

The FOOD MAGAZINE

Campaigning for safer, healthier food for all

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Government subsidises snack promotion

Tax-payers are subsidising snack foods to the tune of over £5 million per year through a government scheme supporting British food factories and food exports.

The money is paid to Food from Britain, an organisation set up in 1983 under a special act of parliament. The act guarantees a subsidy of around £5 million every year, which is used to run training courses, host conferences and promote market development for food companies that are based in the UK.

As a recipient of public money, Food from Britain's work might be expected to tally with government policy on diet and health. But a recent advertising campaign reveals that Food from Britain is using its public subsidy to promote processed fatty and sugary foods and soft drinks. A press release even boasts of the UK's position as 'kings of convenience', with 'added-value' products accounting for 64% of food exports.

As well as producers of mango chutney, jelly beans, chocolates and whisky, Food from Britain has assisted the company Dairy Crest to promote its fruit flavour Friji milkshakes that contain added sugar but no fruit. And Weetabix has received support for its Alpen Strawberry with Yogurt cereal bars, which are 10% fat, have sugar as the second ingredient and contain little more than 1% strawberry and 2.5% yogurt powder.

Food from Britain boasts in its annual report that it has helped such products become established in overseas markets. One case study shows that with Food from Britain's help, the Friji milkshake is now listed in 500 retail outlets in Holland. Another case study shows that Britvic has received advice and support from Food from Britain for an extensive marketing campaign in the Netherlands that included 'public relations, online media communications, in-store demonstrations, sampling and national television advertising'. The campaign promoted Robinson's Fruit Shoots juice drinks which contain as little as 10% real fruit juice.

Such projects, funded from the public purse, show that not only is Food from Britain paying little attention to the nation's health, it is also helping to export unhealthy dietary patterns to our overseas neighbours.



Tax-payers are unknowingly helping to promote fruit-free, sweetened drinks and fatty snack bars.



Children's menus flunk nutrition standards

Last summer, the Food Commission's Parents Jury expressed their dissatisfaction with children's menus on offer in cafés, restaurants, shops and service stations. They gave awards to outlets such as Garfunkels for its 'Nasty Nosh'; Wacky Warehouse for its 'Hopeless Holiday Food'; and Allders for an 'Unhealthy Shopping Break'.

Parents reported that it is very difficult to find healthy food for children when they are out shopping or taking a day trip – the usual fare is chicken nuggets with chips and beans.

Now a nutritional analysis of children's menus in cafés, restaurants and visitor attractions has confirmed parents' suspicions. Of 141 children's meals analysed and compared to the Caroline Walker Trust's Nutritional Guidelines for School Meals, not a single meal managed to meet the recommended quality.

■ For more details of this story, see page 8

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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Schools: a bad report

Just as schools closed for the summer break, two reports were published that gave school meals services a definite thumbs down. A study by school inspectors Ofsted and the Food Standards Agency found that primary schools did well in teaching the theory of healthy eating but let children down when it came to lunches and snacks sold by the school. In secondary schools, a report from the DfES found that nutritional advice is failing to alter children's eating habits, while 20% of schools failed to meet nutritional standards and 10% failed to provide vegetables or fruit on most days.

These reports came days after the government promised to halt the growth in child obesity by 2010 by ensuring that 'every school should be a healthy school'.

Indeed it should. But the philosophy sits uneasily next to another government initiative – the 'Business in the Community' policy which encourages greater participation by business in local institutions, such as schools. This leads to such anti-health measures as soft drinks in vending machines being sold to pay for school equipment, crisps packets being collected to help buy school books, and McDonald's vouchers being given as rewards for school attendance.

We need more than vague targets set for a date that's at least two general elections away. We need real targets now: Actual sales of fruit and vegetables in schools, actual removal of inducements to purchase unhealthy foods, and nutritional targets to be met by all school caterers in terms of actual products sold, not just made available to children. And we need a budget to back up the targets, so that schools no longer have to rely on selling unhealthy foods to pay for good equipment. And we need a monitoring body that checks these targets are being met, with powers to promote good practice to the benefit of all children.

* * *



The Food Commission was well-rewarded for its efforts providing evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Health. The Committee's report on obesity, published at the end of May, quoted the Food Commission and our work ten times and parts of the report looked like extracts from the *Food Magazine*!

The government must now make a formal response to the report, after which Parliament decides what further measures it should take. Watch this space.

Can the Food Commission help you?

- Are you planning research that deals with food or nutrition?
- Do you have a campaign that needs expert input on food and health matters?
- Do you need nutritional survey work to be undertaken?
- Do you need editorial support for a publication dealing with food, health and nutrition issues?

Contact Kath, Annie or Ian on 020 7837 2250 for more information or email: enquiries@foodcomm.org.uk

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Badvertisements!

This magazine takes no commercial advertising 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!

Additives research findings vindicated

Research showing that food additives can cause toddlers to have temper tantrums has finally been vindicated, over a year after it was brought to light by a *Food Magazine* investigation.

In October 2002 we reported on a government-funded study of the effects of additives, conducted by the UK's Asthma & Allergy Research Centre and the University of Southampton, involving 277 three-year-olds from the Isle of Wight.

When the toddlers consumed additive-laced drinks, parents reported behaviour such as 'interrupting', 'fiddling with objects', 'disturbing others', 'difficulty settling down to sleep', 'loss of concentration' and 'temper tantrums'. The researchers concluded that, *"Significant changes in children's hyperactive behaviour could be produced by the removal of colourings and additives from their diet."*

Southampton University paediatrician Professor John Warner said, *"You could halve the number of kids suffering the worst behavioural problems by cutting out additives. It would be good if people could accept that sweets and foods do not need to be brightly coloured to be attractive and taste nice."*

The study was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and inherited by the then newly-established Food Standards Agency. At the FSA, it had lain unpublished on a library shelf. When the *Food Magazine* revealed the striking findings of the study, the FSA fended off criticism by saying that they could not consider the research until it had been published in a scientific journal.

Over a year later, the study has appeared in the Archives of Disease in Childhood, a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

The additives implicated in the study are chemicals widely used in children's food products – the colourings Tartrazine E102, Sunset Yellow E110, Carmoisine E122 and Ponceau 4R E124; and the preservative Sodium Benzoate E211. The colourings are from the 'azo dye' group of chemicals derived from fabric dyes and have long been suspected of triggering behavioural problems in children. The preservative is widely used in soft drinks consumed by children.

The Food Commission will be writing to the Food Standards Agency requesting it to review its laissez-faire attitude to food additives, and to urge manufacturers to remove these non-essential chemicals from children's food.



Additives rot teeth

The tooth-rotting properties of soft drinks may be caused by additives, according to a study from the American Academy of General Dentistry.

Researchers exposed tooth samples to drinks such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Dr Pepper, Sprite, Canada Dry ginger ale, canned ice tea, black coffee and black tea, with tap water as a control. The study recorded loss of enamel when the teeth were soaked in these drinks over a period of 14 days.

Tap water, root beer, black tea and black coffee all showed minimal effects on enamel erosion, unlike the soft drinks. Diet and regular non-cola drinks and canned iced tea eroded enamel at a rate 30 times greater than black tea or black coffee.

The researchers suggested that flavouring additives 'such as malic, tartaric and other organic acids, which are more aggressive at eroding teeth' could contribute to the additional tooth-rotting effect.

■ **Dissolution of dental enamel in soft drinks, *General Dentistry*, published by the Academy of General Dentistry, July/August 2004**

Drinks link to obesity

New evidence also links soft drink consumption to obesity in children. Researchers working with 644 children in six primary schools in Dorset gave half of the children extra advice on cutting back on soft drinks.

By the end of the year-long study, overweight and obesity had increased by just 0.2 per cent in the group that received the advice. In the group that did not receive the advice, overweight and obesity had risen by nearly 8 per cent.

■ **Preventing childhood obesity by reducing consumption of carbonated drinks, published in the *BMJ*, 23 April 2004**

New child obesity figures

The UK government has released new data on child health, showing nearly 27% of children to be overweight or obese, as measured by internationally-defined criteria.

Based on the latest figures, calculations by the International Obesity TaskForce show that, of the 9.9m school children (age 5-17) in the UK, some 2.5m of children are overweight, including 0.6m obese. Looking at the trends from 1994 to 2002, the numbers are rising every year by an additional 178,000 overweight children, including 43,000 obese children.

■ See www.official-documents.co.uk/document/deps/doh/survey02/hcyp/hcyp31.htm

UK companies ignore formula marketing codes

The latest report from baby milk campaigners at the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) highlights the companies that continue to break the formula milk marketing codes across the world, including in the UK.

Despite assurances from formula manufacturers that they abide by the rules, IBFAN shows that Wyeth (SMA), Farleys and Numico (Milupa and Cow & Gate) have all been promoting their products using code-busting techniques, while retailers – including ASDA, Sainsbury's and Boots – have been supporting the baby-food companies with rule-breaking promotions within the shops.

Wyeth has been prosecuted for its 'cynical and deliberate breach of the regulations'. The company distributes pamphlets to mothers in clinics promoting a Wyeth helpline. This is despite the fact that the marketing code explicitly outlaws the practice of seeking direct contact with pregnant women and mothers.

However, prosecutions continue to be rare. IBFAN's report shows that other companies have flouted the rules with apparent immunity.

Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules, available from the IBFAN website [www.ibfan.org/english/pdfs/btr04.pdf].

Waiting for Ofcom

Calls for controls on advertising aimed at children have been deflected by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) onto the newly-formed advertising regulator Ofcom, which has been asked to examine whether a strengthening of the existing advertising codes should be considered.

In July 2002, DCMS Secretary of State Tessa Jowell told MP Debra Shipley that *'The establishment of Ofcom ... will require a wholesale review of the Codes governing advertising standards and practice.'* Last December Jowell formalised this with a letter to Ofcom asking for a review of current codes.

The omens looked bad when the issue was completely excluded from Ofcom's Annual Plan for April 2004-March 2005, published earlier this year. Things also appeared bad when a spokesperson said that the issue had been handed to an academic, Professor Sonia Livingstone, to look into. Was this another delaying tactic? Was she going to be a 'safe pair of hands' hired to come back with the right answers?

In 2001 Sonia Livingstone reviewed the dangers to children of online internet surfing and concluded that three measures were needed: more parental awareness and involvement in the issue; more joined up thinking between government, schools and home; and awards to children for Surfing Proficiency to show their internet literacy.

If Sonia Livingstone applies such ideas to TV advertising it would play directly into industry hands (blame the parents, stall, and let children vet their own TV).

