

# The FOOD MAGAZINE

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

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## Fighting food fraud and fabrication

**W**hen shopping or eating out in the UK, we can choose from a huge variety of food products. Supermarkets, corner shops and markets are jam-packed with produce which has been sourced from all over the world. Such abundance is dependent on a complex production system, and, as with any such system, things can sometimes go wrong. Mistakes can be made, and unscrupulous manufacturers and retailers can lie about food quality and food ingredients. Food may be sold when it is past its best, or it may contain unlabeled ingredients which may be harmful to our health.

Any food that is mislabelled may well come to the attention of trading standards officers (TSOs), the men and women who are on the front line of policing our food system. These local authority employees check that shoppers are not misled by inaccurate information. They respond to consumer complaints, and conduct their own surveys, sampling food and drink across the UK. Any manufacturer or retailer selling food

which, "is not of the nature, substance or quality demanded," may find themselves answering to their local TSO, who also has the power to take them to court.

When a TSO suspects they have found a problem, and needs hard evidence, they must turn to the experts, the public analysts – the scientists who can examine a product and reveal exactly what it contains. For instance, a TSO might want to check whether a product has been re-labelled with a new 'use-by' date, or whether a 'low fat' claim is accurate, and the public analyst can verify this by using laboratory tests. Should a case go to court, the public analyst's opinion is invaluable, and as such they play a crucial role in protecting the public's health.

The public analyst service is essential, but their laboratories are threatened by a lack of funding and the number of labs is dwindling. Faced with an uncertain future, the flow of new recruits to the service is now drying up.

■ See page 4-5 for the full story.

### The right food at the right price



**Eric Samuel (left) of the charity, Community Food Enterprise, buys fruit and veg from Spitalfields market and sells it at low cost through a mobile food store, and at stands at local schools and workplaces. The project also supplies primary schools with fruit and veg for free, to use at breakfast clubs and for breaktimes. Here he is with his vegetable supplier Kevin.**

The price of food is skyrocketing and it is the poorest among us who will be feeling the pinch the worst. With the price of fruit and veg escalating more than 10% in the past year by some estimates, it is getting even harder to eat healthily. While politicians dither instead of hanging their heads in shame at their inaction on poverty, there are those who are working to make sure those on low incomes can get the right food at the right price. *The Food Magazine* profiles Eric Samuel, founder of the charity, Community Food Enterprise, which supplies thousands of east London residents with low cost, high quality fruit and veg – right on their doorsteps. See pages 10-11 for the full story.



**When shopping or eating out we can choose from a huge variety of food products. *The Food Magazine* shines a spotlight on the experts who test our food and ensure that high standards prevail.**

# A simple diet?

It is surprising how many people happily say they know all about the minimum five-a-day fruit and veg message, but who also admit they do not eat that on a regular basis. I have spoken about this to all sorts of people, from diverse backgrounds, including quite a few who actually work in food – selling it, promoting healthy eating, and cooking. The reasons are variable, but mostly come down to time, the temptation of ‘chocolate,’ and for some, money. And, many mention a familiar malaise – a combination of guilt, and worry about dying younger than one should from some seemingly self-inflicted illness directly attributable to dietary failures.

So, here we are, in the midst of a seeming reawakening of food culture, when every time you turn on the TV some amateur or professional cook is blathering on about the intricacies of spicing or the horrors of overcooking, and yet, the population average consumption of fruit and veg is just about three portions a day. Our food policies have failed to deliver even the basics, and what’s worse, have handily managed to heap the blame for their failure onto guilt-ridden individuals.

It has made me think back to an interview from my younger days, when I went to see Maisie C. Steven, in Perthshire, to speak to her about her book *The Good Scots Diet: what happened to it?*

I did my best to be enthused by her description of the healthy diet of the Scots before the long working hours of industrialisation got ahold of them, along with a cheap and ready supply of gut rotting white flour and sugar. From my memory, the diet Steven described consisted mostly of turnips, oatmeal, barley, with an occasional bit of meat or animal blood. Excellent, I told her, while inwardly I thanked my stars for being born into modernity, along with its delicious, and seemingly endless, supply of hundreds of foodstuffs from all over the world.

But, 15 years later, I am making an apology to Steven, as I find myself becoming romantic about

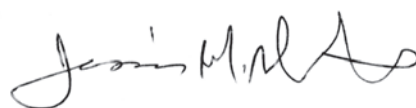
her descriptions of the robust health enjoyed by those people who enjoyed just a few foods, grown or gathered locally, simply cooked, and eaten in moderation.

Of course, I still do not eat remotely like the diet she describes, and dietary surveys show that, most likely, neither do you. But, wouldn’t it be interesting if somehow we could find the deliciousness and the celebration in a diet like that, one healthy to body and environment, kind on the wallet, and simple to the taste? Kind of like a cool glass of water after a prolonged and gluttonous feast.

We won’t find our shove in the right direction in current government policies – with their focus on individual health promotion messages, a refusal to crank the purse open wide enough in support of the poor or public sector projects, and go-easy style on the food industry. It would be unwise to look to industry, which cares what you eat so long as you eat what they are selling you. As the recent profit margins posted by big agri-business and some supermarket chains show – as ever, for big biz, where there is misery and poverty, there is brass.

But, all over the UK there are people who are keeping us thinking and hoping. People applying pressure in the places where it counts, struggling for social and environmental justice and experimenting with new ways of living. You will find them in the pages of this magazine, and I hope they give you the boost they give me.

**Jessica Mitchell, Editor**




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# Suspect additives to be 'voluntarily' removed

UK manufacturers will be called upon to voluntarily remove six artificial food colourings from all food and drink by the end of 2009, if advice from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is acted upon by Ministers. The food additives, which have been linked to hyperactive behaviour in children, have been the focus of The Food Commission's 'Action on Additives' campaign. The campaign has kept the pressure on the UK government and manufacturers to remove these unnecessary, and potentially harmful additives, and has published details of more than 1,000 products, despite claims by the Food and Drink Federation that they are used in only a, "handful" of products.

Whilst the FSA advice is welcome, it must be emphasised that, as the ban is voluntary, action may not be forthcoming from certain manufacturers. The advice also ignores the use of the preservative sodium benzoate, which was included in the research that linked food additives with hyperactivity. The FSA has said that, "Further consideration would need to be given," to the issue.

At the same time as seeking a voluntary ban here, the FSA is also looking for a mandatory EU ban on the colourings. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) controversially concluded in March that no action was required, however,

a working group has been formed by EFSA to discuss the issue further. Following the EFSA opinion, the 'Action on Additives' campaign wrote to the European Health Commissioner, with a statement co-signed by 42 public interest organisations from 12 EU member states. The statement pointed out that the European Commission has a responsibility to place the health of the consumer at the forefront of food policy, and that to do nothing would seriously fail European consumers, and fall short of fulfilling the stated purpose for which the EFSA was initially formed.

Meanwhile, support for a ban is building amongst Members of the European Parliament (MEPs); the EU Environment Committee has recently voted in support of amending legislation to include a ban on the six colourings. The proposal must now be agreed on by the plenary session of the European Parliament in July. If you would like to see an EU ban, write to your MEP to urge them to support the proposal.

■ For more information see website at [www.actiononadditives.com](http://www.actiononadditives.com)

■ To contact your MEP, visit [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

## Caterers fail to label GM ingredients

Two recent surveys by trading standards officers in North Yorkshire and Norfolk have revealed that many local restaurants were using vegetable oil or mayonnaise which contained oil from genetically modified (GM) crops. Restaurants must clearly declare any use of GM ingredients on their menus, but almost all of the surveyed restaurants had failed to do this.

The North Yorkshire survey found that around a quarter of caterers were using cooking oils sourced from GM crops without telling their customers. The officers visited cafés, takeaways, pubs, restaurants and hotels across the Yorkshire and the Humber region.

In Norfolk, trading standards officers surveyed 50 independent caterers including chip shops, sandwich bars, restaurants and private members' clubs. By spot-checking labels they found that 21 outlets were selling vegetable oils and mayonnaise which contained oil from genetically modified soya beans, but this information was not being passed onto customers.

Both surveys found that caterers who were using GM oils were either ignorant of the law or had not carried out proper checks of the raw materials they were using (the oils were labelled as GM, but the caterers were not checking the labels). No prosecutions were made, and when informed of the error, most traders chose to change to a non GM source of oil, rather than labelling meals as containing GM ingredients.

■ A useful fact sheet on GM labelling (pdf format) has been produced by Norfolk Trading Standards and can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/5y9w6j>

## Calorie counts on the menu

New York City law now requires chain restaurants to post calorie counts on menus and menu boards so consumers can make more informed choices. Around 1/4 of these restaurants are already complying.

The new rules were first proposed back in autumn 2006 but have been subject to more than one legal challenge by the New York State Restaurant Association (NYSRA). A third appeal is due to be heard this summer, which could see the new law over-turned. NYRSA claims that chain restaurants, defined as those with more than 15 establishments nationally, are being unfairly targeted. And, that the strict rules about the format for displaying calorie information violate *First Amendment* freedom of speech rights by compelling, "government-directed speech."



The Food Commission organised free 'Action on Additives' workshops for students at Bonneville Primary School in London, as part of the school's healthy eating week. In just two hours these children found more than 80 products containing the food additives which the FSA wants to see removed by UK food manufacturers. These young people had a message for the government, "We don't think our parents know enough about these additives. Please get rid of them, we don't want to eat them." Photo by Jessica Mitchell.

# Sharp practice by supermarkets

Following a two year enquiry, the Competition Commission has announced its ideas for curbing the power of the major supermarkets. Campaigners say they do not go far enough to stop the big chains bleeding suppliers dry and driving local stores out of business.

"The Commission has thrown suppliers a bone with their plans for toughening up the *Supermarket Code of Practice (SCOP)* and by calling for the appointment of an ombudsman to oversee it, but they've done almost nothing to control supermarket expansion," says Vicki Hird of Friends of the Earth.

At stake on the supply side is the future of the farmers who grow the food that is on your supermarket shelves. Entire sectors are being driven out of business by the failure of supermarkets to raise payments to producers, who are facing escalating production costs. Talk to many suppliers and they are full of stories about sharp practice by supermarket buyers, whose main interest is looking out for number one – with the problems of suppliers of no interest to them.

A leading UK producer (who has requested anonymity for this piece) feels the problems of fresh produce growers illustrate some of the worst practices of the multiples. The producer we spoke to is full of stories about how retailers are happy to, "drop growers in it," because all they and the government care about is, "making sure food stays as cheap as possible."

