity was not merited by the quality of the research.

The measures of cardiovascular disease were based only on the elasticity of the bronchial artery, which cardiologists suggested was not a good indication of disease risk.

The statistical analyses were criticised for not giving sufficient information on which to judge the significance of the results, and the the fact that those not breastfed would have received unmodified dried cows' milk rather than modern formula milks.

An anthropologist also added that none of the participants appeared to have been breastfed sufficiently. Taking into account growth rates, tooth eruption, sexual maturation timing and adult body size, comparisons with other primates suggest that the optimal length of breastfeeding should be for at least two and a half years, and possibly as long as seven years. Young chimpanzees are breastfed for four to five years.

Other factors also need to be taken into account, including the composition of breastmilk - which is in turn determined by the types of fat eaten by the mother - as well as other predictors of disease such as the individual's diet and exercise patterns.

Dettwyler KA. et sqq. British Medical Journal, 323, 689-693, 22 Sept 2001.

Do brittle bones mean lost teeth?

Evidence that people who suffer from osteoporosis may also be at risk of losing their teeth has been strengthened following a survey showing that supplements of vitamin D and calcium can help prevent tooth loss among older people.

A three-year trial of vitamin D and calcium supplementation among over 100 older people, designed to note the effect of these nutrients on bone demineralisation, compared the rate of tooth loss during and after the trial. Before the trial had finished, 13% of those taking supplements had lost one or more teeth, compared with 27% of those taking placebo pills. During the 2-year follow-up, 40% of those with a high calcium intake lost one or more teeth, compared with 59% of those with a low calcium intake.

The results suggest that the extra nutrients, even in the later stages of adulthood, can belp ensure tooth retention. More work needs to be done to assess whether bone strength or the health of connective tissue or gums lies behind the link between low calcium and tooth loss.

Krall EA, et al, American Journal of Medicine, 111, 452-456 15 Det 2001

	Calcium per portion
Tofu (140g)	700mg
Tinned sardines/pilchards (100g	g) 550mg
Gruyere cheese (50g)	470mg
Cheddar cheese (50g)	360mg
Milk (half pint)	350mg
Edam cheese (50g)	330mg
Yogurt (150g carton)	250mg
Quiche (70g)	180mg
Tinned rice pudding (200g)	150mg
Leeks (200g)	150mg
Chickpeas (200g)	150mg
Tahini/sesame seeds (25g)	140mg
Dried figs (50g)	130mg
Muesli (60g, dry)	120mg
Milk chocolate (50g)	110mg
Baked beans (200g)	100mg
White bread (2 slices)	100mg
Broccoli (100g)	80mg

Heart attacks and body fats

A study of patients suffering invocardial infarctious (heart attacks) showed a lower level of long-chain n-3 fats in their body than in a control group, implying that fish consumption could help prevent heart attacks.

The researchers examined the type of fat stored as adipose tissue in 100 people aged 45-75 years who had experienced a first heart attack, and compared this to control patients. The heart attack patients had lower levels of n-3 long chain oils

than controls, and higher levels of trans fats, as well as slightly higher levels of n-6 and short-chain n-3 oils.

Trans fats are found in dairy foods and in artificially hardened vegetable fats used in processed fatty foods with a long shelflife, such as biscuits, cakes and margariues. As noted above, long-chain n-3 oils are largely found in oily fish.

Petersen JD et al, European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 54, 618-625, 2001.





calcium: 800-1000mg

'They only want me for my n-3 very long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids!'

Fishy looking

We often receive letters from readers asking about preventing irreversible visual impairment and blindness in older people. Many are confused about the link between eye problems and diet, and in particular the types of oils consumed. Some say they have heard that that fish oils are the best for protecting sight. Many say they have problems finding out more, especially since food labels don't usually carry this sort of information

A recent survey of patients with macular degeneration*, the commonest form of irreversible visual impairment may help to clarify the subject.