Let us hope they come up with something better. Ofcom's consumer panel may want to play a role here – but again the omens are bad (see box below). Ofcom has promised that a draft document for consultation will be out before the summer break – i.e. by the time you read this *Food Magazine*. We will report on developments in future issues.

■ **Ofcom is currently consulting on its strategy and priorities for the promotion of media literacy. See details on the Ofcom website: www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/current/strategymedialit/**

Campaigners call for support for the Children's Food Bill

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming has recently launched its Children's Food Bill campaign in Parliament. The Bill challenges government to introduce regulations which will have a positive effect on children's diets, including measures to improve food quality, the composition of school meals, food education and cookery skills.

If the bill becomes law, it will also require the Food Standards Agency to specify criteria for unhealthy and healthy food, taking into account nutritional content and the presence of additives and contaminants. Using these definitions, companies would be prohibited from marketing unhealthy food to children. The Bill covers TV advertising as well as other forms of marketing, such as school vending machines. The government will be required to publish an annual plan to promote healthy foods to children.

The Food Commission was pleased to be invited to speak at the launch of the Children's Food Bill, alongside Debra Shipley, the MP who is championing the Bill and who has also supported the Parents Jury. The Food Commission is one of the 116 campaign supporters, which include the British Heart Foundation, Diabetes UK, the Association for the Study of Obesity and the World Cancer Research Fund.

A statement of support for the Children's Food Bill has been published in Parliament, known as 'Early Day Motion 1256'. To date, 159 MPs have signed up but more signatures are needed. To find out how you can help visit: www.childrensfoodbill.org.uk or call Charlie Powell on 020 7837 1228.

US breastmilk adverts withdrawn

An advertising campaign sponsored by the US government to promote breast feeding has been shelved following complaints by infant formula companies.

Commercials showed pregnant women undertaking dangerous and violent sports, with a message: 'You wouldn't risk your baby's health before it's born. Why start after?' and finish with a list of diseases more common among bottlefed babies. The ads were scheduled for release at the beginning of this year but have been shelved indefinitely after infant formula companies complained that the ads were inaccurate and too negative in tone.

But as a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics board on breastfeeding said, 'When you say "not breastfeeding is risky" you are saying that "using infant formula is risky," and that is true and they know it.'

■ **See pages 18 & 19 for a commentary on social marketing campaigns.**

Ofcom's consumer reps

Under Section 16 of the Communications Act 2003, Ofcom is required to consult with consumers, and it has duly set up a Consumer Panel. This is charged with furthering consumer interests.

But just who do they mean by consumers? Judging by the constitution of the Panel, the word 'consumer' means the sections of the industry that buy and sell communications – hardware, software, services, facilities, content and advertising. Ordinary folk hardly get a look-in.

The Consumer Panel

Azeem Azhar is a journalist and manager of several internet companies with experience running technical and communications companies.

Nainish Bapna is the head of a satellite TV channel (Pharmacy Channel) and was previously a director at technology company NCorp.

Colette Bowe (Panel Chair) is a fund management executive, sits on the board of several finance houses, and is Deputy Chair of Thames Water.

Fiona Ballantyne is director of a marketing agency and a member of the Scottish Committee of the Institute of Directors.

Roger Darlington is part-time strategy adviser to the Communication Workers Union.

Ruth Evans, the nearest to a real consumer representative, is ex-Director of the National Consumer Council, a government-funded independent agency.

Simon Gibson is Chief Executive of technology and hotels group Wesley Clover. He founded and ran a software company and was Vice President of Marketing and Communications at technology group Newbridge Networks.

Graham Mather is a solicitor and one-time Tory MEP. He has been the head of the Institute of Economic Affairs and head of the Policy Unit of the Institute of Directors.

Kevin McLaughlin works with the Magherafelt Disability Forum and is a Commissioner on the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

Kate O'Rourke is a solicitor specialising in intellectual property law and was a member of the Radio Authority (the former regulator of radio advertising) until December 2003.

Bob Twitchin is a consultant telecommunications scientist, after two decades with BT.

Kids' character agencies want guidance on quality



Agencies that license cartoon characters to appear on children's food have agreed there is a need for government guidelines on foods suitable for promotion to children.

In June, the Food Commission convened a meeting of organisations such as HIT Entertainment (which owns the rights to Bob the Builder), Warner Brothers (Harry Potter), Granada Media (Thunderbirds), Entertainment Rights (Barbie), 20th Century Fox (The Simpsons) and The Licensing Company (Star Wars).

Delegates heard a presentation from BBC Worldwide, the commercial wing of the BBC, which sells the rights for BBC characters such as the Teletubbies and Tweenies to appear on children's food, toys and other products. In March 2004, BBC Worldwide announced a nutrition policy which prevents its children's characters appearing on fast food and everyday confectionery. BBC Worldwide is also committed to promoting food that complies with government guidelines for levels of fat, salt and sugar appropriate to the target age group (i.e. toddlers).

The meeting also featured a presentation from the government's Food Standards Agency (FSA), outlining its concerns about the promotion of food to children and the effects on children's diets. The FSA has welcomed BBC Worldwide's nutrition policy, with FSA board members calling on all licensors of children's characters to adopt a similar progressive approach.

The outcome of the meeting was extremely positive. Character-licensing organisations were sympathetic to moves to improve children's food, and many said that they already felt cautious about their characters appearing on certain categories of products.

However, most said that they now needed a clear lead from government. Some said that they lacked experience in judging the quality of food products or claims made by food companies, so would welcome nutritional guidance from an independent body such as the FSA – especially guidance on appropriate fat, salt and sugar levels for foods aimed at different ages of children.

The Food Commission is delighted to have had this opportunity to meet with organisations whose characters are so influential in developing children's tastes and eating habits, as members of the Parents Jury have so often highlighted. We look forward to seeing more nutrition policies, which should also help to influence food manufacturers to improve the nutritional content of their children's foods.

Stop press: BBC Worldwide has just signed a multimillion-pound marketing deal with Kellogg's to publicise the broadcaster's DVDs such as *Jonathan Creek* and *The Office* on 11m packets of cornflakes. The deal overlooks the fact that Kellogg's Cornflakes are a high salt product, containing five times the amount of salt that one would find in an officially 'low-salt' product.

Fat, salt and sugar levels for children

Food companies seeking guidance on maximum levels of fats and sugars acceptable in children's diets will find few official recommendations. We summarise below a proposed set of Food Commission guidelines consistent with healthy eating recommendations, which could be used as a guide for good manufacturing practice.

An average meal should avoid going above about one third of these amounts, and a single portion of a food item should be well below a third of these amounts.

These recommendations assume that:

- children aged over five years should conform to adult healthy eating guidelines;
- children aged one to three years should eat a diet that is based on a transition from the composition of breast milk (50% calories from fat, of which half is from saturated fat, and 35% calories from lactose) to the healthy eating recommendations (35% calories from fat, 11% calories from saturates, 11% calories from non-lactose sugars) estimated at 45% calories from fat, 20% calories from saturated fat and 15% calories from sugars;
- infants below 12 months should have a diet matching the composition of breastmilk.

The recommendations also take into account the target intake levels for salt issued recently by the Food Standards Agency, and the

recommended nutrient guidelines for Scottish school meals (see: www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/niss-02.asp).

Recommended daily consumption of fat, sugar and salt for children

Daily maximum amounts

	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Sugar (g)	Salt (or as sodium) (g)
Adult man	99	31	75	7 (2.8)
Adult woman	75	24	57	5 (2.0)
Boys 15-18 yrs	107	34	81	7 (2.8)
Girls 15-18 yrs	82	26	62	5 (2.0)
Boys 11-14 yrs	86	27	65	6 (2.4)
Girls 11-14 yrs	72	23	54	6 (2.4)
Boys 7-10 yrs	78	24	58	5 (2.0)
Girls 7-10 yrs	70	21	51	5 (2.0)
Children 4-6 yrs	67	21	50	3 (1.2)
Children 1-3 yrs	62	19	50	2 (0.8)
Infants 6-12 mths	50	19	88 as lactose	1 (0.4)

Infants under 6 months – breastmilk recommended

Chicken – gone to fat

As part of a series examining the impact of modern farming we look at chickens – and find they have become fatter, have lost valuable nutrients and are no longer the supposed healthy alternative to red meat.

When the Royal College of Physicians published their report on diet and heart disease in 1976 they made several recommendations. One of the most practical ones was to encourage people to eat less red meat – deemed to be high in saturated fats – and to substitute chicken meat instead. Chicken, they suggested, had less fat and less saturated fat, and was a better alternative.

A government advisory panel report in 1984, the COMA report on diet and cardiovascular disease, gave much the same advice, telling readers that '*meat and meat products are foods for which alternative forms with lower contents of saturated fatty acids and fat are becoming more widely available... [such as] non-fatty fish (relative content of*

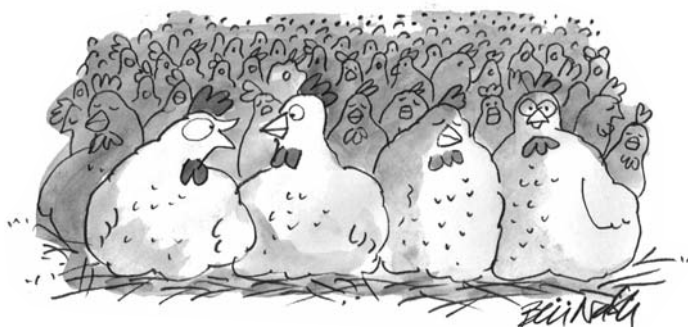
saturated fatty acids about 5%) or poultry e.g. chicken (relative saturated fatty acids about 30%)'.

And as a nation we have taken the advice, at least in respect of chicken if not of fish. Household purchases of chicken in the UK has nearly doubled in the period 1970-2000, while pork, lamb and beef purchases have tumbled. Taking fast food and other catering supplies into account, poultry meat supplies more than doubled from 10.5 kg per person in 1970 to 28.3 kg per person in 2000.

But has this been of any benefit? Is this chicken really so good?

To meet the rising demand, suppliers in Europe, Brazil and Thailand have increasingly intensified production techniques – producing broiler chickens in shorter time periods, in more cramped conditions, using feedstuffs enriched with antibiotics and other compounds to promote rapid growth. The average broiler chicken now reaches slaughter weight in just six weeks, twice as fast as thirty years ago.

The result has been a startling change in the nutritional profile of chicken meat. Once viewed as a valuable source of protein in the diet, chicken is now a rich source of fat rather than protein, and the levels of fat have risen so much that eating a small portion (100g) of roast chicken today will give you over 100 more kilocalories than you would have obtained 30 years ago. As a percentage of the carcass, fat has risen from under 2% to over 22% – a 1000% increase! The quality of the fat in the chicken has also deteriorated.