Some examples of problems faced by producers that we were told about include:

- A grower with a verbal contract for one price rung up on the weekend and told to reduce his price by 10%, by Monday, because the retailer needed to increase its profit.
- A grower with a verbal contract to sell his particular vegetable crop to one supermarket, who was rung up by another retailer who told him he would be delisted (never sell to them again) unless he sold the crop to them. The retailer was prepared to use such threats because its regular supplier had just lost their crop to disease.
- A grower who lost approximately £2 million when a retailer rang to cancel an order at the last minute for a crop they had specifically requested he grow.

To some extent, the Competition Commission has acknowledged that supermarkets do play fast and

rough with suppliers by altering the terms of their contracts and payments at the last minute, and that this needs to be controlled. But, Vicki Hird wants to be sure that the still-to-be-drafted wording of the new *SCOP* is not unduly influenced by supermarket interests. "The last thing we need is a weak code which has absolutely no teeth. We want a tough code overseen by an ombudsman with the power to impose serious fines," she says.

The proposed ombudsman would have the power to take anonymous submissions from producers, and to pursue investigations, not to hang around waiting for complaints.

According to Phil Hudson, chief horticultural adviser at the National Farmers Union, it is positive step that there will be a move from a, "passive code," to an, "active code," for which bad practice should be sought out and eliminated.

Certainly, producers are frightened to be identified as complainants about supermarkets, and it is hard to imagine that their problems will be easily solved. As the nervous producer we spoke to says, "Retailers just deny that they do any of these things and that is a big problem. We hope the new *SCOP* will make a difference, but we will have to wait and see."



Cherries at Brogdale. Photo by Ida Fabrizio.

## Fruit collection stays put

The National Fruit Collections, including more than 2000 varieties of apple, are to remain at Brogdale, in Kent. The management of the Collections went out to tender last year, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs considered proposals to move the more than 4,000 varieties of fruit trees and bushes to another site. Joan Morgan, co-author of *The Book of Apples*, and long time friend of the Collections, says, "The decision to keep the Collections onsite was the right one. This is very good news indeed." Public access to the Collections remains and Morgan encourages people to come for a visit with their families.

■ For information about becoming a Friend of the National Fruit Collections, currently free, visit [www.fruitforum.net/inforequest.aspx](http://www.fruitforum.net/inforequest.aspx)

## Food Commission news

The Food Commission has had a busy and successful year – thanks to the readers of *The Food Magazine*, our committed staff and our project funders. Here is just a little bit about what we have been up to...

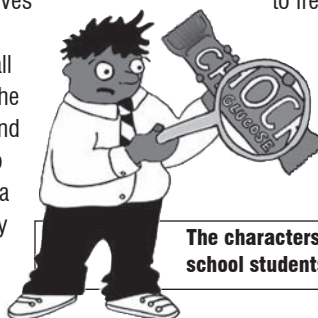
More than 200 staff and residents of Hexagon Housing Association have taken part in workshops as part of our Food Standards Agency (FSA) funded 'Eat less salt' project. The work, which has now finished, included many people on benefits, teenagers living in temporary accommodation and residents in homes for those with longterm mental illnesses. We are now working to convince housing regulators to support the more active involvement of social housing providers across the country in work on healthy eating and food growing.

Our 'Action on Additives' campaign is celebrating the FSA's decision to call for a voluntary ban on the 'Southampton Seven', and is continuing its work to press MEPs to vote for a Europe-wide, mandatory ban.

We are looking forward to the upcoming year, with work already begun on research into the flavourings industry, and with our appointment as Healthy Eating Ambassador for The Foyer Federation. This will involve work with some YMCAs to improve their catering and food service.

Thanks to readers, we are able to do a range of free work for organisations with limited budgets. This last year we have conducted workshops in schools for healthy eating weeks, and for childminders who wanted to know more about additives. We co-authored a ground-breaking report about low wages and health.\* We have helped trading standards officers to distribute the contents of our 'Chew on this' website to students and schools all over Surrey – giving them access to free lesson plans about food policy.

\*The impact of low wage employment on workers' health, nutrition and living standards: a case for the London Living Wage is available at [www.foodcomm.org.uk/books.htm](http://www.foodcomm.org.uk/books.htm)



The characters at [www.chewonthis.org.uk](http://www.chewonthis.org.uk) help secondary school students understand more about the food they eat.

## Getting tougher on ads to kids

A group of consumer and health non-governmental organisations have launched a stiff set of rules to restrict marketing of food to children.

The *International Code on Marketing of Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children* also sets a benchmark for negotiations at the World Health Organization which was charged last year by health ministers with producing a set of recommendations on the issue – a process expected to take several years.

The *Code* draws its inspiration from the work done to protect babies from excessive marketing of breast-milk substitutes, where an international code holds companies to account across the world even in countries without their own statutory regulations. Furthermore, the new *Code* aims to protect children from cross-border marketing through media such as satellite TV and the internet, which lie outside a country's jurisdiction.

Produced by Consumers International and the International Obesity TaskForce (IOTF), between them representing several hundred organisations in more than a hundred countries worldwide, the *Code* calls for a ban on any forms of promotional marketing of fatty and sugary products directed towards children (as defined by local legislation, but at least up to the age of 15) through any media, including internet, TV, print, and at the point of sale.

The restrictions apply to foods and beverages high in fat, sugar or salt, following definitions similar to the one used by the UK regulator Ofcom in restricting TV advertising to children. This leaves open the opportunity for producers and supermarkets to advertise healthier products to children, and it encourages manufacturers to reformulate and change their portfolio of products.

The *Code* proposes a ban on TV advertising of these products up to the 9pm watershed. It also bans their promotion in settings such as schools, nurseries, and health centres, and bans the marketing of these products towards parents and carers.

Some grey areas remain to be fully resolved, such as issues to do with brand promotion. For example, McDonald's has recently advertised during children's TV in the UK, but has focused upon their fruit offerings, in line with Ofcom restrictions on junk food advertising. Campaigners note that it is still uncertain whether the new recommendations would ban some brands from promoting to children altogether, if it is determined that they are inextricably linked to certain types of product.

Professor Philip James, Chairman of the IOTF, said, "We challenge the food and beverage industry to throw their weight behind this *Code* and demonstrate that they really do want to be part of the solution and not part of the problem."

■ The *Code* is available to download from <http://tinyurl.com/43tw4x>

## Trans fats and take-aways

Surrey County Council trading standards department has responded to a call by The Food Commission for research into trans fats in fast food meals. Despite Food Standards Agency (FSA) assurances about the low level of these fats in the diet of UK consumers, we maintain that there is a strong possibility that some people may be consuming them at a level damaging to their health.

Many fast food restaurants are likely to use deep-frying oils with high levels of trans fats, as they can be used again and again. In some restaurants a single serving of fried chicken and chips can put you above the maximum, recommended daily intake.

Trading standards officers will visit take-away premises, in Surrey, to take samples of a typical chicken and chips meal that has been deep fried. Products will then be analysed for trans fats, saturated fat, and salt. According to Claire Wilman, a senior trading standards officer, "It may benefit consumers to know whether the food they eat contains any trans fats, as studies have shown they may contribute to obesity and coronary heart disease. At present, there are no regulations in the UK limiting the quantity of trans fats in food, and the only requirement is for added hydrogenated fats to be identified in the list of ingredients. However, this does not apply to food for direct sale



**Trading Standards Officers in Surrey are surveying take-away chicken and chips meals to test for levels of trans fats.**

such as in take-aways, as no ingredients listing is required."

We hope to use the results of the research to encourage the FSA to think again on this issue – in the first instance to commission a larger, national survey about trans fats in fast food.

The School Food Trust recently released a ranking of local authorities in England by the number of junk food outlets that exist per secondary school. On average, there were 23 per school, with Brighton and Hove topping the list at a whopping 46. The young people using these take-aways could be consuming high levels of trans fats along with large quantities of salt and saturated fat. Surely, it is time the FSA acted to find out.

**These young men took part in one of our 'Eat less salt' workshops in Peckham. Some of them reported regularly eating up to two portions of deep fried, take away chicken or ribs, and chips a day. These are the kind of consumers who may be getting high levels of trans fats in their diets. The FSA has said there is no need to put in place mandatory upper limits for trans fats in foods in the UK. Restaurant meals do not even need to provide information to customers about the fats they deep fry in. Photo by Jessica Mitchell.**



# Fighting food fraud

**Our food system does not police itself. Sadly, the foods intended for our tables are sometimes produced by fools, sometimes by crooks and sometimes by the careless. Bob Stevens reports.**

**D**angerous food colourings – peanuts and other allergens – offal in burgers – toxins from mould – pesticide residues in fruit and veg – hormones – food fraud: it is thanks to public analysts, independent experts who perform analysis of food samples and give evidence in court about malpractice, that consumers are protected from these risks.

That sounds like a pretty important role, doesn't it? Certainly an exciting and challenging one. And yet, the public analyst profession is facing extinction through continued neglect.

As a result of continuing cut backs, laboratories have been closing year on year. From 35 in 1995, there are now only 13 public analyst laboratories for the whole of England and Wales. The crisis has been brought about by the way in which these laboratories are funded. Effectively, their funds depend upon the number of samples submitted to them for analysis by trading standards and environmental health officers, and those numbers are steadily falling.

Worse, new public analysts are not coming forward at a rate sufficient to match retirement because the lab staff who would normally work to

qualify by private study are no longer convinced that they have a future. The profession has been caught between the rock of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) refusing to set any standards for the number of food samples to be taken and tested, and the hard place of local authorities around the UK having too many competing demands for their limited finances.

Up until the late 1990s, most local authorities based their sampling activities on a target of three samples per 1,000 population per year. While undeniably a crude measure, this did at least ensure some level of sampling and the assurance of a steady flow of work, which allowed investment by the laboratories in new equipment (such as to detect genetically modified ingredients and allergen contamination), and in training new public analysts.

This performance target, on which the laboratories depended, was abolished by FSA officials soon after the Agency was set up. Local authorities since then have been free to do as much or as little sampling as they choose, under the banner of local accountability and discretion.

Back in 1990, an estimated £150 million was earmarked by central government as the total

## Fishy business

Retailers which sell unfit food or drink are often given a warning before being prosecuted, but if that does not work they can face stiff fines.