Compared with controls (patients with other eye diseases), people with macular degeneration tend to consume more fats and oils, including olive oil and margarine, and to smoke more, but the risk of the disease was lower in people who consume oils from the n-3 (or omega 3) group of oils, which includes fish oils and some vegetable oils such as rapeseed oil, provided they did not also consume a large amount of the n-6 group of oils (typically found in soy, sunflower and peanut oils).

Most polyunsaturated oils are either of the n-3 or n-6 form, and it has long been

shown that polyunsaturated oils are important in ensuring the health of certain vascular tissues, including those that form the blood vessels serving the retina, and other blood vessels serving brain and heart, as well as neural tissue.

It now appears that n-3 oils are the important ones in maintaining adequate eve functioning, and that n-6 oils compete with n-3 oils in the process of digestion and metabolism. Consuming fish oils and other n-3 oils while also consuming large quantities of n-6 oils may not have the beneficial effects that the n-3 oils can bring when they are consumed alone.

To help translate this advice into real foods, some good sources of n-3 oils are shown in the table (right).

Within the n-3 group, the longer molecules (long-chain fatty acids) are most valuable, and these are the ones found in fish. We can metabolise these longer molecules ourselves from the shorter chain n-3 oils, but the biochemical conversion is slow and inefficient. Thus, eating the oils in their longer-chain, fishy form is likely to have the most benefit.

Good sources of very long n-3 fatty acids Recommended intake: 1.5 grams per week

	grams per 100 gram portion	
Salmon (raw)	2.3	
Salmon (canned)	1.8	
Salmon (smoked)	1.1	
Sardine/pilchard (raw)	2.2	
Sardine/pilchard (canno in tomato sauce)	ed 1.7	
Tuna (raw)	1.6	
Tuna (canned in water)	0.3	
Herring (raw)	2.0	
Herring (kipper)	2.2	
Herring (pickled)	1.5	
Rainbow trout (raw)	1.2	
Crab (raw)	0.8	
Lobster (raw)	0.5	
Cod (raw)	0.3	
Coley (raw)	0.2	
Plaice (raw)	0.1	

Sources: McCance & Widdowson, US Dept Agriculture.

Lactose intolerance often ignored

A doctor who himself suffers from lactose intolerance - an inability to digest the milksugar lactose - believes that the condition affects far more people than is realised, and should be checked before tests are conducted for irritable bowel syndrome.

Few other mammals have milk in their diets after weaning. The gene for making the lactose-digesting enzyme, lactase, is presumably switched off in adulthood unless milk continues to be regularly consumed. Lactose intolerance affects an estimated 90% of people in Asia and Africa but is considered to be relatively rare in Britain. The disorder causes flatulence and diarrhoea, but avoiding lactose is surprisingly difficult. Milk products are used in many processed foods such as bread, biscuits and cakes, and lactose is used in tablets such as aspirin and paracetamol. If lactose intolerance is proved to be more common than currently realised, there will be significant implications for the dairy and processed food industries.

Harris MD, British Medical Journal, 323, 640, 15 September 2001.

BADvertisement

Hospital horrors

Visiting a friend in Torbay Hospital in Devon, one of our staff was

pleased that nutritional advice was a key part of the programme to help patients who'd suffered from heart attacks.

However, the hospital shop (Stringers) in the main reception area revealed an entirely different

approach. Stuffed with hundreds of varieties of sweets, crisps, salty snacks and chocolate, only three

tiny baskets of fruit were available for people wishing to buy healthy

> gifts for their convalescent friends.



think this is suitable food for patients in the adjacent cardiology and cancer wards?



^{*} Seddon et al, Archives of Opthalmology, 119, 1191-1199, August 2001.



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

Ads for health visitors

Obi Amadi writes (Letters, Oct/Dec 2001) to defend advertisements for artificial breastmilk substitutes in the professional journal for Health Visitors. These products supply a crude approximation of the nutrition of breastmilk (and do not supply the immune factors, health benefits for breastfeeding women, etc).