If we could just find the door we could go for a walk.

The long-chain omega 3 fatty acid, docosahexaenoic acid, has declined while omega 6 fatty acids, especially linoleic acid, have increased – largely because a free-roaming chicken's diet of insects, seeds and plants has been replaced by commercial cereal and soya-based feeds.

Furthermore, the quality of the leg muscle meat has declined dramatically, with the dark, mitochondrial-rich meat being replaced by meat more akin to the mitochondrial-poor meat found on the breast and wings. The quality of leg muscle meat reflects the use of the chicken's legs in active use: in its natural conditions a chicken spends most of the day walking and scratching at the ground. The modern chicken can barely move, with its heavy weight and under-developed bones.

The changes in the quality of chicken meat have transformed its nutritional value. The heart-health benefits of eating chicken were once clear – with low levels of fat and plenty of omega 3 fatty acids, valuable antioxidants and trace minerals it was a clear winner.

But now? Sadly, like the tale of the goose that laid golden eggs, mass production of chickens has destroyed the very thing that gave them their special value.

■ Article based on data from YQ Wang, M Crawford *et al*, London Metropolitan University [y.wang@unl.ac.uk]. Household purchase trends are available at <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/nfs/datasets/allfood.xls>, and food supply data can be found at http://www.fao.org/waicent/portal/statistics_en.asp

In future issues: the farmed fish that have lost their PUFAs and the vegetables that are a shadow of their former selves.

Fatty acids in chicken meat 1980 and 2004

	Total fat	Docosahexaenoic acid (Omega 3)	Linoleic acid (Omega 6)
1980	17.5 g/100g	180 mg/100g	2,400 mg/100g
2004	22.8 g/100g	25 mg/100g	6,290 mg/100g

Fat and protein in chickens 1896-2004

	Fat g/100g	Protein g/100g	Kcal /100g	of which Kcal from fat
1896	1.8	22.8	107	16
1940	10.3	26.2	198	93
1970	8.6	24.3	175	77
1991	17.7	17.6	230	159
2002	16.9	20.9	236	152
2004	22.8	16.5	271	205

Children's menus standards

A new report on children's meals served in restaurants, cafés and leisure centres has uncovered a nutritional nightmare. Annie Seeley reports.

A meal outside the home was once considered an occasional treat. However as a nation we are now eating out more than ever. The calories and nutrients in these meals are likely to make a significant contribution to children's diets, and so it is all the more important that caterers ensure their children's meals are healthy ones. But are they healthy? A new survey on children's menus reveals a clear NO!

The survey was partly inspired by the Parents Jury Children's Menu Awards in 2003 (see *Food Magazine* 62). In a follow-up study, Rachael Foulds, a post-graduate nutrition student at London Metropolitan University, questioned restaurant and café staff regarding portion sizes and the cooking methods of a range of children's meals, and calculated the nutritional quality of each portion served. Rachael's work was initiated and supervised by Dr Ruth Ash at Metropolitan University.

Soft drinks and puddings were excluded from the analysis unless they were included in the meal price.

In all, 141 children's meals were analysed and compared to the Caroline Walker Trust's (CWT) Nutritional Guidelines for School Meals.* Every single meal failed in one way or another to meet these guidelines.

The survey found a woeful lack of fruit and vegetables in the menus. Only two establishments offered a selection of fresh vegetables. Those that included pudding in the meal package offered no fruit.

Calories and fat

Calories: 57% of the meals exceeded the CWT guidelines for calories for 5-6 year olds and 37% for 7-10 year olds. Comparing the different outlets (see box, right), all children's meals analysed in Harvester, Adventure Kingdom and Ikea were too high in calories.

The Rib Ticklers Meal in Harvester provided the most calories. At 1,270 kcls it was 2.6 and 2.3 times the maximum recommended energy content for 5-6 year olds and 7-10 year olds respectively.

Fat: 81% of the meals exceeded the guidelines for fat. All children's meals in Natural History Museum, Adventure Kingdom, Tesco, Ikea, Fairlop Waters and Redbridge Sports Centre exceeded the total fat guidelines. Harvester's Rib Tickler meal again tipped the scales, with 4 times the maximum recommended level.

Saturated fat: 54% of the meals exceeded the saturated fat guidelines for 5-6 year olds, while 50% exceeded them for 7-10 year olds. All children's meals in the Science Museum contained too much saturated fat. 80% of meals from family run restaurants and cafés had levels of saturated fat that exceeded the recommended intake for both age groups. The highest level of saturated fat was found in a chicken nuggets meal from Garfunkel's. This meal would provide a 5 year old with 5 times and a 7 year old with 4.5 times their recommended saturated fat intake for one meal.

Carbohydrates and fibre

Complex carbohydrates: The majority of the meals failed to meet the guideline recommended minimum amount of complex carbohydrates. None of the children's meals in Tesco, John Lewis, Ikea, London Zoo, Natural History Museum, as well as other outlets, contained the minimum guideline amount of carbohydrates.

Dietary fibre: Almost two thirds (65%) of the meals failed to meet the minimum recommended fibre content for 7-10 year olds. Almost half (48%) failed to meet the minimum recommended fibre content for 5-6 year olds.

Soft drinks and puddings were excluded from the analysis unless they were included in the meal price. The two establishments where they were included (Garfunkel's and Science Museum) exceeded maximum recommended levels for added sugar in half of their meals.

Restaurants, cafés and outlets included in the survey:

Family establishments: Garfunkel's, Beefeater, Harvester

Visitor attractions: London Zoo, Natural History Museum, Science Museum

Soft play: Adventure Kingdom, Play Town, Wacky Warehouse

Retail outlets: John Lewis, Tesco, Ikea

Leisure Centres: David Lloyd, Fairlop Waters, Redbridge Sports Centre.



All children's meals provided by the Science Museum, Adventure Kingdom and Fairlop Waters were too low in fibre.

Micronutrients

A number of the meals analysed provided few essential vitamins and minerals such as: folate, vitamin A and vitamin C.

Iron: 60% of the meals were too low in iron for 5-6 year olds and 82% were too low in iron for 7-10 year olds. None of the children's meals provided by Ikea and Fairlop Waters contained enough iron.

Calcium: 70% and 79% of children's meals failed to meet the minimum guideline calcium

flunk nutrition

levels for 5-6 year olds and 7-10 year olds respectively. All children's meals in John Lewis, London Zoo, Fairlop waters, Ikea, and Redbridge Sports Centre failed to meet the minimum guideline levels for calcium.

Vitamin A: 67% of the children's were too low in Vitamin A. None of the children's meals provided by Adventure Kingdom, Tesco, Ikea, David Lloyd and Fairlop Waters met the Caroline Walker Trust nutritional guidelines.

Folate: 37% and 66% of meals failed to meet the minimum guideline levels for 5-6 year olds and 7-10 year olds, respectively.

Vitamin C: 45% of the meals did not meet the guideline level for Vitamin C.

Zinc: 78% of the meals analysed did not meet the zinc guidelines. All children's meals provided by retail outlets and visitor attractions failed to meet the guideline recommendations for both age groups.

Sodium: Assuming that salt was not added during cooking or at the table, 37% of meals exceeded the guideline set for sodium in the 5-6 year age group and 8% for the 7-10 year olds. The highest levels of sodium were found in Beefeater, Harvester and Wacky Warehouse meals.

From the 141 menus analysed it was impossible in many cases to make a healthy choice. Indeed some outlets, such as Wacky Warehouse described a chicken nugget meal as 'healthy' despite exceeding recommended levels for fat and saturated fat.

Missing choices

These findings clearly show an urgent need to improve the nutritional quality of children's menus across the UK. This research has been submitted to the FSA in response to their Children's Food Promotion consultation and to the Department of Health for their Choosing Health consultation. The FSA is working on a nutrition criteria for all foods promoted to



Garfunkel's won a Nasty Nosh Award from the Parents Jury a year ago for its children's menus. Garfunkel's was criticised by parents for offering 'The usual kids' menu – heavily processed... with little nutritional value.' There were no fruit or vegetables (only baked beans on the breakfast menu) and most of the foods provided a 'mainly fried and unimaginative choice'.

children (due to be published in March 2005). In the meantime such outlets would do well to reduce the fat, sugar and salt content and increase the fruit, vegetable and complex carbohydrate content of their children's meals.

* The Caroline Walker Trust Guidelines for school meals state that the meal should provide not more than a third of a child's recommended intake of calories, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrates or added sugar. The meal should provide not less than 30% of a child's recommended daily intake of protein, fibre and Vitamin A. Not less than 35% of

Badvertisement

Yummy! Toxic waste!

It's rare, but some products are remarkably honest about their ingredients. These sweets are called Toxic Waste and advise children that the longer they suck on the sweets the more toxic their tongue will become. One minute will give you 'Full Toxie Head!', portrayed by a cartoon mushroom cloud exploding.

After dismantling the packaging, which partially obscured the ingredients list, we found that the sweets are coloured with Yellow 5, Yellow 6 and Blue 1, the American names for Tartrazine (E102); Sunset Yellow (E110) and Brilliant Blue (E133) – all artificial azo dyes, developed for fabric dyes, and derived from coal tar.

The Hyperactive Children's Support Group recommends that parents exclude these additives from the diets of hyperactive children.

A final note on the label seems especially appropriate: 'Warning: Choking Hazard'.



Trust me, I'm a doctor

Apparent endorsement by health advocates such as Dr Hilary Jones and the NHS are being used to persuade the public to believe the health claims made by advertisers, writes Kath Dalmeny.

Claiming that food products can reduce the risk of disease or positively contribute to health is a risky area for advertisers. Unsubstantiated claims can result in censure from trading standards officials, adverse media coverage and, perhaps most damaging of all, increased scepticism among their customers.

What better way to convince us of the validity of health claims than to use an independent and trusted organisation or individual to give their endorsement to the product?

Two extraordinary publications, destined for circulation to millions of people in the UK use this technique to exploit the trustworthiness of two of the most well-known health advocates in the UK – GMTV's Dr. Hilary Jones and the National Health Service.

The publications interweave health advice and advertising, usually for pharmaceuticals and food products. Some of this marketing is in the form of 'advertorial' - features designed to look like an independent and unbiased assessment of a product, yet written by industry representatives aiming to portray the product in the best possible light.

nhs Family Choice is a new directory of medical treatment providers, due to be published this summer and distributed by the NHS via doctors' surgeries, midwives and community nurses to over 2 million families. It will be published in response to Health Secretary John Reid's call for patients to have more choice in their medical care.