The supermarket Morrisons discovered this to their cost when the work of a public analyst proved they were continuing to sell fish which had gone off, despite a previous warning. Worcestershire County Council successfully prosecuted the supermarket chain in January 2008 for two instances of selling 'fresh fish' which was in an unacceptable condition.

Morrisons, which had recently run an advertising campaign highlighting the freshness of their products, was fined £19,500 and an additional £2,135 in costs.

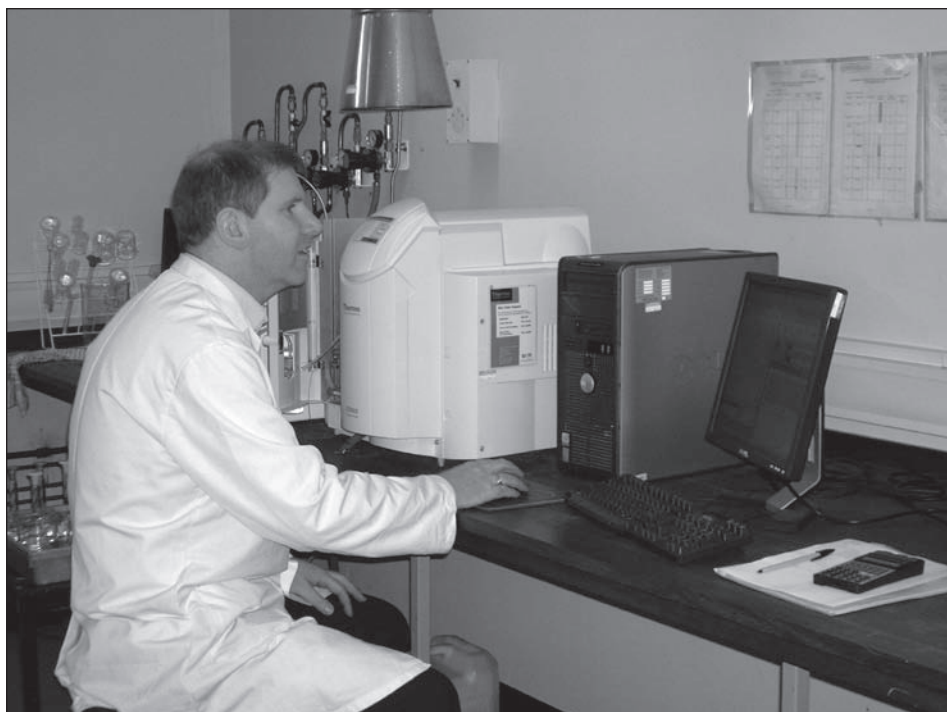


amount it expected local authorities to spend on food enforcement. That amount should have been steadily rising because of inflation, and new challenges to food safety and quality. In practice, however, the amount spent on actual testing of safety and quality has been falling.

Examples can now be seen of authorities, with similar population levels, spending as little as £5,000 or as much as £100,000 a year, depending on the affluence of the authority, and the priority it gives to food safety. As a consequence, the extent to which consumers' interests in food are protected varies enormously by region.

The FSA was set up to reverse years of food industry favouritism from the old Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and one of FSA's by-words has been, "putting consumers first," so it is strange that their officials should have taken action with such negative consequences for consumer protection.

Since the creation of the FSA, the Association of Public Analysts (APA) has been pressing its case with officials, and has attended countless meetings. The most recent round of talks began more than a year ago, but nothing concrete has emerged, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, for whatever reason, officials do not share public analysts' sense of urgency.



**A typical public analyst enters the laboratory as a trainee with a chemistry degree. He or she then spends five years or more learning on the job and by private study, before gaining the MChemA, an examination administered by the Royal Society of Chemistry, and identified in law.**

# and fabrication

Unless something is done soon to finance food enforcement analysis, the public analyst profession, and with it a vital part of consumer protection, will disappear. Those who argue that the industry should be allowed to police itself are either dupes or fools. They should be reminded of what industry can get up to when left to its own devices, such as the mislabelling of nutrient levels, the spurning of traffic

light nutrition labelling and the routine addition of water to so-called 'premium' meats.

The spend nationally on the public analyst service is less than 10p per person per year, and if it had to be increased to a whole pound to provide the public with an adequate level of protection, would this cause any hardship?

## Take-aways and added water

Water in chicken is an ongoing problem. It is plain old fashioned adulteration – 7kg of chicken breast can be turned into 10kg of product that looks like chicken breast. This is totally legal as long as the water is mentioned in the small print of the ingredients list, but when was the last time you saw an ingredients list in your local take-away? And, not every producer of frozen chicken wants to truthfully declare just how much water they add.

The Dutch have a major industry producing this stuff from chicken that is reared in Brazil, watered and frozen there, then thawed and watered again in Holland before being re-frozen and sold to take-away owners in Britain. This is why the meat in a chicken take-away can have an over-plump, odd texture. The Worcestershire public analyst lab has performed detailed analyses of such chicken, and has been involved in four successful prosecutions related to deceptive labelling.



Without labs such as this, the situation would be even worse. There is an interest in adding water to our beef and pork too, all in the interest of making it more succulent, of course! But, if the laboratories are underfunded, they cannot do the necessary research and control testing.

The gap between what industry spends on developing new things to do to our food, and the spending on testing that food, is immense, and widening. The continued existence of problems such as imported, watered chicken is evidence of the ineffective, piecemeal nature of the UK's enforcement system.

EC regulations require member states to ensure that there are, "sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff," in the enforcement system. With numbers declining in an uncontrolled way, it is difficult to see how the UK is now complying with this requirement. If the UK is failing to control its food production in the way that the EC requires, this is bound to have negative consequences for UK food exports. It is no coincidence that the illegal dye Sudan 1 was found in Worcester sauce, not by a UK lab, but in Italy, having gone undetected where the sauce was produced in Rochdale.

Similarly, if imports of adulterated chicken products are not controlled, the domestic poultry industry will suffer. In either event, the costs nationally would far outweigh the costs of continuing to run the public analyst service.

## What is the solution?

The FSA was set up to be independent of government, and to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food. Its Board should issue a policy statement on its support for the public analyst service, and instruct its officials to give some urgency and re-direction to the current review which began a year ago. It needs to find a way of refocusing the UK's food control effort, because the control of our food supply should sensibly be organised nationally and not be left to cash strapped local authorities.

■ Bob Stevens has been a public analyst for more than thirty years

■ The website for the Association of Public Analysts is at [www.the-apa.co.uk](http://www.the-apa.co.uk)

## Illegal dye escaped detection by UK labs

Prior to 2003, Sudan I in food could be thought of, to use Donald Rumsfeld's term, as an, "unknown unknown," but by 2005 knowledge of its use as an illegal colour in spices was widespread, and legislation was in place requiring imports into the EU to be certified free of Sudan I and its close relatives Sudan II, III & IV.

So, the UK was clear about the need to be alert for these dyes. Yet, the discovery of Sudan I in Worcester sauce that prompted the recall of hundreds of different food items, in the UK, in February 2005, happened in Italy.

Dr Duncan Campbell, public analyst for West Yorkshire, feels that it was no coincidence that it was not picked up in the UK. He says, "The UK food law enforcement system is chronically under resourced. When budgets come under

pressure, cutting sampling is painless – at least until the next Sudan crisis."

The following is a quote from the report of the Sudan I Review Panel published in July 2007. "We became aware during our meetings that during the Sudan I incident there were major concerns about the availability and capacity of analytical laboratories to undertake the necessary testing of samples. In the short time available to us we were unable to pursue as far as we would like the underlying causes of this and the extent to which it hampered the handling of the incident. We recommend that the FSA should ascertain the UK laboratory capacity available to assist in major incidents of this nature, including public analysts, and pursue the

matter within Government if it is deemed to be insufficient."

According to Campbell, the lack of laboratories is the result of chronic and continued underfunding. He says, "The Food Standards Agency is required by EC regulations to ensure that there is an adequate provision of accredited laboratory services... The current situation where the Agency appoints official food testing laboratories but does not fund them, doesn't allow the Agency to meet its responsibilities in this area."



# One more cattle disease to worry about?

**Organic farmer Richard Young considers whether there could be a simple solution to bacteria found in milk which may pose risks to human health.**

About a decade ago, the now defunct Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food sampled milk on retail sale, and found that 1.8% of pasteurised milk, and 1.6% of raw milk contained *Mycobacterium avium paratuberculosis* (MAP), a close relative of *M. bovis* which causes tuberculosis (TB) in cattle. MAP causes Johne's disease – a condition that develops slowly, but, in the final stage, animals develop profuse diarrhoea, and rapidly waste away. Unfortunately, the bacteria are emitted in milk and manure intermittently, long before visual signs of the disease become apparent.

While not yet proven, evidence is building to link MAP to Crohn's, the incurable, inflammatory bowel disease affecting more than 100,000 people in the UK, and which affects a further 5,000 victims each year – an annual figure ten times higher than 50 years ago. A recent review of 28 studies in the medical journal, *The Lancet*, found a strong association between Crohn's sufferers and MAP.

For the past 18 months, government-funded scientists have been sampling cattle for Johne's disease. Results will not be published until the autumn, but we know already that at least one in 20 UK herds has a Johne's problem, and that it is increasing in both cattle and sheep. The cash-strapped Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) does not, though, have the inclination to launch an eradication programme, as some other countries are doing, occupied as it has been with a foot and mouth outbreak, the tail end of the BSE crisis, a worsening TB problem, and new disease threats from bird flu and blue tongue.

As a draft government document on Johne's states, "responsibility for disease control lies with the private sector." A few livestock farmers have joined schemes which verify their Johne's-free status, but most are only just emerging from years of financial hardship, and do not have the reserves to adopt the strategies that will eliminate the disease. Recently published research should make the government think again.

There has been reluctance to accept a Johne's–Crohn's link because Crohn's is an immunological, not an infectious, disease. As such, MAP is unlikely to be the direct cause of the condition. But, new research from Liverpool University has found the mechanism for a possible indirect cause. MAP bacteria thrive in animals inside macrophages (white blood cells) which should by rights destroy them.

They manage this by releasing a yeast-like sugar which disarms the cells, but does not kill them.

Crohn's, it now appears, may be an unfortunate side-effect of this process because the disabled macrophages can no longer kill off other invading pathogens. It is suspected that the most important of these is a type of *E. coli*. Professor Jonathan Rhodes, who led the team that discovered the new sugar says, "Scientists have previously shown that people with Crohn's disease have increased numbers of a 'sticky' type of *E. coli* and weakened ability to fight off intestinal bacteria."