She points out that a maximum of 35% of the journal is advertising and that a maximum of 2/3rds of this is from artificial baby milk companies. So, ONLY 23% (or almost one

feedback

letters from our readers

quarter) of the journal can consist of artificial baby milk company adverts!

As a student researching the influence of regular visits to child health clinics on breastfeeding women, I have been looking at library copies of the journal from the last decade or so. What struck me forcibly when first seeing the journal is both how the ads dominate each issue, and also their placement. Almost every time there is an article on feeding babies (including articles promoting better breastfeeding support practice by Health Visitors) either on the page following or on one of the pages in the middle of the article is a full page advert for a breastmilk substitute. I have wondered if companies might even be offered this placement for increased payment! The effect is to undermine any independent information in the article with glossy promotion.

Obi Amadi states that the aim of accepting these ads is to let members know what information is available for parents. Some of the ads in the professional journals are not

allowed to be placed in magazines for the public, as this is restricted by law. Furthermore, having seen up to 20+% of each issue full of ads for breastmilk substitutes, I have managed to miss, in my searching through the journals, any article which discusses the marketing tactics used by companies to promote their products. Oo the readers understand that that is why the articles are thoughtfully included month after month? If they do look up the references supplied, are they also alerted to the fact that much of the research cited is paid for by the companies themselves?

The companies are credited with making the professional conference and the journal cheaper for members. But is this altruism? Or is it a tiny price for them to pay for continual access to the health professionals who provide a universal support service for new mothers - their target market?

Magda Sachs Breastfeeding Supporter, Lancashire

Tonic wind-up

I find your magazine really good to read especially the letters page where you manage to find answers to difficult questions.

But here's one to stump you. I bought a bottle of Sanatogen, the classic 'tonic' wine recently. As an alcoholic beverage it does not

need to list its ingredients, and indeed it doesn't, with one exception. On the front of the bottle there is some small print declaring 'Contains Sodium glycerophosphate'.

I have looked up sodium glycerophosphate in additives books - but it's not there. So what is it?

Geoff Quimbery, Cambridge

As you say, alcoholic beverages are exempt from the regulations requiring foods to list their ingredients, although there is some pressure to have this changed through EU legislation.

Like you, we can't find sodium glycerophosphate in the usual additive books, and it doesn't have an Enumber. Nor is it listed in popular volumes in the US as a food ingredient there, either. Nor is it in the usual industry trade directories as a normal constituent for food products. But, in the end, we did find some clues on the Internet.

You will like this:

- 1) Sodium glycerophosphate is, according to the rules on Environmental Health and Safety in the USA, a chemical 'approved for sewer disposal' provided it is completely dissolved in water (presumably Sanatogen will do for this purpose)
- 2) The chemical has been approved by the European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products as 'a source of phosphate in the treatment of calcium and phosphate metabolism' in cattle! Basically, it is a veterinary nutrient supplement, 'administered by injection'.
- 3) We phoned Matthew Clark Brands, makers of Sanatogen, who told us that the declaration was mainly intended to tell people that Sanatogen was not just wine,

but contained additional ingredients - in this case a source of phosphate.

Phosphate is a valuable nutrient, essential for bone structure. Phosphate deficiency is unknown in humans, according to MRC nutritionist Sheila Bingham of Cambridge University, although it is recognised in animals. Bingham comments in her book 'Food and Nutrition' that so-called tonics containing phosphorus 'are of dubious value' and that 'weight for weight most foods are better sources'. She adds, 'Many "tonics" rely on their alcohol content for any apparent improvement in morale.

SERA's Rally for a Sustainable Britain

(supported by Friends of the Earth, Groundwork and UNISON)

Saturday April 6th 2002 Westminster Central Hall

Speakers including: Robin Cook, Charles Secrett, Sara Parkin, etc.

(Workshops to include: food issues, energy, transport...)