Despite its name, the magazine is not published by the NHS and is a commercial venture that mingles information provision with advertising and advertorial.

A marketing brochure circulated by manufacturer Hall & Woodhouse, makers of Panda Pops, reveals the type of advertising material *nhs Family Choice* will contain. The advertorial portrays Panda Pops as low in sugar and low in additives, and therefore a healthier choice for children. Some Panda Pops products are indeed low in sugar, but others are not – and some contain the very additives identified by a recent government study as triggering behavioural problems in toddlers, including sodium benzoate and the red food colouring carmoisine (see page 3).

Hall & Woodhouse goes further, implying that 'senior NHS staff' approved the advertorial. This is especially worrying since the advertorial contains a table showing Panda Pops as a healthier choice than fruit juice. At a time when an NHS priority is to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables through the five-a-day programme, this is a highly unlikely message for the NHS to endorse.

When we spoke to the publisher of *nhs Family Choice*, Cyworks plc, they admitted that the NHS is not involved with the publication of the magazine, and gave the following feeble defence: that the 2 million families to whom this publication will be circulated would not think that the health messages came from the real NHS because the real NHS logo uses upper-case letters.

The Food Commission has duly submitted a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority against both Hall & Woodhouse and the publishers of *nhs Family Choice*.

Family Healthcare magazine 'with Dr. Hilary Jones' is another magazine that demonstrates

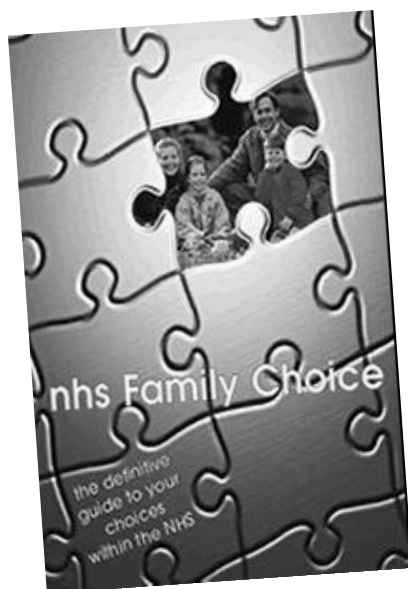


how a trusted health advocate can be used to convince readers of the benefits of products. *Family Healthcare* is

distributed through high-street newsagents and bookshops, costing £3.50. Over one third of the magazine (117 of the 290 pages) is advertising, with several features that also appear to be advertising material, although they are not declared as such.

In the introduction, Dr. Hilary Jones states that 'the prognosis for the NHS is bleak and consequently it will become ever more vital for us all to take more responsibility for our own health. Ultimately, each one of us will in a way need to become amateur doctors in our own right.' The perfect cue for features and advertising encouraging self-diagnosis and self-medication by means of pharmaceuticals, herbal remedies, vitamin pills and functional foods. At least 25 advertising pages are devoted to self-medication by means of food products, including: Warburton's bread with added omega 3 fat to 'aid brain development in unborn children'; Scottish Salmon to help with 'reducing the chances of developing coronary heart disease'; Columbus Eggs, to 'keep joints supple and prevent injury'; Müller Probiotic yogurt 'helping to balance your entire digestive system'; and the Tea Council stating that consuming tea 'may have a role in protecting against certain diseases such as cancer, stroke and heart disease'.

One particular feature caught our eye: 'Smiles to be proud of', written by Dr. Samantha Stear and investigating dental health. The article contains many familiar industry defences for sugar consumption, and focuses on personal responsibility in dental care rather than dietary changes to combat dental decay. Who would advocate such an approach? Our suspicions were triggered by an advert for the industry's Sugar Bureau, conveniently placed in the midst of the article, promoting the health benefits of sugar. So who is this author? Who is the seemingly independent Dr. Samantha Stear? None other than Science Director for the Sugar Bureau. A fact that the article fails to mention.



Not the real NHS, but pretending to be – and 2 million copies will be given out in GP surgeries and by midwives.

Parents go hungry to feed their children

Food Commission researchers have found that almost half of all parents (46%) on a low income have gone without food so that another family member can eat. Annie Seeley reports

Research by the Food Commission for the children's charity NCH: Action for Children has revealed high levels of food poverty among families living on low incomes.

The study follows on from a similar survey published in 1991, and shows that over the intervening twelve years the diets of children and parents have not shown substantial improvements – and in some ways have worsened.

Fruit, veg and meat

Comparing 1991 to 2003, low income families are eating less fruit and vegetables, and the children are eating more processed meats:

- The number of children eating fruit, green vegetables or salad on most days decreased from 76% in 1991 to 69% in 2003;
- The number of parents eating fruit, green vegetables or salad on most days decreased from 68% to 63%;
- Since 1991 the number of children eating processed meat four or more times a week has increased from 42% to 54%.

The 2003 survey also found that 28% of children and 25% of parents never eat green vegetables or salad. This is in stark contrast to the 90% of children who eat sweets and chocolate most days, including the 20% who eat them every day.



Marketing pressure

It is no secret that food advertisers target children with persuasive marketing of unhealthy foods. 80% of the parents questioned said their children pestered them for certain foods promoted through television advertising, packaging and free toys. 80% of the products that children asked for were high in fat, saturated fat, sugar and/or salt.

Money and debt

For families on low incomes, food is the most flexible part of their budget. When cash is scarce and bills need paying, many families cut back on food expenditure.

Our research found that the longer people were on income support, the more likely they were to be in debt:

- 40% of parents were either behind in bill payments or in debt;
- One in five parents said that they do not have enough money for food;
- The average amount spent on food per person was £16.07 per week, or just £2.29 per day.

'The shop where I do my main shopping is 10 miles away. That's the nearest big supermarket. It's too far to go more than once a week. My local shop doesn't have many different fruit and vegetables; what it does sell isn't very nice and is too expensive and not fresh enough.'

Healthier food costs more

The research also included an assessment of the cost of healthy and less healthy food products in the shops close to where the survey participants live.

This revealed that over the last 15 years the average cost of a healthy shopping basket has increased by 50%.

The cost of an unhealthy basket has also increased, but by only 33%, so that the gap between the costs of eating healthily and less healthily has widened.

Access and prices

The research also showed that the concentration of retail sales into a few large supermarkets, and the closure of local shops, has affected many families:

- In urban areas more than one in three parents (35%) have to travel more than two miles to get to the nearest supermarket. In rural areas this figure rose to 66%;
- The average cost of travelling to and from the shops was £3.71 – an extra 23% on top of the average food bill;
- The high cost of travelling to the supermarket meant that most rural families (57%) only went shopping once a week or less, which reduces the amount of perishable fruit and vegetables which can be bought;
- 'Five-a-day' fruit and vegetable products were typically 38% more expensive in rural areas compared to urban. A healthy shopping basket was also 34% more expensive in rural areas compared to urban.

■ This research has been submitted to the Food Standards Agency and the Department of Health in response to their consultation papers on diet and health and on children's food promotions. The full report can be downloaded from: <http://www.nch.org.uk/goinghungry/>



'It was very hard living in the countryside because as well as having to buy the shopping I would have to pay for a bus ride there and a taxi back. I had to get the taxi back because the buses don't run that often. This would be an extra £6 onto the shopping and meant I went less often and had £6 less to spend on food.'

The hidden cost of bargain meal deals

They are convenient, filling and cheap, but – asks Kath Dalmeny – are bargain ‘meal deals’ as good as they seem?

Over the past few years, ‘meal deals’ have proliferated – the chance to buy a sandwich with a drink and snack – all for a bargain price. But how many people consider just how much fat and how many calories they add to their meal by accepting these extra products? And how many people question the fact that meal deals almost always offer the same range of choices, and hardly ever any healthier options such as fruit juice, salad or fresh fruit?

It’s no coincidence that almost all of the meal deals we looked at contained the same familiar brands. Meal deals are seen by the snacks industry – mainly multinational companies such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi

(which also sells Walkers crisps) – as a way of increasing sales and ensuring that people consume their products on an everyday basis. The marketing press often boasts of increased confectionery sales that can be gained through deals with sandwich outlets. These are multi-million pound opportunities, especially when offered through a retail network with national reach, such as petrol stations or onboard buffets in mainline trains.

By linking soft drinks and crisps to these bargain offers, the snack companies have gradually changed our expectation of what constitutes a meal. An additional 500ml bottle of coke and a bag of crisps are now standard fare, with some food outlets even

A healthier option?

The majority of the meal deals contained no fruit or vegetables, except for a little salad in some of the sandwiches or a few teaspoons of fruit juice in some of the juice drinks. Very few offered any genuinely healthy options, and the only outlet offering a meal deal flagged as ‘healthier’ was Texaco, with a reduced fat ham and cheese sandwich (with no salad), water and a ‘virtually fat free’ Müller strawberry yogurt.

Sadly, when our researcher asked how she could eat the yogurt, no spoons were available. Not much good for health-conscious travellers!



The bargains get bigger and bigger

In a highly competitive market, outlets offering meal deals have to make them seem like the best possible deal.

One way to do this is to keep on adding products. In this meal deal, available on GNER trains, customers are offered two filled rolls accompanied by a bag of crisps and a can of Coca-Cola or Sprite. In this case, it is a regular-sized bag of crisps (34.5g) and a regular-sized Coca-Cola or Sprite (330ml), but how long before the deal gets ‘better’ and the snacks get larger?



Cost of meal deals

adding a chocolate bar, piling on extra sugar, fat and calories.

We took a look at some of the meal deals on offer to travellers looking for a rapid snack in petrol stations, railway station food outlets, and on-train buffets. Knowing that customers are likely to be spending a lot of their day sitting down, either behind the steering wheel or on a train, you might expect these outlets to consider the healthiness and calorie content

Hoping to encourage extra spending in the lunchtime market, Shell promotes large packets of Walkers crisps and bottles of Coca-Cola with its meal deals.

of the foods they offer. Whilst many do now offer some choice, with bottles of water as an option to replace the standard 500ml bottle of coke, the sector is dominated by 'Big Eat' packets of Walkers crisps (55g – the standard sized bags are 34.5g) and 500ml bottles of sugary drinks that contain the equivalent of around 10 or 11 teaspoons of sugar.

But if you don't want lunch, Shell offers another way to pile on the calories, with a 'snack deal' of a Mars bar (65g), large Walkers crisps (55g) and a 500ml bottle of coke – all for £1.49.