MAP may be responsible for more than just Crohn's disease. Research published in the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* found that people with Irritable Bowel Syndrome are 17 times more likely to carry MAP in their intestines than other members of the population.



None of this proves beyond doubt that Johne's in animals is causing problems for people, but before Defra falls back on its standard excuse for inaction it would do well to recall one of the recommendations from the Phillips Inquiry after the BSE crisis, "The importance of precautionary measures should not be played down on the grounds the risk is unproved."

## A cheap and easy solution

Shortly before his untimely death in 2006, campaigning organic farmer, Mark Purdey, widely known for his alternative theory on the cause of BSE, came up with an explanation for why his herd of healthy Jersey cattle had suddenly fallen prey to tuberculosis. His paper, published in the journal *Medical Hypotheses*, suggested that increased soil acidification was making animals more susceptible to both Johne's and TB, and could be tackled by liming the soil.



Research from a number of countries shows that Johne's is more common on acid soils, and one large study in the US found the disease incidence was 70% lower on farms which lime their pasture than on those which do not. Purdey claimed this was also likely to be the case with bovine TB, but that it is not soil acidity which causes the problem, but the fact that acid soils make iron more available when it is present in underlying rocks. Purdey believed that most TB hotspots are in areas where the soil is rich in iron. In the case of both MAP and *M. bovis*, he cited evidence to show that cattle eating grass high in iron will have reduced ability to resist infection because their intake of iron overwhelms an important natural defensive mechanism, the release of a protein which combines with iron and temporarily takes it out of circulation.

Purdey suggested that a simple, and cost-effective solution could be liming acid soils on UK farms. Liming has many benefits, and from 1937 until 1976 was encouraged by a generous government subsidy. Since this was dropped, use has rapidly declined, and now only 5% of grassland is limed each year. Forced to cut costs to survive the financial squeeze on dairy farmers, Purdey, like many others, stopped using lime, and calcified seaweed, which has a similar effect. Within three years, his soil acidity increased significantly, the availability of iron more than doubled, and before long his cattle started reacting to the annual tuberculosis test. However, once he limed all his fields, no more cases developed.

TB in British cattle is now increasing at almost 30% a year. But, while the government's failing attempts to control the disease are costing taxpayers £100 million a year, and the 6,500 affected farmers, on average, £3,000 a month, its research programme for the last 35 years has focused almost exclusively on badger culling and vaccine development, both of which look increasingly unlikely to improve the situation any time soon. In contrast, a simple trial comparing the incidence of both TB and Johne's on farms with acid soils using lime, with those not using it, might just provide us with a low cost solution to an otherwise intractable problem, and prove a wise precaution in the event that the link between Johne's and Crohn's is one day confirmed.

# Education not exploitation

**It is five years since The Food Commission exposed Cadbury's Get Active campaign as an own goal against children's health. This year, new guidance has been issued by the government on commercial partnerships with schools, but will it stop food companies marketing in the classroom? Jane Landon of the National Heart Forum warns that it looks like business as usual.**

In 2003, The Food Commission criticised Cadbury's *Get Active* – the confectioner's 'chocolate-for-footballs' initiative – as absurd and contradictory, pointing out that if all 160 million chocolate wrappers were redeemed for sports equipment, this would involve British children chomping their way through two million kilos of fat, and adding an estimated £67 million to Cadbury's profits. A 10-year-old child eating enough chocolate to get his school a basketball would have needed to play the game for 90 hours to burn off the calories consumed. [FM61, April 2003].

The sports minister who backed the scheme ended up with creme egg on his face and government officials – when questioned by the health select committee during its inquiry into obesity – protested that they had not been consulted.

The Cadbury's debacle highlighted concerns among parents, policy makers, and civil society organisations about the growing presence of food brands in schools. Earlier, Walker's crisps *Books for Schools* was singled out by the National Audit Office in its 2001 report *Tackling Obesity in England* as a promotion which, "may encourage children and their families to buy more snack foods with high fat, salt and sugar content." According to a survey jointly commissioned by the British Heart Foundation and the National Heart Forum in 2004, six out of ten parents said they would prefer to see token schemes limited to healthy foods, even if it meant less money or resources for schools.

Since 1996, there have been a number of attempts to draw up codes of practice for schools on managing sponsorships with commercial companies. But, guidance is voluntary and carries no compulsion, only suggesting that schools think

about issues such as branding and collection schemes.

The latest document, *Working with Schools – Best Practice Principles*, published this year, to take into account the new school food standards, is a joint production by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers (ISBA). ISBA is, "the body representing the interests of British advertisers in all areas of commercial communications," and, as it acknowledges on its website, advertisers stand to gain from activity in schools: "There are of course dangers with ill-judged activity in schools, but these should not detract from the tremendous benefit to both brands and the community within which they operate if a partnership is done well."

**Cadbury's clearly had children's best interests at heart when they asked British school kids to chomp their way through an estimated £67 million worth of chocolate. In return, their schools would get sports equipment, and the children would get a chance to burn off some of the two million kilograms of fat they would have eaten.**



It is the, "tremendous benefit to brands," that explains one of the key weaknesses in the guidance, a presumption that branding and sales messages are permissible in schools as part of commercial partnerships.

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has spoken out against businesses targeting schools with marketing aimed at pupils and parents, and recently published a charter on commercialisation which identified measures needed to protect children.\*\* Christine Blower, acting general secretary of the NUT, describes this latest guidance as "inadequate" saying it does not go far enough to prevent the exploitation of schools and pupils by commercial companies. "Robust guidance is needed to tackle explicit sales messages, branding and publicity, conflicting messages about unhealthy eating and unsolicited materials being sent to schools," she says.

The NUT has raised its concerns with the Secretary of State in April, but a reply from Jim Knight, the minister for schools, did not address any of the Union's detailed points.

If schools observe the new guidance,\* will we see new promotions such as the Cadbury's or Walker's collection schemes in the future? Quite probably. Because instead of firmly aligning sponsorship principles with the new school food regulations which clearly state that chocolate and crisps are off the menu, the government is merely inviting schools to use a checklist of questions to weigh up whether, "the educational benefits of the partnership outweigh the potential issues."

What is more, the guidance does not ask schools to consider the compatibility with the school food standards when considering partnerships which do not involve collector schemes or school food. For example, Coca Cola Schools Football Association, McDonald's Community Football, and Kellogg's Frosties swimming awards would all 'pass' the checklist test, while exposing pupils to logos for fizzy drinks, fast food, and sugary cereals on branded sports kit, clothing, and awards.

In drafting guidance with only the help of the advertisers, and without consulting the teaching unions, health or consumer organisations, the government seems to have deliberately missed the target. At the same time, it is concerned about the commercial pressures on children, and has launched a new enquiry to explore the effect of shopping, advertising and commercial messaging on children's wellbeing. The NUT will not be alone in reminding ministers that the first aim of government guidance on schools and businesses working together should be to protect schools and pupils from exploitation.

\* *Working with Schools – Best Practice Principles* [www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/conDocument.cfm?consultationId=1548](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/conDocument.cfm?consultationId=1548)

\*\* *Growing up in a Material World. Charter on Commercialisation. 2007. National Union of Teachers.* [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk)

# Is Royal endorsement

**The Royal Warrant is regarded as the ultimate seal of approval and appears on a number of popular food and drink products. The Food Magazine questions whether such Royal endorsement is always deserved.**

**R**oyal patronage can be a valuable marketing tool for those companies which are lucky enough to get it. The Queen, The Duke of Edinburgh, and The Prince of Wales all give what are known as Royal Warrants, a mark of recognition to companies who have regularly supplied goods or services to them for at least five years. The Warrants are supposedly a mark of excellence and quality, and allow a company to display the Royal Arms or Badge on their products.

Showing that such endorsement improves sales is tricky, but companies tend to regard the Warrant as the ultimate seal of approval, and many of their customers will think the same.

Over 800 Royal Warrants are currently active, covering services as diverse as picture framing, rifle making and the supply of toilet tissue. Approximately 90 Warrants have been granted to food companies. Many of these are specialist or local suppliers, whilst others are household names. This report looks at some of the big food businesses which hold a Royal Warrant, and asks if such companies always deserve such endorsement.

The Food Magazine asked Buckingham Palace, Clarence House and The Royal Warrant Holders Association (RWHA) if members of Royalty used any nutritional, environmental or ethical criteria when granting Warrants. Both the Royal Houses pointed us to the RWHA, who told us they were unable to answer the question. However, both Clarence House and the RWHA did confirm that The Prince of Wales will only allow his Warrant to be used if suppliers can demonstrate they have a sustainable environmental policy.

The only time that health issues appear to have openly influenced policy was in 1999, when The Queen cancelled the Warrant she had granted to the cigarette manufacturer Gallagher (Benson

and Hedges), supposedly under pressure from Prince Charles. The Late Queen Mother was less bothered about such issues, and her Warrant continued to be displayed on packs of John Player until after her death.

All of the companies on these pages have been awarded a Royal Warrant by The Queen, with just one, Weetabix, also holding a Warrant from The Prince of Wales. The Duke of Edinburgh has no current Warrants with any food companies.

## Sugar

Between them, British Sugar and Tate & Lyle have the UK sugar market pretty much wrapped up, producing almost all of the sugar we consume. Both are endorsed by HM The Queen, with her coat of arms displayed prominently on the front of packets of Tate & Lyle and Silver Spoon (which is made by British Sugar).

Interestingly, Her Majesty is endorsing a product which her own government is encouraging the public to eat less of. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) states, "Most adults and children in the UK eat too much sugar. We should all be trying to eat fewer sugary foods, such as sweets, cakes and biscuits, and drink fewer soft drinks."

The World Health Organization (WHO) is also very clear on the need to limit sugar intake, stating that free sugars should provide less than 10% of our daily energy intake. The WHO directly links sugar consumption to dental disease and to obesity, which is itself linked to escalating rates of type 2 diabetes.

Meanwhile, British Sugar, with Her Majesty's endorsement, is adamant that sugar is good for us, telling us that, "Sugar is a natural, wholesome food and plays an important part in a healthy balanced diet." They also contradict WHO expert advice with the claim that, "It has been observed that those who eat more sugar are likely to be

### Fairtrade sugar

Tate & Lyle have committed to switching all of their UK retail cane sugar to Fairtrade by the end of 2009. The sugar will not be any better for us, but it will ensure a fairer wage for the Belize farmers who produce it. Let's hope that other major UK food and drink manufacturers learn from Tate & Lyle's example and start to give something back to the overseas farmers who produce so much of our food.