More info available from the Socialist **Environment and Resources Association** SERAoffice@aol.com or 020 7263 7389

Contains: Sodium glycerophosphate 0.62% W/W The name 'Tonic Wine' does not imply health giving or medicinal properties

feedback

letters from our readers

Stock answers

I bought an Organic Sainbury's Chicken Casserole and was sorry to find that the small print listed 'non-organic chicken stock' as an ingredient. I've written to complain to Sainsbury's because I really feel that if the

stock does come from nonorganic chickens then they shouldn't be able to label the product as organic. Can you investigate?

J Parker, London SW

The law allows non-organic ingredients in organic foods, up to 5% off the product (ignoring added water – the largest ingredient in his product), so Sainsbury's are within the law. But the Soil Association standards (which are higher than the

legal minimum) forbid non-organic chicken stock in SA-certified foods, and as this product was SA certified there is definitely a problem here. The Soil Association has been alerted and will be chasing this up.



Secret drinkers

I have found a Pina Colada cocktail in a bottle, which says, 'A classic Caribbean cocktail with premium rum, pineapple juice and coconut flavouring,' but which offers no further details on its constituent parts. Aren't mixed drinks like this covered by the legislation that requires ingredient listing?

C Challenger, email

Yes, they are covered by the legislation, and that legislation makes a specific exemption for alcoholic beverages over 1.2% alcohol. So the Pina Colada, at 5.3%, is exempt.

According to the Co-op (CWS), it would be actually illegal to put an ingredients list on an alcoholic drink. The Co-op is campaigning to change the law, giving consumers the right to know, and have been producing their ownlabel wines with full ingredient listing. It's time the other producers followed suit.

Market makers

I read recently that we are buying less sugar than we used to and that we are buying more fruit and vegetables. This must be good news. Can we look forward to fewer fields of sugar beet and more apple orchards?

John M Poltyre, Exeter

Sadly not. Thanks largely to the Common Agriculture Policy, sugar producers have been well-rewarded for expanding their production, while fruit growers – especially in the UK – have received EC grants to grub up their orchards.

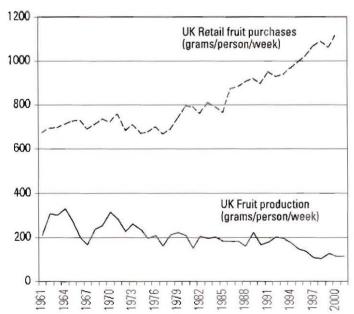
The graphs included below show how household purchases of sugar have indeed fallen, and purchases of fruit have risen. But UK sugar production has risen and our fruit production has fallen. So much for consumer power! So much for market-driven economies! The CAP has ridden roughshod across such notions.

In the case of fruit, the 'gap' between production and consumption is filled with imported produce. More than three-quarters of the apples and pears we buy are now imported.

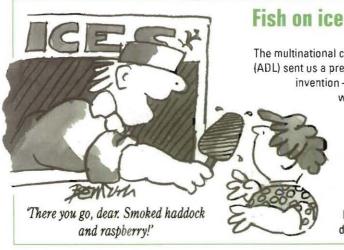
In the case of sugar, the extra sugar goes largely into processed foods: we are eating and drinking record quantities of soft drinks, confectionery, ice creams, desserts and sweetened breakfast cereals.

The demand gap: how the Common Agricultural Policy has boosted sugar production and decimated fruit production, despite consumer purchasing trends in the opposite direction









The multinational corporation Arthur O Little (ADL) sent us a press notice of their latest invention - reduced fat ice cream

with added fat.

The added fat is in fact n-3 fatty acids from fish, which we all should eat plenty of. AOL boast that they have now developed a technology which allows these smelly oils to be used in a sweet dessert. The technology

relies on 'reduced oxidation and fish flavour elimination'.

The reduced oxidation is, apparently, due to a process 'linked to the ice-cream's cold storage properties' (i.e. freezing). And the flavour elimination relies on masking: the 'technology' consisted of a taste panel. The panel found that 'vanilla/orange flavour works well in minimising the smell and taste associated with fish oil'.