The least healthy meal deal

Of all the meal deals surveyed, the railway station outlet Whistlestop offered the least healthy choice. The deal consisted of three extra products to accompany a sandwich. The sandwiches contained between 10g and 30g of fat. Choosing the fattiest and sugariest of the additional snacks and drinks on offer would add:

- An extra 80g sugar (16 teaspoons) – more sugar than an adult's recommended daily intake (see page 6)
- An extra 32.6g of fat – around half of an adult's daily intake
- An extra 790 kcalories – around a third of an adult's recommended daily intake
- And salt? Sorry, we are unable to estimate the additional salt, as this information was not declared on some of the products.

Note: These figures do not include the fat and calorie content of the sandwich in the meal deal.



One lonely salad

Only one meal deal, from a train-station branch of Boots, included a salad option. This was available with a range of chocolate or crisps, and 500ml bottles of cola, water or a low-calorie 'Shapers' drink.

A note with the offer stated that freshly squeezed Shapers orange juice could not be included in the meal deal. After all, you wouldn't want it to be too healthy, would you?!



Eat like a king? No thanks!

Most of the cost of processed food lies in packaging, distribution and advertising, while the cost of the ingredients is usually a very small part of the total. Not surprisingly, companies are thus keen to increase brand sales by offering larger portions for a bargain price.

There is a limit to how much food we can be expected to eat, which might put a natural ceiling on the commercial marketplace. But appetites are fickle things, and an individual can easily succumb to temptation and eat a larger portion as if it were a regular size. The sellers of snacks, sweets, fast food and even

alcoholic drinks are aware of our poor dietary control, and have been raising portion sizes year by year.

Here we offer a quick guide to the difference between the regular and the extra-sized product, and show just how much you will be adding to your waistline if you let bargains rule your belly.



Bigger portions for bigger people? The aptly-named 'Big One' from Snickers provides a whopping 501 kcal – that's over a quarter of an adult woman's recommended daily energy intake for a single day! An average British woman needs about 2000 kcal a day. An average man needs about 2500 kcal.

Bigger isn't always better				
Food	Size	Weight	Kcalories	% Kcal increase
Yorkie	Regular	68g	367	--
	King Size	85g	445	21%
Twix	Regular	58g	287	--
	King Size	85g	421	47%
Kit Kat	2 fingers	21g	106	--
	4 fingers	48g	243	129%
Kit Kat	Chunky	55g	290	--
	Chunky King Size	77g	403	39%
Maltesers	Regular	37g	179	--
	King Size Bag	58.5g	283	58%
Mars Bar	Regular	62.5g	281	--
	'Big One'	85g	382	36%
Snickers	Regular	64.5g	323	--
	'The Big One'	100g	501	55%
Walkers Crisps	Regular	34.5g	183	--
	'Big Eat'	55g	290	58%
Ribena drink	Carton	288ml	164	--
	Bottle	500ml	285	74%
Burger King burgers	Hamburger	--	296	--
	Cheeseburger	--	337	14%
	XL Whopper (with cheese)	--	922	211%
McDonald's fries	Regular Fries	78	206	--
	Medium Fries	110	293	42%
	Large Fries	155	412	100%
	Super Size Fries	183	486	135%
McDonald's Cola	Regular Cola	250ml	108	--
	Medium Cola	400ml	172	60%
	Large Cola	525ml	226	110%
	Super Size Cola	750ml	323	200%
Red Wine 13% alcohol	Standard	125ml glass	116 (1.6 units)	--
	Large	175ml glass	162 (2.3 units)	40%
	Extra large	250ml glass	232 (3.2 units)	100%

The biggest sandwich in Britain?

Sandwiches are now getting the super-size treatment, and we are launching a competition to find the store selling the largest sandwich (calorie-wise).

Currently number one contender must be Tesco. At 1,043 kcals (over half the recommended daily calories for a woman), Tesco's Chicken Stuffing Bap isn't just big; it's enormous!

Described as 'Chicken Stuffing', Tesco has somehow managed to stuff in 58.8g fat and 4.7g salt (that's virtually a whole day's recommended salt intake) all in one sandwich.

But you may be able to find bigger. We would like to find the highest calorie sandwich in Britain being sold by a high street store. If you see one that beats Tesco, send us the wrapper (but not the sandwich!) and we will name and shame the manufacturer who is doing their worst to supersize the nation.

From company product information and the Newark and Sherwood DC website
www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/environmentalservices/healthyeating/

Why do food companies love salt?

In June, public health minister Melanie Johnson accused the food industry of failing to cut the salt in processed foods and gave companies three months – until September – to come up with concrete proposals.

That she made her criticisms public – leaked to *The Times* and followed by a live appearance on *Newsnight*. This implied a high degree of government frustration with food companies not seen since Edwina Curry attacked the egg industry in 1988.

A food industry spokesman Martin Patterson responded by claiming that Johnson was 'pushing at an open door' but that 'there was no point in a food company making food that stayed on the shelf' – presumably meaning that reduced-salt food would not be popular with shoppers. Such an argument clearly indicates that voluntary salt reductions are unlikely to happen, as manufacturers will not risk losing sales to competitors who do not reduce salt levels. Legislation may thus be necessary to force food manufacturers to act.

But how did the industry fall into this love affair with salt? In a letter published by *The Times* (22.06.04), a certain Malcolm Kane asked the same question: Why had salt reduction become necessary? What had led to its widespread use? Kane was no ordinary newspaper reader. He had spent nearly 20 years at Sainsbury's as Chief Food Technologist until 1999, and he knew the answers to his questions.

Today's food industry, he said, 'inherited the legacy of decades of crude, unprofessional, cost-reduction-focused product development involving "extending" foods with water, fats, cheap carbohydrates and far too many additives'.

He continued 'The necessary adjunct to this has been the boosting of flavour which, in the case of savoury foods, involves the addition of excessive salt and monosodium glutamate, both of which contribute to dietary sodium levels.'

He said that the industry 'needs to admit that generations of consumers have been weaned on to high salt-boosted' foods. And he added a final sting: 'The food industry requires a cultural change to reintroduce

professional standards of consumer-focused product development and a rejection of additive-led development.'

We couldn't put it better ourselves.

■ **Contact Malcolm Kane at:**
malcolmkane@foodcontrol.co.uk

■ **In the next issue of the Food Magazine:**
The inside story on Italian olive oil.



"Which came first, the chicken or the salt?"

Just what the doctor ordered?

For food manufacturers, a crucial way to accrue long-term profits is to secure contracts with large-scale food providers.

That is why Kellogg's is so keen to trumpet its contribution to the government's 'Better Hospital Food Initiative' in this advert from the journal of the Hospital Caterers Association. Over 300 million meals are served annually by the NHS, in around 1,200 hospitals, with a budget of £500 million.

Kellogg's portrays its cornflakes as being drip-fed to patients – an alarming image, considering that Kellogg's Cornflakes are one of the saltiest breakfast cereals on the market.

An estimated 40% of adults and 15% of children are malnourished on admission to hospital. And according to the Malnutrition Advisory Group, around two-thirds of hospital patients are malnourished. The Better Hospital Food Initiative has a very long way to go.



Badvertisement

The useless use of vitamins

The Food Commission has always argued that vitamins are added to products for marketing purposes rather than to meet genuine nutritional need.

Witness the plethora of 'vitamin enriched' salty, sugary and fatty children's foods. The product packaging is designed to appeal to children. The added vitamins help to persuade mum that such foods and drinks are a good compromise.

If any further proof were needed that adding vitamins is merely a marketing



ploy. Andrex has launched toilet paper enriched with vitamin E.

Can vitamin-enriched toilet paper really offer any health benefits?

Andrex's

typically vague justification is that the Vitamin E is added 'to give you and your family an extra level of care'.

Like most fortified food, the best thing to do with this Andrex product is to flush it down the loo.

Tesco: where 'proceed'?

Tesco has promised a 'traffic light' labelling scheme to indicate the levels of fats, sugar and salt in its products. But shoppers should prepare for shelves full of red warnings, as we found that even the Tesco 'Healthy Living' range includes some nasty surprises.

From this September, Tesco should be displaying products with a new nutrition labelling scheme that gives a 'traffic light' coding with red warnings on food high in fat, saturated fat, sugar or salt, and green signals for low levels of these ingredients.

To quote the company's publicity statement: *'The traffic light initiative is the latest move by Tesco in its quest to provide customers with information that will help them make an informed choice when shopping. Since the launch of its Healthy Eating range almost 20 years ago Tesco has led the way in providing customers with the choice and information they need to follow a healthier lifestyle.'*

So we took a look at Tesco's products promoted in its healthy eating range – now re-branded as Tesco Healthy Living – to check their 'traffic light' credentials. Green all round,

surely? But no: surprisingly, and sadly, the lights went amber and red again and again.

Using the Food Standards Agency criteria (see box) we rated a sample of the company's products, including dairy, meat, cereal and dessert products. Many of them would have to be coloured with amber warnings, and more than a few would have to carry a red danger signal – somewhat undermining the label's claim to be healthy.

For example, the so-called 'light' cream cheese in the Healthy Living range has nearly twice the levels of saturated fat that lead to a red signal.

Tesco's Healthy Living bran flakes (and also its sultana bran) will get a red signal for salt and a second red signal for sugar. And its Healthy Living sunflower spread gets three red signals: for fat, saturated fat and salt.

What was Tesco thinking of? Is the company planning to use a different set of nutritional criteria than the one recommended by the Food Standards Agency – which would be highly misleading to consumers and a slap in the face for the Agency's guidance.

Or did the company make its announcement without thinking through the consequences. It says it has come up with its traffic light scheme following *'18 months of research and development with customers'*. Hmmm.

Perhaps Tesco is planning to change the formulation of its products? If the company reformulates a broad range of products to ensure they do not get red warnings, then good for Tesco. The traffic light scheme can be deemed a success.

Let's see what happens in September...

P.S. Tesco is not alone in having high levels of salt, fat etc in its 'Healthy' range. The other supermarkets can also be held up to criticism in this regard – but they have not had the courage to propose traffic lights on the front of their packs.

Colour coding: the numbers

To help shoppers interpret nutritional information on food labels, the Food Standards Agency issued advice in 2002 defining what the Agency considered to be 'a lot' and 'a little' in respect of fats, sugar and salt. These can be used to identify red and green traffic lights – with intermediate quantities earning an amber light.

Amount per 100g of the product

	Red lights	Green lights
Sugar	10g or more	2g or less
Total fat	20g or more	3g or less
Saturated fat	5g or more	1g or less
Sodium	0.5g or more	0.1g or less

How should a mixture of colours be interpreted? We suggest:

Green for go	All green lights – consume without worry, choose in preference to amber or red.
Amber warnings	Some amber lights – eat in moderation, choose in preference to red.
Red hazards	One or two red lights – leave these products on the shelf if you can.



red means

Bran flakes: At least the fat and saturated fat earn green lights, but then this is a breakfast cereal, so they should. What a shame that both the sugar (at 32g per 100g) and salt get a definite red light.