**The Queen's Royal Warrant adds an apparent 'seal of approval' to products such as Kellogg's cereals and Dairy Milk chocolate.**

slim and those that eat less sugar tend to over consume fat and are thus fatter."

When most health experts are advising consumers to cut back on sugar consumption, the use of the Royal Warrant on packets of sugar seems highly inappropriate.

## Soft drinks

The Royal Warrant has been granted to both Britvic, and Robinsons and they make the most of it, with Robinsons even putting the Royal Warrant on bottles of Fruit Shoot, a drink with such a poor nutritional profile that it is no longer allowed to be sold in schools.

Coca-Cola and Lucozade (GlaxoSmithKline) also get the thumbs-up from Her Majesty, who is seemingly unaware of official advice about fizzy drinks. The FSA says, "Both adults and children in the UK eat too much sugar, and more of it comes from fizzy drinks than any other type of food or drink. So cutting down on sugary drinks, such as cola and lemonade, is a good way to reduce the amount of sugar you have. These drinks



**Robinsons Fruit Shoot displays the Royal Warrant. Due to its low juice content (just 11%) this product would not be allowed to be sold in schools.**

# ent warranted?

contain very few nutrients and the added sugar they contain can damage teeth. Fizzy drinks can also fill us up, so we have less appetite for healthier foods."

Coca-Cola and Lucozade do not display the Royal Warrant on their products, presumably because it has very little appeal to their young target markets.

## Chocolate

Her Majesty clearly has a sweet tooth, and allows her coveted Royal Warrant to grace Cadbury Dairy Milk chocolate bars. The Warrant also pops up on other Cadbury products, such as Drinking Chocolate. A Warrant is supposedly a mark of excellence and quality, so the Queen must have missed the 2006 scandal when Cadbury set an allowable tolerance level for salmonella in its Dairy Milk chocolate, rather than ensuring that the chocolate was salmonella-free. Dozens of people fell ill, and three people, including a baby and a young child, ended up in hospital. Cadbury's were fined £1M for food and hygiene malpractice, but they held on to their Royal Warrant.

## Marge and mayo

It seems The Queen is a fan of home baking, as her crest appears on packets of Stork, the fatty spread often used when making cakes and pastry. Her Warrant also decorates jars of Hellmann's mayonnaise, which is currently being marketed as a 'good natural source of OMEGA 3', as though tucking into a mayonnaise sandwich is nutritionally equivalent to eating a portion of oily fish.

Both Stork spread and Hellmann's mayo are made by Unilever, the corporate giant which makes

many everyday food and household products. Unilever was recently targeted by Greenpeace activists because it is one of the world's biggest users of palm oil, an industry which is destroying Indonesia's rainforests, one of the few remaining homes of the orang-utan.

Under pressure, Unilever has just announced that it intends to have all of its palm oil certified sustainable by 2015 (but only in Europe). We will have to see if its 'intentions' are met with solid action.

## Coffee

Her Majesty's favourite cuppa appears to be Nescafé coffee, which she has endorsed with her Royal Warrant on larger jars and cartons. Presumably she is unaware of, or disagrees with, the long-running boycott campaign against Nestlé, the company which manufactures Nescafé coffee. The boycott began in 1977 when campaigners accused Nestlé of the irresponsible promotion of infant formula over breast-feeding in less economically developed countries. The International Baby Food Action Network claims that such marketing practices can lead to health problems, and deaths among infants.

Nestlé also comes in for criticism from The International Labor Rights Fund, which accuses the company of not doing enough to stop the use of child labor throughout its cocoa supply chain. Nestlé is now one of the most boycotted companies on the planet.

## Companies ignore FSA advice

Her Majesty's Government has a commitment to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food, but attempts to

**Hellmann's, 'By Appointment to Her Majesty The Queen,' are currently marketing their 79% fat mayo as a 'good natural source of Omega 3.' Encouraging consumers to buy mayonnaise in order to top-up on Omega 3 oils is hardly a sensible nutritional message, but the jar carries The Queen's Warrant, so surely it must be good stuff?**



improve the public's nutritional health are sometimes obstructed or hindered by Warrant holders.

For instance, the FSA approved 'traffic light' labelling system, designed to effectively communicate high, medium or low levels of the nutrients fat, sugar and salt, has been openly resisted by many of the companies featured in this article. Fearful that red 'warning' labels might reduce their sales, Kellogg's, Tate & Lyle, Cadbury's, Coca Cola, Lucozade, Quaker, Nestlé and Unilever have all ignored the FSA advice and have introduced a rival system based on Guideline Daily Amounts (GDAs), which is harder to use and which has led to further confusion. But, they still get the Queen's support.

## Conclusion

The Royal Family is still hugely influential and has a very wide popular following. When the Queen grants a Warrant to a company it sends out a very clear message that, as far as she is concerned, this is a company which produces a good product, the one which she prefers.

Although foods and drinks with poor nutritional profiles are an inevitable part of our everyday diet, it is questionable whether the Queen should be granting her Warrant, and the status associated with Royalty, to such products. This is especially relevant when her own Government is actively seeking to reduce consumption of such foods.

Her Majesty should perhaps consider the wider ramifications of her actions and ensure that her seal of approval is used to promote healthier choices, or simply not used at all. And, like The Prince of Wales, she could insist that any Warrant holder should first be able to produce a genuine, sustainable environmental policy.

■ To view a list of current Royal Warrant holders visit [www.royalwarrant.org](http://www.royalwarrant.org)

## Breakfast cereals

Kellogg's, Quaker, and Weetabix have all been granted the Royal Warrant by The Queen, with Weetabix getting a second approval from The Prince of Wales.

Kellogg's has been repeatedly criticised for producing high sugar cereals, and for irresponsible marketing practices – but it has also managed to win the Readers Digest 'most trusted cereal brand' for the last three years. The company is adept at marketing itself as a trusted brand despite the poor nutritional profile of some of its products, and the placement of

the Royal Warrant on Kellogg's products is sure to bolster this image.

Quaker also display the Royal Warrant on their packaging, but they do at least produce healthier breakfast cereals, as do Weetabix, who choose not to display either The Queen's or The Prince of Wales's Warrants at the present time.



**Kellogg's much criticised Real Fruit Winders carry the Royal Warrant, even though the Warrant was only granted to Kellogg's as 'purveyors of cereals.' We presume the Queen does not tuck into these sugar-laden snacks for breakfast, but who knows what really goes on in the Palace?**

# The right food at the

**Food prices are escalating, making it harder for those on low incomes to buy fruit and veg. Jessica Mitchell meets a man whose life is devoted to making it easier.**

In the bright light of day, the work of the charity Community Food Enterprise (CFE) is fun – there are friendly food stalls selling great produce, at low prices, at a dozen local schools; lively breakfast clubs with cute children eating free fruit; and a mobile shop staffed by the lovely John and Lorraine, who, on the day I visit say, “We are off to Manor Park today – we’ll make about six stops, mostly to local estates. People really appreciate us bringing the fruit and veg to their doorsteps.”

But, it all starts, as with many things, in the cold, and gloom – it was 4.30am when Eric Samuel, MBE and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CFE, picked me up from a street corner in West Ham, in the charity’s van, for the daily visit to Spitalfields market to buy fruit and veg. Although this one-off visit seems extraordinarily audacious to me, for years this was Samuel’s daily start to the day. Up at the crack of dawn, head to market, then back to HQ to price up and ready the fresh produce for distribution – with all his other work – fundraising, networking, setting up new community food access projects – squeezed in between.

“I still make sure I get to market once a month or so, it keeps me in touch, but I’ll let you in on a secret, I hate driving this van, it’s so damn big,” says Samuel. He is spared the six day a week visits thank to Hassan Enver – the deceptively mild mannered buyer who now does the dealing at

market – making sure the limited pennies of CFE go as far as they can, and says Enver, “On the best fruit and veg, we have hardly any waste because we buy very good quality.” This a theme picked up by Samuel, “We have it down to a fine art now. Quality is so important to the people we sell to, just being cheap is not good enough.”

The people CFE sells to, or supplies free, are primarily those of Newham, the east London borough. It is one of the poorest in the country and the most diverse – and the official statistics bear out what is clear to Samuel everyday, “too few shops selling reasonably priced fruit and veg,” to a community which already doesn’t get enough, with many suffering from problems of diet related disease.

CFE tackles these problems through a range of projects including: low cost fruit and veg stands at workplaces and schools; the provision of free fruit to local schools for breaktime snacks (for all primary school children through year 6, in contrast to the government’s School Fruit Scheme that runs only through year 2); and the mobile shop. “We are no threat to Tesco, for the simple reason that we plug the gaps, we work in areas supermarkets are not interested in. You can’t compare what we do,” says Samuel.

Samuel is passionate about what these people deserve, “This community has the right to the right



**At Hardy’s exotics in Spitalfields Market, Eric Samuel (right) notes that his ethnic customers really know about fruit and veg and demand the best quality. Samuel shares their passion, but still finds it hard to get his five-a-day – he is just too busy.**

food, to what they want, if it’s local that is great, but it is their choice.” The Mission Statement of CFE makes these principles absolutely clear: “Everyone in the community has the right not just to food, but to the right food. At the heart of our belief is the principle that access to food is a right, not a privilege. The food and drink we consume should be safe, nutritious, affordable, accessible and culturally acceptable.”

Samuel’s dogged ferocity on these points is one of the most endearing things about him. And, my goodness does he work for this – any conversation with him involves following him around while he drags boxes, loads vans, sweeps floors – he is not the kind of CEO that sits in the office greeting dignitaries. I met him first, not long after he got started in this work, about ten years ago. As a resident of the Cranberry Lane Estate in Newham, he set up a food co-op, and drew in his,



**Lita Webb, Eric Samuel, and Hassan Enver at work in the CFE warehouse, soon to be developed into an even larger food distribution centre. Samuel is keen to ensure CFE survival by developing new projects, and running more efficiently so the charity can be less reliant on unreliable grant funding. The new centre means they will be able to more easily take on contracts that earn more profit – such as supplying Canary Wharf offices with fruit and veg. This profit can then be ploughed back into school co-ops, breakfast clubs and free school fruit schemes.**

# right price

now longtime, co-worker, operations manager, Lita Webb. "Eric came to a tenants' association meeting, I had given up work – in shops, and I didn't want to do it anymore. But, look at me now," she says, as she laughs and goes to get the stock ready for the mobile shop.