Hmmm... That was last August, and we haven't seen the product yet.

One extra squeeze

The folk at biochemicals company OSM were kind enough to send us their latest press release. It promotes an enzyme they have dubbed FirmFruit, which breaks down pectin in tomatoes, they say, 'improving the viscosity and consistency of tomato sauces'.

They add that the bits that are left will be 'easy to identify' and this 'could allow reduced tomato usage per kilo'. Not so good for consumers then. But of course we could always check the contents list on the pack to see if FirmFruit has been used...

But we can't. Being a processing aid, the enzyme won't be in the final product, so it needn't be mentioned. As the press release says, the enzyme will 'improve the quality and appearance of processed tomato products without affecting the ingredients label'!

Computing the cost

Who dares to criticise the good intentions of the supermarket Tesco for their 'free computers for schools' promotions? Just shop with the caring, child-friendly company and you will be helping your local school to benefit from this valuable technology, feeding young minds, boosting the school's resources... the violins are unbearable.

We suspect that it is Tesco rather than the school that really gains, however.

The Consumers' Association has calculated how much shopping you must do to buy the school some equipment: For about £45,000-worth of shopping, Tesco's will donate a graphic scanner, costing about £80 retail and much less

with an educational discount. To get the school a single computer worth around £700 with discount, shoppers must spend nearly £220,000 in Tesco's stores.

Jobs for the boys

Much merriment before Xmas over where the new European Food Authority would be sited. Italy and Finland both claimed they deserved the new body, but in the absence of a decision the body will be in... Brussels!

A press release issued while no one was looking, noticed by a trade paper on January 2, said that 'for the time being ... the European Commission has already rented office space in Brussels' which of course is where the Commission itself is.

According to the news service AgraNet, Berlusconi claimed that Finland couldn't possibly host the EFA because 'the Finns don't even know what prosciutto is'. A Finnish daily paper then led with a headline 'Prosciutto is Ham - Is that enough for Berlusconi?'

The AgraNet report then let slip the most amazing fact of all. We trust it was a typing error - but knowing the European Commission it probably wasn't. They said 'Once operational, the EFA will have a budget of some 40 million Euro and will employ some 250 million people."

Sugar, good for some

A nice argument from the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Rome-based UN agency rasponsible for co-ordinating governmental agricultural initiatives around the world. In a feature article on their website, they ridicule the idea that sugar might contribute to weight gain, or diabetes, or hyperactivity, or might even spoil your appetite for nutrient-rich foods.

What's more, 'sugar is a tasty, low-cost energy source that helps make a variety of foods more palatable and desirable'.

And, they add, 'in many countries the sugar industry itself can make a valuable contribution to improved nutrition. This happens through the sugar industry's impact on economic development and income generation necessary to alleviate poverty and provide the social services needed to promote better nutrition for all.

No mention of the slave trade, then. But wait a minute. There is a terrible rumour that the nutrition department in the FAO, which produced this interesting defence of sugar, shares its offices with a non-governmental body by the name of the International Life Sciences Institute. Who funds this body? Coca-Cola and a host of other food industry interests.

Jammie Dodge

Under European proposals known as the 'breakfast directive', a new definition for 'jam' could have meant the end of the road for Jammie Dodger biscuits. The directive sets compositional criteria for any product that declares 'jam' on the label and bans the use of chemical flavourings in the jam. Unfortunately for manufacturers Burtons, Jammie Dodgers are filled with plum jam flavoured with

chemical raspberry flavour, so bye-bye Jammie Dodgers... However, fierce lobbying by British MEPs such as Conservative Theresa Villiers has caused the European Parliament to grant special exemption for jam-filled biscuits. Which means that these low-fruit, chemicalflavoured and coloured biscuits are now specially protected under European rules.

> Meanwhile, for anyone still wishing to consume such delights, a website competition caught our eye recently. At www.compaholics.co.uk you can Win your own weight in Jammie Dodgers!"

Is that your weight before or after you scoff 'em?