Pork mince: amber lights for fat and saturated fat, and green for sugar and salt.

Sausages: these get an amber light for fat and for saturated fat, green for sugar, but red for salt.

Liver pâté: unfortunately this gets an amber light for fat, amber for sugar, red for saturated fat and red for salt.

Tesco's Healthy Living range

How would the Tesco Healthy Living range shape up to a traffic light scheme using the Food Standards Agency's definitions for 'a lot' and 'a little' of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar?

Fruit Swirls: Green for fat and saturated fat and for salt, but a definite red for sugar, at 28g per 100g.

Sunflower spread: not surprisingly a green light for sugar, but sadly three red lights earned for total fat, saturated fat and salt.

Cream cheese: claimed to be 'Light' but amber for fat, salt and sugar and red for saturated fat.



Badvertisement

Click... Tick... Pop... Ping

It is little wonder that when it comes to food, teenagers demand speed and convenience above all things. The perceived need to eat as quickly as possible is cultivated by fast food restaurants, food packaging that helps teenagers eat on the hoof, and microwave snacks that are ready in seconds.

What hope for the survival of cooking skills and the joy of lingering over a shared meal

prepared from delicious fresh ingredients?



Feasters 'Eatwell' microwave Chicken Ciabatta panders to the speed-food culture by promising a meal in 80 seconds. Just 'Click' to open the microwave door, 'Tick' to set the microwave clock, 'Pop' to hear the plastic bag burst (the signal that your food is ready), and 'Ping' to hear the end of the microwave cooking.

What better summary of the teenage food culture?

Can good ads bad ones?

Social marketing – using advertising techniques to promote health – appeals to a nanny-phobic government. But, asks Tim Lobstein, will it have any impact?

How do you get people to change their behaviour without lecturing to them, bribing them or punishing them?

A government unwilling to regulate, fearful of being called a nanny and reluctant to impose taxation to influence consumer choice has hit on the answer – you advertise. This is what commerce does to influence behaviour, so this is what government can do, too.

No interference with the ideology of a free market. No complex and messy legislation. Just borrow the tricks of the trade from the advertising and marketing boys, and put them to good use, promoting desirable behaviour.

And, given that a ban on advertising to children would have lost thousands of jobs in the advertising industry, the idea that the government could become a major client will be welcome news there.

But will it cost too much? The food and drink industry currently spends nearly £1bn every year in the UK on TV advertising and similar amounts on print media, radio, internet and point-of-sale promotion strategies. Just being a sponsor of a major event can cost a small fortune: the eight official sponsors of Euro 2004 reportedly spent £300m to buy the logo and market the games on their products. Sponsors of the England team spent a further £300m.

Buying a popular star isn't cheap either. Miss Dynamite was reportedly paid a £1m fee to help promote Pepsi. Justin Timberlake reportedly earned £4m to feature in McDonald's 'I'm Lovin' It' campaign, but the current record goes to David Beckham, expecting to be paid £40m to be the (unshaven?) face of Gillette, on top of an annual £8m for his endorsement of various products, including the ubiquitous Pepsi.

The UK government can match these figures, of course, if it really wanted to. But

even if the treasury were persuaded to spend £1bn, would it work? The sorts of foods and drinks being promoted at present are nearly all foods which are high in fats and sugars. These sorts of foods should form only a small part of the daily diet – at most no more than 10-12% and preferably less. Fruit, vegetables and foods rich in complex carbohydrates should constitute about 60-70% of the diet – and it could be argued that these sorts of foods should therefore be advertised at much higher levels to overcome the competition. A budget of £10bn to promote healthy foods could be needed – and that is £10bn every year, not just once!

But this is fantasy. The government will not spend anything like that sort of money. What it might do instead is introduce a levy on current advertisements to pay for healthier ones. The food industry will find itself taxed for advertising their products, and paying for the promotion of products it does not make much profit on.

Taxation for health has been tried in California where voters passed Proposition 99 in 1988 that levied a 25c tax on every cigarette pack to help pay for anti-smoking campaigns. The anti-smoking advertising rose to some \$25m annually, which was still small compared with the \$500m spent by the tobacco companies. An evaluation over the first two years of the measure suggested that the advertising reduced cigarette purchases by 232m packs, while the extra tax of 25c per pack reduced cigarette purchases by over 800m packs. Awareness of the dangers of smoking rose significantly.

And this is one of the dangers with social marketing, or indeed with any form of health education campaign: it may raise awareness significantly but may not have a significant effect on actual behaviour, or to have a lesser

effect than other measures (such as taxation or regulation) would have.

There has been a long history of governments placing their faith in health promotion campaigns to deliver their public health policies. Leaflets, posters, videos, even TV adverts have been the stock-in-trade of health educationalists for decades, covering smoking, diet, sexually transmitted diseases, car seat belts and recently food hygiene.

These health promotion campaigns need proper evaluation which considers not only awareness-raising among the target groups but also measures real change in long-term health benefits. And they need to be properly compared with other policy options. Otherwise social marketing will be seen as just another version of health education – in danger of reproducing all the top-down attitudes and victim-blaming effects of health education at its worst.

The fault that lies at the heart of the health education strategy is its 'downstream' approach to disease prevention. In terms of the food chain, health education attempts to change food intake by influencing the very last links in the chain – the point where individual consumers are making their choices.

This approach passes all responsibility to the individual ('you should do this') and removes it from the government ('we told you not to do that') and it takes attention away from the influences further up the food chain that have helped to create the final choice: the supply of different foods, their pricing, their availability and ease of access, their convenience and their social desirability, let alone the effect of years of commercial marketing. It deflects attention from the choices being made further up the food chain, by the supermarkets' chief buyers, by the manufacturers' recipe formulators, by the fast food catering buyers, by the farming support policy-makers and the global trade regulators.

Social marketing offers nothing new to resolve the structural problems in food supplies that shape the food chain. Social marketing is not the solution here: the problem needs cross-governmental, multi-policy

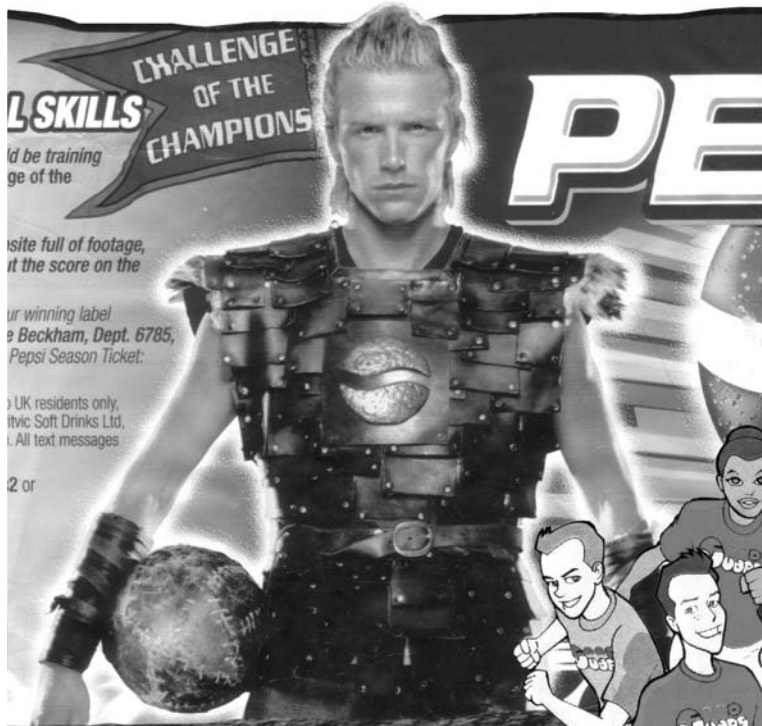
beat

support, and it needs regulatory change as well as marketing skills.

There is no reason to fear regulation. Indeed, it is time that the concept of regulation was re-branded and re-launched as something beneficial for society as a whole. After all, putting controls on commercial behaviour helps to level a playing field that is steeply inclined to the benefit of producers and marketers and against consumers.

Public goods are things which benefit all and which do not diminish by being used, such as reference libraries and national parks. Regulations are a perfect example of public goods, and should be seen as benefiting the community at large. De-regulation is done in the name of the market and to the benefit of the producer over the consumer.

So let us start by changing attitudes in government. A marketing campaign, if one is needed, should be directed at the legislators and regulators in government to get them to do what the public wants them to do.



Can characters such as the Food Dudes – perhaps the most successful attempt so far to ‘market’ good health to children – compete with the likes of a gladiatorial David Beckham? Yes – but only for £10bn a year!

■ For more information see www.fooddudes.co.uk and The Food Commission's report *Broadcasting Bad Health* at www.foodcomm.org.uk/press_junk_marketing_03.htm

Ten healthy eating tips to avoid

A kid's healthy eating book should be good ... But wait, what are the correct answers to these questions:

Every day you eat (a) 2 slices of bread (b) no bread (c) lots of bread if you are hungry?

No surprises here – ‘c’ gets 3 points, ‘a’ gets 2 points, ‘b’ gets zero points.

After school your favourite snack is (a) fruit (b) bread or toast (c) chocolate biscuits?

‘a’ gets 3 points, but oddly both ‘b’ and ‘c’ get 2 points.

How often do you use sugar in drinks and cereals? (a) once a day (b) never (c) frequently throughout the day?

‘a’ gets 3 points, while ‘b’ gets only 2 points, and ‘c’ gets 1 point, surely not right?

You eat crisps, chocolate and snacks (a) never (b) occasionally (c) every day?

Incredibly, ‘a’ gets only 1 point, while ‘b’ gets 3 points and ‘c’ gets 2 points.

Who produced this stuff?

The booklet is co-produced by the European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians, who really should know better, and the European Food Information Council, who know exactly what they are doing, being funded by the likes of Coca-Cola, Danone, Mars, McDonald's and Nestlé.



Marketing controls?

Research commissioned by the WHO analyses food marketing controls across the globe, including regulation of TV advertising, in-school marketing, sponsorship, product placement, internet marketing and sales promotions.

The report highlights ‘significant regulatory gaps’ and concludes that ‘existing regulations do not recognise food as a category in need of special consideration from a public health standpoint’ It adds: ‘Much less effort is being directed at developing a comprehensive, across-the-board approach to the regulation of marketing techniques and a stronger regulatory environment in countries that have relatively low but rapidly rising rates of diet-related non-communicable diseases.’