Since then, these two have worked together, in various incarnations, but always with the same essential mission says Samuel, "The bottom of the chain is most vital, what is happening with food access is that funders are forgetting the grassroots and giving too much money for coordination. No one wants to pay for delivery so we have got to be entrepreneurial." Indeed, Samuel, a former banker, is entrepreneurial, full of plans for social enterprises in local schools, around the Olympics, for further development of CFE's National Training Programme for Community Food Workers and for their new food distribution centre that will trim visits to Spitalfields to once a week

Which is where we arrived eventually, as the sun finally came up – to the sort of organised mayhem that made me glad I was with someone who knew what he was doing. It is huge, stall after stall selling produce from all over the world, stacked to the ceiling, all being moved around by mini-forklift truck drivers who zip through the aisles at speeds and angles that make a dazed stroll as dangerous as a perambulation down the M1. Samuel has a list, has



**The day I visited in April, the mobile shop was selling at least 25 types of fruit and veg including: carrots for 45p a kilogram (kg); courgettes for £1.45 a kg; large white cabbages for 50p; and Royal Gala apples £1 a kg.**

**That same week, a nearby supermarket was selling carrots at 75p a kg; courgettes at more than £2 a kg; white cabbages for 75p; and Royal Gala at £1.59kg.**

faxed it to their three regular suppliers – fruit, veg and exotics – and off we set.

"The guys we work with are great, but you have got to know what you are doing as these people will show you no mercy," says Samuel. He wonders how the actual growers make any money – much of the produce is sold at big auctions in Europe to so-called senders – who then ship it off to clients who have stalls at Spitalfields. The senders themselves only get their money when the stallholders have sold

**CFE has more than 50 volunteers who run stalls at some workplaces and schools, like this one at Tate & Lyle. One of the workers here said, "For the last six months food has been getting more expensive, but prices here are a lot cheaper than at the supermarket." For another, "This helps me because I don't have to try to make time after work to go out and buy fruit and veg."**



**These new 'Juice for life' bars will sell freshly squeezed juices and smoothies. CFE will loan**

**some to schools, with a start up grant, so students can run them as their own social enterprise. Others, fitted with motors, will be rented to social entrepreneurs for sales around Newham.**

the produce, and if the stallholder can't sell, or has to drop the price, the sender can come and collect his fruit and veg, or bear the loss. Out of interest, Samuel once costed out what the economics of yam importation would be – at that point, £4 would've covered all costs for bringing a big box of yams from Kenya, that would have sold on the market for £14, so, "Imagine the poor farmer, who knows what he is getting."

Prices in the market are bad this year, "I have been coming for seven or eight years and there wasn't much change, this year is bad. English produce is always more expensive, but everything is bad this year. It doesn't half make a lot of difference." According to Samuel's vegetable supplier, Kevin, "Look across there at those lemons, they're £20 a box, usually they would never get above £5 across the season." At the exotics stall, Hardy's, prices are high too, but Samuel says, "Hardy ain't gonna put us wrong, he will do right by us and we have to have the things supermarkets don't sell, for the ethnic market." As we finish, Samuel is determined to find a box of mangoes, but just cannot stick the prices, "That is damn ridiculous, £12 for 8, those are supermarket prices."

The van loaded up, we head back to CFE – now a large warehouse and offices – on the grounds of Tate & Lyle's HQ. For, it is Tate & Lyle which has come through for CFE, giving them space, equipment, money and training opportunities, all without extracting much in the way of publicity value out of the work says Samuel, "There is no way we could deliver the service we do without them, the funding is not there. I have absolutely no problem with it, and don't feel they use us to promote their products."

CFE has tried to interest government in using their model as a national one, but there has been no action forthcoming. Before I leave Samuel to it, he tells me, "Sometimes the spirit is down but I am committed to the community of Newham. These people have suffered. I am committed to change and I hate to admit defeat. So, we will have to keep up the entrepreneurial spirit."

■ [www.community-food-enterprise.org.uk](http://www.community-food-enterprise.org.uk)

# Peddling influence

**Jessica Mitchell**  
**investigates the murky**  
**world of commercial**  
**conference organising.**

**W**e at The Food Commission are new to the world of commercial conference organising, and so were surprised by a recent sales pitch from the company GovNet Communications Ltd. If we paid them £15,000 we could then run two, hour-long, seminars at their conference 'Health of the Nation 08' – an event, in July, promising attendees the chance to discuss the implementation of the government's *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives (HWHL)* strategy.

Although the Department of Health (DoH) is not the official organiser, it did author *HWHL*, and will provide three of the headline speakers – Sir Liam Donaldson, chief medical officer; Dr. Will Cavendish, director of health and wellbeing; and Sam Mellor, head healthy schools programme. We understand that these main speakers will not pay (or be paid) to speak at the event; the GovNet sale offer referred specifically to running seminar sessions at the event.

We admit that we did entice GovNet into making the offer, which we never had any intention of taking up, and certainly could not afford, because we just could not believe our ears when we heard that they had rung up the charity Sustain offering them a similar deal, and indicating that the money would be well spent as it would enable access to policy makers. However, enticement on our part was hardly needed, as most aspects of this conference are up for sale. If we wanted to pay a bit less, a simple £5,000 would buy us a stall, while £2,500 would get us a leaflet on the conference chairs and in the take home packs.

To put the icing on the cake, the £15,000 payment would also buy us the right to be listed as a 'Supporter' organisation, with our logo on their website right underneath that of the conference 'Main Sponsors' Nestlé and Splenda. Take a look at GovNet's website and you can see the roll call of such 'Supporter' organisations – some of them UK food and health charities.

And there you have it – from one point of view this is just a nice event bringing together a range of health experts, including those from industry, with some commercial involvement, because, hey, things cost money to run right?

But, from my perspective, you have a conference easily mistaken for a government one, as it is titled after a DoH strategy, an impression given added weight by the fact that the DoH

has provided top officials to speak, bringing in attendees to seminars sold off to those with deep enough pockets. And, then, to crown it all, one of the main sponsors, Nestlé, is a food company which is the subject of a nearly 30 year consumer boycott for its

baby food marketing practices, and the subject of regular criticism from food campaign groups

for its opposition to the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) traffic light labelling scheme. Thanks to GovNet, Nestlé gets months of excellent publicity on the GovNet website as they appear to be working hand in hand with campaign groups.

The DoH sees no problem with its participation, and told us that it is aware that this is a commercial event, but, that it is offering no official endorsement to the conference or its sponsors, simply that it is, "contributing to the programme by adding, as a stakeholder, its voice to the debate." It is surely possible that the DoH could have added its voice to the debate by organising its own conference – one that does not judge the degree of interaction by how much money organisations pay to attend.

For Jeanette Longfield, coordinator of the charity Sustain, the situation seems dangerously close to influence peddling, "I had thought – perhaps naively – that conference agendas were drawn up to bring together the best speakers on the most appropriate range of topics – not on the basis of ability to pay. I am also shocked at the brazen way that payment to participate was linked to access to policy makers. I knew our democracy was not in a healthy state, but I didn't realise it was that sick."

The conference organisers hope to attract a wide range of attendees including teachers; nurses; GPs; directors of public health; people from primary care trusts (PCTs); and those working for local authorities. I have not seen any information that tells those people, some of whom will have paid more than £250 to attend, how seminar sessions were chosen.

For the organisations that are running seminars or having stalls at this event – it is a clear opportunity to do business. PCTs and local authorities are spending big money these days on bringing in outside partners to help them meet obesity reduction targets – indeed, one of the exhibitors at this conference, the Weight Management Centre, brags on its website, "we have trained over 5,000 people from Primary Care Trusts, Local Authorities..."

As for Nestlé's sponsorship, they are having a bumper few months in their efforts to convince consumers and policy makers that they are a company primarily interested in health and wellbeing. They also sponsored the 16th European Congress on Obesity, in May,

coordinated by the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO), the sponsorship of which has prompted many organisations, including

The Food Commission, to write in complaint under the banner of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), reminding EASO that, "there is a risk that under the flag of sponsorship food companies will seek to influence policy and decision making, potentially damaging the image of the EASO."

It all raises very difficult questions for charities and campaign organisations which need to raise their profile to raise funds in order to survive, and who will on occasion take the decision that working with certain companies is acceptable. Organisations will juggle with the nature of that relationship – what kind of company is acceptable, judged by what standards; how closely do you ally your workloads, or publicise your campaigns?

IBFAN is keen that charities do not leave this decision making to an ad hoc process and are encouraging debate about stringent guidelines for working with industry, coherent with the proposed *International Code on Marketing of Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children* (see news page 3). EASO has responded positively to IBFAN's requests for debate on this issue. The DoH and other government departments could do the same – surely in future it would be encouraging to think of them insisting that events they support with senior speakers do not appear to be for sale. Imagining that they would respect the longstanding Nestlé consumer boycott is, sadly, probably an imagine too far.



# Welsh hospital vending machines get healthier

**H**ospitals in England continue to dish out junk food through their vending machines while other countries in the UK are moving to make healthier options the norm.

High fat, sugar and salt foods are to be removed from all NHS hospital vending machines in Wales while Scottish hospitals plan to ban machine sales of sugary drinks.

Wales has set the standard, with the Welsh Assembly government promising that this is just the first step to fulfilling its promise to deliver improvements in hospital food and nutrition.



**Vending machines like this one selling sweets will soon be gone from Welsh hospitals, but are free to remain in English ones.**

The Welsh health minister Edwina Hart says, "We need to create an environment where it is easier for people to make healthy choices and our public sector settings should be an exemplar of best practice, particularly our hospitals."

Most machines will be replaced by those with healthier options within the next six months, with only one hospital out of 130 in Wales scheduled not to have healthy vending in place by 2010 – because of a standing contract.

A recent study looked at vending machines in, or close to, paediatric departments in hospitals in Wales. The survey found that very few Trusts had any vending machines where half or more of the drinks were healthy.

Huw Jenkins, consultant paediatric gastroenterologist at University Hospital Wales, who carried out the research, says, "It is clear from a recent survey that the majority of vending machines around children's areas in Welsh hospitals do not provide enough healthy options."

Now, Rosie Blackburn, of Sustain's 'Good Food on the Public Plate' project, is calling for all NHS hospitals to follow Wales' lead. She also wants to see, "action taken to make sure all of the food available in UK hospitals is sustainable

and healthy. Removing junk from vending machines is great but when the onsite shop sells rubbish, or when there is a McDonald's in the lobby, it doesn't help much. If the hospital food itself was tasty and enjoyable, people wouldn't want unhealthy, expensive junk. The UK faces a huge obesity problem, but the NHS reinforces the idea it's okay to eat badly by allowing this."

The problem is, no government has yet taken the holistic approach needed to ensure that all aspects of food provision in hospitals benefits patients, in the way that school food has been taken in hand. Shockingly, there are no nutritional standards for hospital meals, and other food provision has been left to the free market. There is money to be made out of junk food vending, with hospitals keeping a share of the profits, so the machines stay.

"What is happening in Wales is a positive sign, but I see so many problems. I attend meetings with hospital catering managers, and as part of the agenda, there is a veritable beauty parade of junk food suppliers looking to get their food into hospitals. Cost is pretty much the only considered factor – furthermore, catering managers are not obliged to have nutritional knowledge or qualifications, yet they are responsible for feeding tens of thousands of sick people every year," says Blackburn.

When asked about their junk food vending machines, Great Ormond Street children's hospital said, "Catering at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust (GOSH) has

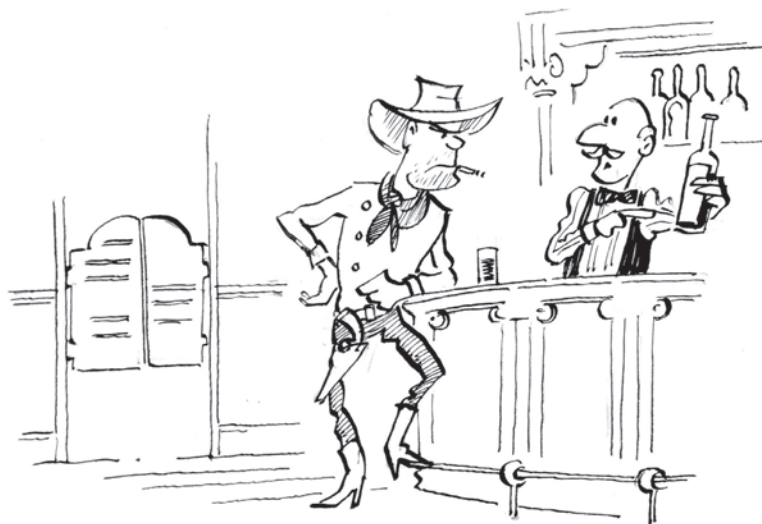


**The main entrance to Guy's Hospital in London is also home to a large McDonald's.**

a strong emphasis on healthy options such as salad and fruit. Fruit is available from our restaurants, where we also offer an interesting variety of prepared meals. The vending machines at GOSH provide cereal bars, nuts and dried fruit. Some also offer snacks and chocolate, but this is because of the very sound dietetic advice we receive that depriving sick children of such things is not to their benefit. A significant number of our in-patients may indeed need to be encouraged to eat anything at all."

The need for more joined up thinking on the matter is suggested by Helen Crawley, of the Caroline Walker Trust, and author of authoritative guidelines on public sector catering standards, including for older people in residential and nursing care. "We have a duty of care to make sure that when vulnerable people of any age are being looked after in any setting that everyone works together to ensure that the food provided achieves clear and mandatory nutrition guidelines, and that all food made available in public places is health promoting."

Crawley also notes that, "In the case of very sick children I do agree that there needs to be a lot of flexibility in food choice for the children themselves – but that should be catered for by the NHS caterers and dietitians, and not left to relatives and friends to supply from vending machines."



*I am obliged to point out that your three fingers of red-eye is equivalent to six units of alcohol.*

# Must the planet

**David Nicholson-Lord investigates whether our planet will be able to feed its ever growing population.**

**N**ot long ago, a group of us from the Optimum Population Trust met a New Labour minister to discuss rising human numbers in the UK. He was cheery enough to begin with but it wasn't long before his features assumed a dourer expression. "Are you Malthusians?" he growled at length. An uncertain pause followed. Well, I said eventually, if by that you mean someone who believes there is a trade-off between population, resources and environment, yes, I supposed we were.

There are two mysteries about Thomas Malthus, the clergyman economist who wrote his early environmental classic, *An Essay on population*, in 1798. The first is why people, mainly on the left, regard 'Malthusians' not only as a separate sub-species of *Homo sapiens* but also as somewhere on a spectrum of chillingness between Nazi eugenicists and serial killers. The second is why so many declare with such confidence that he was wrong.

The basis of such a belief seems to be that in the two centuries since Malthus, thanks to the proliferation of new food technologies, and cultivation methods, and the abundance of fossil fuels – neither of which, it is sometimes conceded, Malthus could have foreseen – we have somehow abolished world hunger, despite a hugely increased global population. Forgetting for a moment the environmental and human damage wrought by such technologies, what do we then make of the 800-million plus people who, according to the UN, still go to bed hungry every night, or the two billion who are malnourished?

Malthus' thesis was that population growth will tend to outrun food supply and is only kept in balance by "checks". These may be unpleasant – war, famine, disease – or they may involve wise precautionary actions. Such "preventive" checks might include limiting numbers through, for example, family planning. Responsible societies, Malthus thought, took the preventive route. Even though much of the stigma attaching to Malthusianism seems to stem from the strange belief that Malthusians



**Global rice stocks are at their lowest level since 1976, and many countries are now banning exports, amid fears that shortages could provoke food riots.**

are advocates of famine or disease, even those who argue he has been proved wrong, over the last 200 years, are beginning to wonder whether he is finally about to be proved right.

The reason is the apparently abrupt dawning, in 2007, of a new age of scarcity

– most dramatically expressed for UK shoppers by rising food prices but elsewhere in the world by shortages, riots, plummeting grain stocks and a new concern for food security, meaning the ability of states to guarantee supplies to their citizens. The world's wheat stocks are at a 30-year low, while the UN's World Food Programme has been urgently trying to fill a \$500m hole in its coffers caused by rising prices.

The reasons usually given for the sudden arrival of food crisis include drought, poor or non-existent harvests in Europe and Australia, the impact of biofuels and the increased appetite of new Asian middle classes for 'improved' diets, notably meat.

For environmentalists, the outlook is alarming. Genetically modified food is being widely canvassed as an answer – not least by the government's new chief scientific adviser, John Beddington. So too is a massive expansion and intensification of agriculture – indeed Peter Kendall, president of the National Farmers' Union, said recently that food production needed to double, and possibly treble over the next 40 years and, "developing the agricultural potential of this country to its fullest is actually a moral issue."

In this respect, last year's decision to end set-aside – the system which obliged European farmers to devote a proportion of their croplands to nature – is a worrying harbinger



**There are 6.7 billion of us on the planet, a number which increases each year by about 75 million. According to the UN, there will be 9.2. billion of us by 2050, many of whom will be high-consuming individuals with extensive ecological footprints.**

# go hungry?

of the future. What price conservation and biodiversity with a supercharged farming industry on a moral crusade to increase food production?

Virtually all analyses of the current food crisis list one further factor not so far mentioned – population growth. Global population when Malthus wrote was under a billion – none of them with cars or central heating. Today there are 6.7 billion of us, each year there are about 75 million more and by 2050 there will, according to the UN, be 9.2 billion, many of them high-consuming individuals with extensive ecological footprints.

But, the difference between now and Malthus' time is not merely one of numbers: it is one of planetary exhaustion. In the intervening two centuries – and thanks in no small measure to the food-production technologies applauded by Malthus' critics – the human race has, in an almost literal sense, bled the planet dry: there are no longer empty lands or vast reserves of natural wealth to be exploited with apparent impunity.

You can measure this in two ways: by the reports of overfished oceans, topsoil depletion, desertification, drought and climate change that are the markers of a world food production system under extreme stress; or by comparing ecological footprints with biological capacity to ascertain what sustainable living might look like. The most authoritative set of ecological footprint data is WWF's biennial *Living Planet Report*, produced by the Global Footprint

Network, which shows that the world crossed the threshold into ecological overshoot – using up more resources than it can renewably provide – in the late 1980s. The report estimates that by 2050 we will require almost two times what our planet can realistically provide.

Ecological insecurity thus takes on a whole new dimension. The UK is only 63% self-sufficient in food and a mere 29% in terms of all raw materials and supplies. At current standards of living, it can thus support a population of only 17 million from its own biocapacity – although its actual population is 61 million and this is forecast to rise to 85 million by 2081.

It is a similar picture with Europe as a whole – footprint is more than double biocapacity so the EU's sustainable population is 208 million, against an actual population, in 2003, of 454 million. Even greening our lifestyles wouldn't make that much difference – if we managed to cut carbon emissions by 60% in the UK, our sustainable population would only rise to 27 million.

Does such ecological vulnerability matter? Can't the UK buy or negotiate its way out of global food or resource crises? Possibly – but at the expense of poorer, hungrier people in the developing world. And in the longer run, what democratic governments in commodity-producing countries will dare continue exports as normal when faced with shortages at home and riots among voters? Indeed, many

countries have already introduced partial or total bans on grain exports: they include China, India, Egypt, Argentina, Vietnam, Cambodia and Kazakhstan.

An even bigger question is why population, though ranked high among the causes of food crisis, does not figure among the solutions – at least as canvassed by the policy-making classes and thus as reflected in the media. The public knows better. A recent BBC Radio 4 *Farming Today* programme on food prices ignored population and was emailed in bulk by listeners pointing out the omission and complaining that politicians wouldn't talk about it. Nor will environmental groups, fearful of the sensitivity of the issue and its potential to lose them members and funds.

The irony is that limiting our numbers may well be the greenest option of all, since population growth is clearly driving the push for environmentally risky solutions like genetic modification. So the answer for individuals concerned with the food crisis is clear. By all means avoid waste, grow your own (organically), eat local and consume less meat – all these will help. But they won't help anything like as much as having a smaller family – or adding your voice to calls for a rather less populous UK.

■ David Nicholson-Lord is an environmental writer and research associate for the Optimum Population Trust. [www.optimumpopulation.org](http://www.optimumpopulation.org)

## One baby at a time

Optimum Population Trust (OPT) projections in 2005 showed that UK population could be reduced to 53 million by 2050 with a fertility rate of 1.55 children per woman (currently around 1.8 and rising), and zero net effect (numerically balanced) migration i.e. same number of emigrants as immigrants (net immigration responsible for at least 70% of projected UK population rise). Globally, one child less per woman over the next four decades could mean 3 billion fewer people in 2050.