■ **Marketing Food to Children: The Global Regulatory Environment**, by Dr Corinna Hawkes. See <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2004/9241591579.pdf>



reviews

Not on the Label: What really goes into the food on your plate

Felicity Lawrence. Penguin, 2004. ISBN 0 141 01566 7. £7.99 (www.penguin.com)

Shopped: The shocking power of British supermarkets

Joanna Blythman. 4th Estate, 2004. ISBN 0 00 715803 3. £12.99. (www.4thestate.com)

Joanna Blythman and Felicity Lawrence are two of the UK's leading investigative food journalists. In two new books they each take a long, hard look at the UK's food supply and both reach a similar conclusion – that the overwhelming domination of our food supply by our favourite supermarkets threatens not just British agriculture, but also the choice and availability of almost every foodstuff we might wish to place upon our plates.

Felicity Lawrence's *Not on the Label: What really goes into the food on your plate* is perhaps the most accessible of the two books. Lawrence travels to farms, factories, packhouses and lorry depots around the world, revealing the hidden origins of supermarket staples such as chicken, salad, beans, bread and ready meals.

She talks to the destitute migrants who provide the muscle for Spain's production of agrochemical salad crops, to prawn farmers in Vietnam and to Ugandan coffee farmers who are paid a pittance for their valuable coffee crop.

By talking to real people Lawrence opens our eyes to the true human and environmental costs of modern food production, allowing us a bitter, but welcome, taste of reality.

Not on the Label also explains how supermarkets have effectively and deliberately deskilled their customers, so that many of us can no longer make a simple meal or bake a loaf of bread. Why go to all the trouble of home cooking when your friendly local supermarket can provide a brightly packaged replica, designed by food scientists from those cheapest of ingredients – starch, fat and sugar – all whipped into shape by a cocktail of additives?



Continuing the theme, *Shopped: The shocking power of British supermarkets* is Joanna Blythman's meticulously researched exposé of our favourite retailers. Blythman charts the rise of the supermarkets, and the downfall of the high street butcher, baker and grocer where local people once met and purchased fresh, locally sourced produce. Like Lawrence she talks to real people, but focuses her attention on our own island, visiting the 'trolley' towns where it takes a car or taxi ride to bring home the weekly shop, and the industrial agricultural landscapes of Lincolnshire where vast quantities of foodstuffs are prepared by an army of casual, low paid workers.

At almost twice the size of *Not on the Label*, *Shopped* is a meatier, highly detailed exploration of the power of the supermarkets. Blythman backs up her research with hard-hitting facts, figures and quotes from producers and industry insiders.

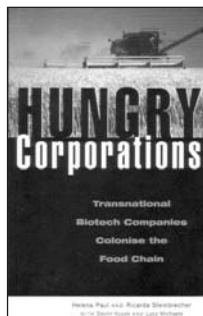
These are both books that will make you angry at just how far the supermarkets have misled us, seducing us with apparent convenience, choice and value whilst destroying our farming heritage and food culture.

■ Both *Not on the Label* and *Shopped* are now available from The Food Commission, see Marketplace on page 22.

Hungry Corporations

Helena Paul and Ricarda Steinbrecher. Zed Books, 2003. ISBN 1 84277 3010 1. £15.95. (www.zedbooks.co.uk)

Hungry Corporations from authors Helena Paul and Ricarda Steinbrecher, focuses on biotech companies but provides an excellent critique of the nature and operation of corporations in general – from their (illegal) beginnings in the East India Company to their ownership of patents on living creatures and their control over the agencies designed to regulate them.



The book is an invaluable record of the domination of human rights by the rights of these artificial legal entities that now shape our future.



Supersize me!

film review

Morgan Spurlock hatched his idea for the 'Supersize Me' documentary on Thanksgiving 2002 (according to Spurlock, the most gluttonous day of the year). A lawsuit filed against McDonald's by two teenagers who claimed that the fast-food company was responsible for their obesity and poor health prompted Spurlock to wonder what would happen to *his* health if he ate nothing but McDonald's food every day for a month.

After receiving a clean bill from a GP, a cardiologist and a gastroenterologist, Spurlock set out on a McFest of the States, abiding by some arduous self-inflicted rules:

- everything eaten and drunk to be purchased at McDonald's, even water;
- every menu item to be eaten at least three times over the month;
- three meals to be eaten (completely) daily;
- supersizing his meal only if the staff suggested it;
- taking no extra exercise, but walking the US average of 5000 steps a day.

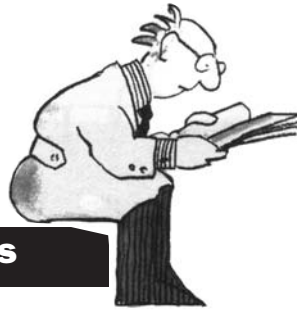
As it turned out, he was asked nine times if he wanted to supersize, five of those being in Texas. The first time resulted in his vomiting out of the car window.

Whilst not suggesting his behaviour is the norm, Spurlock addresses some important issues around fast-food culture; he gained 25lbs, doubled his risk of heart failure, and his fat-laden liver was 'like paté' – an outcome the medics just had not foreseen. Some 20% of children in the States have diet-related abnormal liver function tests, and half of these are at risk of early liver failure in adult life.

Throughout, Spurlock talks to health and education professionals and looks at serious issues such as junk-food infiltration of schools, and the hefty amounts of advertising and other forms of marketing to children.

Following the film's release, McDonald's withdrew supersizing from its US restaurants and, whilst supersizing is not a feature of its UK outlets, the film will certainly stimulate discussion on the continuing effects of the high salt, sugar and fat, nutrient-poor, fast food and ready-meal diet so commonplace today.

■ 'Supersize Me' is in UK-wide cinemas from 10 September



What the doctor reads

The latest research from the medical journals

It is easy to overeat fast food

Given free access to large fast food meals, adolescents (age 13-17) typically consumed over 60% of their daily energy needs (over 1600 kcal) in one sitting, a study in the US has found. Overweight adolescents ate more than normal weight adolescents, both in absolute terms (1860 kcal versus 1460 kcal) and relative to their energy needs (67% versus 57% of daily needs).

In a second study, the researchers found that overweight participants ate more food on days when fast food stores were visited than on other days (total intake 409 kcal higher on fast food days), an effect that was not observed among normal weight adolescents.

■ CB Ebbeling *et al*, JAMA 291, 2004.

School choices reduce diet quality

Giving children choices from a menu increases the chances that they will eat a poor diet, researchers in the US have shown. The *à la carte* availability of school lunches was associated with reduced fruit and vegetable consumption, and increased total fat and saturated fat intake. The presence of snack vending machines in the school was also negatively linked to fruit consumption.

■ MY Kubik *et al*, Am J Public Health 93, 2003

Energy dense foods tend to be cheaper

As the Food Commission has suggested in previous reports, comparisons of the prices of commonly bought foods has shown that fatty and sugary foods tend to be cheaper than foods with lower energy density, such as lean meats, wholegrain cereal foods, fruit and vegetables. A study of the diets of over 800 French adults has confirmed that the energy content of foods purchased (energy per unit weight of the food) was inversely related to the average price for that food, with the cost of a low energy-dense diet being higher than the cost of a high energy-dense diet, regardless of the amount of food energy purchased.

■ N Darmon *et al*, Public Health Nutr 7, 2004.

Low fat foods do not help reduce intake

A study in Denmark using weighed records of people's diets found that people choosing low-fat food (milk, sauces, cold meats) ate significantly more food compared with counterparts who chose foods with regular fat levels.

As a result almost the same amount of energy and fat were consumed in both groups.

■ J Matthiessen *et al*, Public Health Nutr 6, 2003.

Why do people overeat?

A review of research papers has concluded that the energy density of foods is a key determinant of energy intake. The studies show that humans have a weak innate ability to recognise foods with a high energy density and to reduce the amount of food eaten in order to maintain energy balance.

Most fast foods have an extremely high energy density with the average energy density of the entire menu approximately 260 kcal/100g – 65% higher than the average British diet (approx 160 kcal/100g) and more than twice the energy density of recommended healthy diets (approx 125 kcal/100g).

It is far higher than traditional African diets (approx 110 kcal/100g) that probably represent levels against which human weight regulatory mechanisms evolved. The authors conclude that accidental consumption of excess energy may promote weight gain and obesity.

■ AM Prentice and SA Jebb, Obes Rev 4, 2003.

Diabetes linked to sugar

With type 2 diabetes affecting an increasing proportion of the population, there has been growing concern that refined carbohydrates may be to blame.

In a survey of dietary patterns in the US from 1909 to 1997, a significant correlation was observed between diabetes incidence and the intake of many food ingredients, including fat, carbohydrate, protein, fibre, corn syrup and total energy.

If the rise in total food energy is removed from the equation, the only factors correlated with the rise in diabetes were corn syrup (positively linked) and dietary fibre (negatively linked). The authors recommend more research into possible causative links between diabetes and diets high in sugars and low in fibre.

■ LS Gross *et al*, Am J Clin Nutr 79, 2004.

Kids overeat watching TV

Most reports of TV viewing and its links to obesity have not monitored what children eat while actually watching television. Now a study from the US of 64 primary level school children has shown that a significant proportion of a child's daily energy intake is consumed while watching TV, rising from around 17% of total daily intake during weekdays to 26% of intake during weekends. There was no significant difference in the fat content or energy density of foods eaten while viewing compared with foods eaten at other times, but the consumption of vegetables was significantly lower while viewing, and the consumption of snack foods was significantly higher.

■ DM Matheson *et al*, Am J Clin Nutr 79, 2004.

Gold: The high fat, low fat spread

This tub of St Ivel Gold Low Fat Spread contains 38% fat, almost double the Food Standard Agency's definition of a high fat product as containing 20% fat or more. Amazingly, high fat margarines and spreads like St



Ivel Gold are legally allowed to claim to be low fat, even when they contain up to 40% fat. Discover more of these loopholes and learn how to understand

and decipher food labels by buying a copy of The Food Commission's brand new *Poster Guide to Reading Food Labels*. Fully updated and now in colour, the poster costs only £2.50 (including p&p). For more details see Marketplace on page 22.





Not on the Label

Felicity Lawrence examines what really goes into the food on our plates in a series of undercover investigations that track some of the most popular foods we eat today. She discovers why beef waste ends up in chicken, why a third of apples are thrown away, and why supermarkets won't stock different varieties of wine unless they all taste the same. Investigative food writing at its best. £7.99

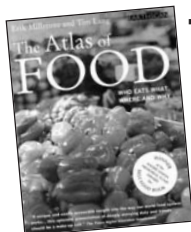
Shopped: The shocking power of British supermarkets

Joanna Blythman investigates the handful of supermarkets that now supply 80% of our groceries. Meticulously researched, this is a book that will make you angry at just how far the supermarkets have misled us, seducing us with apparent convenience, choice and value whilst destroying our farming heritage and food culture. £12.99



The Atlas of Food

The subtitle of this book is 'who eats what, where and why.' This extremely useful, well illustrated and comprehensive publication examines the food trade, food politics and new technologies, and their effects on the environment and human health. An ideal resource for secondary-school pupils, students, and anyone



seeking an overview of food production and its impact on our lives and livelihoods. £12.99

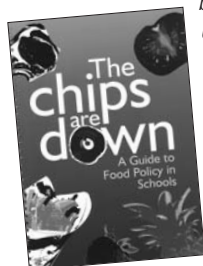
The Food Our Children Eat – 2nd edition

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 enjoy a healthy wide-range of foods. No more tantrums, fights and refusals: her strategies are relaxed, low-effort – and they work. £8.99



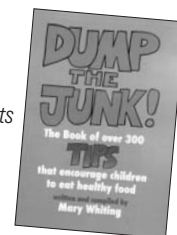
The Chips are Down

This is an excellent guide to the planning and promotion of healthy eating in schools, full of nitty-gritty guidance, such as how to gain support from teachers, parents, health workers and, most importantly, pupils. £15.00



Dump the Junk!

Containing over 300 expert tips for how to encourage children to eat healthy food and dump the junk, and with lots of tasty recipes, this is an essential guide for parents. Illustrated with entertaining cartoons by the Food Magazine's Ben Nash. £7.99



Fast Food Nation

The bestseller that lifted the lid on the US fast food industry. Eric Schlosser explores how fake smells and tastes are created, talks to abattoir workers and explains how the fast food industry is transforming not only our diet but our landscape, economy, workforce and culture. Essential reading. £7.99



Broadcasting Bad Health

This Food Commission report sets out the case for why food marketing to children needs to be controlled, using illustrations, case studies and statistics from around the world. Available as free pdf file on website (see below) or in print for £10.00

Back issues of the Food Magazine

A full set of available back issues (numbers 50–65 and several older issues) is available for £30.00 (£40 overseas). Stocks are limited and some older issues can only be supplied as photocopies. Individual back issues cost £3.50 each.

Posters:

Food Additives, Children's Food, Food Labelling

Packed with essential information to help you and your family eat healthy, safe food these posters 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 is A2 in size and costs £2.50



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feedback

letters from our readers

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 write to The Editor, *The Food Magazine*, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF or email to letters@foodcomm.org.uk

Extensive meat is OK

Your magazine is full of lots of interesting and useful information. But you do sometimes go over the top, and the piece against meat eating is a case in point (FM issue 65).

The piece fails to distinguish between intensive meat production – often known as factory farming – and humane rearing of animals by caring farmers under natural conditions. In the British context there is a high proportion of land which is only suitable for raising beef and sheep. What do you suggest we do with it?

Yes, farmers feed a small amount of imported concentrated food to produce more and better meat. But this is forced on us by the competition from meat imported at low prices – from industrial production or third world exploitation. Why don't you campaign for tariffs on meat that is not produced to the high standards enforced here?

Many farmers strive to retain the 'good old ways', while making a modest living from food production. Economic necessity forces us to modernise more than we might like. Otherwise we face bankruptcy and the end of small-scale farming.

Pippa Woods, The Family Farmers' Association. pippafamilyfarmers@uk2.net

Selenium shock

I was reading with great interest, as usual, your latest magazine (issue 65) when I spotted what looks like a pretty serious typing error on page 23. In the reply to the letter 'Obesity? Look to the Soil' there is a quote from Tom Stockdale that refers to taking a daily supplement containing 200mg daily selenium as selenite. I think this was probably intended to be 200 micrograms.

The Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals has set the safe upper limit for total selenium intake as 0.91mg per day, with up to 0.3mg per day from supplements. Selenium toxicity is cumulative and 200mg per day could result in symptoms of selenosis.

Carol Stevens
Worcestershire Scientific Services.

Baby feeds? Ask ASDA

My local ASDA has decided to put up labels on baby milk shelves that suggest sources of feeding and weaning advice. It lists the baby milk companies and gives their 'Careline' phone numbers.

I think it's appalling that the supermarket should be telling parents to contact formula companies for such information without even a mention of trying your health visitor. In my opinion it breaks milk promotion laws but I think trading standards won't see it that way. I complained to ASDA but I just got a letter thanking me for contacting them.

Tracy Hayden, via email.

Eds: This looks like a clear breach of the formula marketing codes. Well done for spotting it. We will report the case to IBFAN, the organisation that monitors the promotion of breast milk substitutes.



New mums can contact the National Childbirth Trust (0870 444 8708) for breast feeding advice. Non-commercial feeding and weaning advice can be obtained from most community dietitians, health visitors, midwives and GPs.

Don't forget fair trade

I was interested in your article regarding the cost of juice (FM65) and fully support your efforts in highlighting the exorbitant prices effectively charged by producers for many juice-based drinks.

However, I was concerned that in your table giving a comparison of the cost of pure juice blends you included Fruit Passion Fair Trade Pure Breakfast Juice.

Fair Trade products include a premium in their price to ensure that growers receive a fair price for their products and can use some of the money generated to invest in assets that they desperately need, from the installation of clean water supplies to the establishment of schools.

Advising consumers to buy the cheapest available option does little to help Third

Air-babies

I was interested to read your recent article about organic produce and food miles. This morning, I popped into my local Tesco and noticed that their organic baby carrots and baby corn are coming from Zambia and Thailand. Other, non-organic corn in the supermarket came from Europe and non-organic new season carrots were British.

I'm just off to my allotment to harvest my own chemical-free, pest-free baby carrots, which were grown with minimum effort – and I am only a novice gardener!

I am shocked that the food industry has to contribute to global warming by air-freighting in-season organic veg half-way around the globe, when they surely could be grown much closer to home.

Helen Best, Newcastle

Eds: We agree. It wasn't so long ago that the first crops of seasonal fruit and veg were eagerly awaited – but supermarkets now give us the 'convenience' of seasonal crops all year long. UK grown Brussels sprouts won't be in season until September, but Sainsbury's are happy to use non-renewable, polluting oil to import this 'seasonal' crop 10,000 miles from Australia. And at £1.49 for 17 sprouts (8p per sprout) these vegetables are only for the wealthy.



World growers and the immense social problems caused by the UK's ecological footprint as described in your excellent article on the price of meat.

Nigel Keane, by email

Eds: Thank you for your reminding us never to forget the importance of Fair Trade. We hoped to show that pure juices such as the Fruit Passion Fair Trade breakfast juice, millilitre for millilitre, offer considerably better value for their real fruit content than almost all so-called 'juice drinks', even taking into account the Fair Trade premium.

We hope this point came across in our article.



Back to school fatter with Woolworths

A 50-page back-to-school catalogue from Woolworths is largely devoted to clothes, shoes, satchels and bikes. But they couldn't miss out food, surely?

No, there it is on page 49, under Playtime suggestions. And what do they want kids to eat? The entire list consists of Dorritos crisps, Pic 'n' Mix sweets, Chupa lollies, Smarties and Ribena.

But wait – page 36 is also food-oriented. Here we find pencil cases emblazoned with

logos for Coke, Refreshers, Polos, Milky Way and KitKat. How much fatter does Woolies want our children to become?



A friendly chat is compulsory

If you worked on low wages for a supermarket that cared little for its staff or suppliers, and everything for its profit margin, you might feel there was little to smile about. Yet when staff greet you with a friendly chat and offer to pack your bags, they must feel happy with their lot, surely?

An insight into this cheeriness can be found in the following memo, received from a website that tracks snack trends. We're told this notice was found (and photographed) on a till in Sainsbury's:

MEMO TO ALL CASHIERS

We scored 75.6% for Period 1 on our Mystery Shopper, which is below the target of 77%. We got 50% for scan and pack which meant not every colleague was scanning and packing. This is MANDATORY! We WILL scan and pack the first 3 items for EVERY customer. We scored 0% for interaction i.e. chatting to the customer. We WILL speak to EVERY customer that goes through our checkouts. We scored 1.0 for queue length against a target of 0.6. This score is not acceptable!!! Any colleague not complying to the above will face disciplinary action.

Staff smiles may be less to do with employee satisfaction and more to do with the threat of disciplinary action!

Source: Dave Green at www.snackspot.org
 ■ Joanna Blythman went undercover in British supermarkets to research her new book *Shopped* and found a similar harsh attitude displayed to both staff and suppliers. See book review on page 20.

Company keepers

Can we detect the way the world's largest food company is thinking?

If we were responsible for flooding the world with confectionery, sweet breakfast cereals, salty processed foods and far too much baby formula milk, we might start thinking about the illness we cause, and the remedies needed – and appoint to our board a leading light in the pharmaceutical business.

Interesting then that Nestlé has just appointed Rolf Hanggi, vice-chairman of the drug and food supplement company Roche to its board.

And if we were concerned about any liability for selling health-harming food, and wanted to cover our corporate backs, then who better to appoint than Kaspar Villiger, chairman of insurance group Swiss Re, also newly elected to Nestlé's board?

Having ensured we can continue to make squillions from our dubious products and practices, we would need to put the money somewhere safe. Who better to advise us than the ex Bank of England chief Sir Eddie George, a third newcomer to the Nestlé board?

Timebomb? What do they mean?

Food marketers have finally admitted they have a crisis on their hands. A symbolic timebomb appeared on the front cover of a recent edition of *Marketing Week*, surrounded by calorie-laden chocolate, crisps and cola.

Are the junk-food marketers finally in tune with the concerns of the health community?

Is this an acknowledgement of the rise in obesity, described by head of the Food Standards Agency Sir John Krebs as the 'ticking timebomb' of obesity?

Do they finally understand what Chief Medical Officer Liam Donaldson meant when he talked about the 'timebomb' of public health?

Nope. The marketers fear that the timebomb of legislation is about to explode and will finally force them to clean up their act. They fear government action will stop them advertising unhealthy foods to children.

Flight to Mars

Ryanair travellers will be amused by the reading material available to passengers.

On the back of almost every seat in the plane is a prominent advertisement for Mars bars.

And if passengers look at the ceiling there is a list of the snacks available from the stewards: Mars bars, Delight (made by Mars), Maltesers (made by Mars)...



"We're now cruising at 48,000 calories an hour!"