OPT suggest that population limitation may be the easiest of all things to do and will probably bear fruit quickest, because one child less is immediately one whole footprint less, whereas we are now sweating mightily, and not very successfully, to shave small percentage bits off footprints.



# Helping out by handing out

## Anna Glayzer visits a project which redistributes surplus food to homeless people.

**W**hen I told a friend I was visiting a food redistribution project in Edinburgh, she recounted a time when, as a single mother on a low income in a London housing co-op in the 1980s, her and her young son used to take regular deliveries of surplus supermarket food. "It was mainly junk, cream pies and cakes and some unhealthy sandwiches. Of course he used to love it, but I didn't think it was very nutritious."

Twenty years later, global price rises and food riots in the poorest parts of the world show us that the poor are still with us, and they are still hungry. Yet, in a system more dominated by supermarkets than ever, most of us select our weekly purchases from brightly lit shelves that are never empty. And, most of us are buying more than we need.

The Government's Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) reported this month that 6.7 million tonnes of food is thrown away by consumers every year, around a third of all the food we buy. Keeping in mind, however, that the consumer represents the end point of the journey food makes from 'farm to fork' (or to the kitchen bin), it is worth taking a step back to consider that the whole food system is geared towards creating surplus. WRAP verifies that 1.6 million tonnes of food waste is generated by retailers; 3.3 million tonnes by hotels, restaurants and bars; and 4.1 million tonnes by food manufacturers. Along with post-consumer waste, this adds up to 15.7 million tonnes of food, a lot of which is still fit for consumption. Surplus food redistribution programmes aim to divert some of this food to people who need it. An admirable goal, but do programmes like this go any way toward addressing food waste and health inequality?

At the Jane Street depot, of the Edinburgh Cyrenians' FareShare project, called 'Good Food in Tackling Homelessness', I was shown round by Dave Berry, project distribution manager. Founded as a year round alternative to the Christmas drop in centre,

the national charity Fareshare distributes surplus from food and drink businesses through partner organisations around the UK.

In Edinburgh, 300 square feet of depot space, and two refrigerated vans are used to move 7-8 tonnes of surplus food per week. The food is collected from shops and retail distribution centres, sorted, and then distributed to 40 homeless shelters and projects around the city. Deliveries are more varied here than in my friend's recollection.

I set off with volunteers to make the afternoon collections. The problem with back door collecting, one of them explained, is that, "The negotiations take place with the Head Offices of companies. It's not always appreciated at store level. Where one store can't do enough to help, another uses us as a skip." We made four stops, collecting fruit and vegetables, deli leftovers, cheeses and cold meats, some slightly shrivelled looking basil plants, and six crates of crisps. Back at the depot we unloaded our cargo. Some products had to go straight in the bin, including a large edible looking ham, and anything else that was past its sell-by date.

There undoubtedly is a danger that retailers can use schemes like this a free refuse disposal service. As Bill Gray, National Officer for Community Food and Health Scotland, put it, "Food schemes can be win-win for the retailers in terms of waste disposal and PR." Gray argues however, that the Cyrenians' approach, with its heavy emphasis on volunteers, effectively counters the risks, "Potentially, surplus

**These sandwiches are still fresh, so can be distributed, but as with retail sales, any product that is past its sell-by date must be thrown away. Fruit and vegetables constitute an exception, as they can be unwrapped and re-packed for distribution. This makes them ideal for handling.**



**At the Edinburgh FareShare project, a collection target of 40-50% fresh fruit and vegetables is generally met. In the depot there were piles of perfectly good potatoes, carrots and turnips that had been rejected at the packing house because of size or appearance.**

food distribution is a negative approach, both in terms of waste, and in terms of increasing dependency on food banks. The Cyrenians have developed in such a way as to be aware of major flaws, whilst using food as a means of socialising and empowering. The emphasis is on sustainable resettlement for homeless people." The Cyrenians provide job skills training and help with permanent rehousing. Indeed, when I asked one of the volunteers about this, he said, "I'd work here every day if I could."

I left the Jane Street depot feeling impressed at the level of dedication shown by Dave Berry and his staff, and by the demonstrably beneficial effect of the project on the volunteers I had met. There is no doubt, however, that no matter how well handled, surplus food redistribution does nothing to counter wasteful retailing practices. Last year, nationally, FareShare programmes redistributed 2,000 tonnes of food, or 0.125% of the 1.6 million tonnes of food waste generated by retailers. There is also the danger that food donations can act as a sop to vital services which should be properly funded by the state. Itself underfunded to the tune of £60,000 per year, the 'Good Food in Tackling Homelessness' programme has to work hard just to keep going, despite aiding in the rehabilitation of some of society's most vulnerable people.

As debates over food waste and food insecurity continue, one cannot help asking whether rising global food prices will affect the amount wasted in Britain each year and subsequently impact on surplus food redistribution? Maria Kortbech Olesen, marketing and communications manager at Fareshare head office, does not think so, "The volume of food wasted is driven by many factors not just price. While we as consumers want ever more choice, and while the food industry remains a hugely competitive market place, then waste will occur. Major drivers for change include legislation, economic pressures such as landfill tax and increasing energy costs, more than rising food prices and stakeholder and media pressure. The ones truly losing out because of the rising food prices are over four million people in the UK who cannot afford a healthy diet. These people would still suffer if food surplus was to decrease or even disappear."

# A new Eden for apples

**T**he Eden Project in Cornwall is encouraging landowners and second homers to consider offering unused plots of land to boost local food production.

"It could mean a small income for these landowners, who would also have the satisfaction of knowing that they are making an important contribution to revitalising the Cornish fruit industry as well as adding to the landscape," says Eden's economic botany researcher Dr. Andrew Ormerod.

This is one of the ideas that has emerged from two, 'Fruit Focus' discussion and networking events so far held at the Eden Project that are uniting the efforts of fruit producers and experts who want to see Cornwall increase its production to match increasing demand for local fruit.

"Demand for local fruit has increased between 2003 and 2006 but hasn't been matched by production," says market analyst Ruth Huxley. The county's fruit industry, particularly tree fruit, has been in sharp decline since WW2, but now there is active work to figure out how to reverse that trend.

According to Ormerod, "The current trend is for consumers to eat more UK fruit due to increased concerns about healthy eating and environmental issues – and local varieties of fruit have a role to play in niche markets including juice, cider and culinary uses. We think there is great potential, but a huge amount of work needs to go into rebuilding the local market."

In common with other areas that produced fruit for their own needs, the Cornish fruit industry evolved to use well adapted national and locally selected varieties of apples, plums and eastern Cornwall cherries. Pioneers within the county, including James Armstrong Evans

and Mary Martin, have rescued many traditional varieties that would have disappeared over the last few decades. Philip MacMillan Browse, retired Eden Project horticultural director and another pioneer involved with Cornish fruit promotion, suggests that some of these varieties have potential if planted in enough quantity to produce niche products. The challenge now is to see if it is possible to raise awareness about growing and marketing these fruit varieties.

The 'Fruit Focus' events so far held at Eden have considered the need for local fruit from greengrocers, fruit and vegetable wholesalers, restaurateurs, supermarkets, and food manufacturers large and small. All have indicated that they would like more local fruit.

As noted by Andy Atkinson, owner of Cornish Orchards, apple juice and cider producer, "This discussion has been very positive – this has a tinge of commercialism about it." Although the romantic notions about Cornwall may be part of what makes change happen, ultimately, one of the main stumbling blocks to success with reviving orchard fruit crops will be to ensure that there is a strong enough market pull to ensure economic success.

Geoff Ridpath, The Kitchen Garden, Trago Mills, tries to source Cornish produce but supplies are limited and very seasonal. "I deal with three wholesalers – they have what I term 'supermarket psychology' – they tell me what they think the public want. Some wholesalers are not helping local growers. I see the delight on shoppers' faces



**Eden is an educational charity all about our relationship with and dependence upon plants. The Biomes, the biggest conservatories in the world, hold more than 1,000,000 plants representing 5,000 species from many of the climatic zones of the world. Many of these can grow in the mild conditions of Cornwall, others need the controlled conditions of the greenhouses.**

when they see local produce. I encourage local people with surpluses to bring them in – such as local blackberries labelled 'naturally grown, locally produced, picked this morning' they always sell straight off the shelf." Ridpath sells Cornish apple juice very successfully but says it would be nice if there were some Cornish apples out there that he could put on the shelf.

One problem with local fruit has been cost. Produce flown around the world is often cheaper than local produce, and Ridpath notes, "People buy the cheapest – even though the local produce is fantastic." Phil Boddington is a local strawberry grower and also makes jam, and he also notes a conflict, "Chinese strawberries are one third the price of my berries, so what do you do? When do you take into account food miles, carbon footprint and local employment?"

Deborah Richards aims to produce 13,000 jars a year of savoury preserves, using as much Cornish produce as she can. She thinks there is potential in a, "brand Cornwall," so long as it is a unique experience. Her firm uses some of the distinctly Cornish apple varieties and the Kea plum only found in a few creek side orchards.

In addition, the 'Fruit Focus' events have highlighted opportunities for growers to produce soft fruit, and novel fruit crops such as hardy kiwi fruit. Different models for tree fruit production have been considered, including intensive organic production of apples, and bi-cropping of apples with livestock, particularly chickens (which could be mutually beneficial).

■ To find out more visit [www.edenproject.com](http://www.edenproject.com)



Photo by Ida Fabrizio

# Legal, decent, honest and true?

**Misleading food and drink advertisements are supposed to be regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority. Here we report on recent and upcoming adjudications.**

## X Supplementary knowledge

A little bit of knowledge can be a dangerous thing. Most of us know that vitamins are good for us, but rather than getting ours from a healthy, balanced diet, we reach for the vitamin pills and pop a few of those instead. In doing so, we can miss out on a whole range of other essential nutrients – but the pill-makers' claims are convincing and we feel we are doing ourselves good.

A *Food Magazine* reader alerted us to this brochure from Simply Supplements. There are 48 pages of carefully crafted editorial in this brochure, all of it designed to sell supplements with the apparent backing of science. However, we recommend you take heed of the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) advice, "Most people should be able to get all the nutrients they need by eating a varied and balanced diet." The FSA also warns that there is some evidence emerging

of harm from taking supplements for too long or from taking too much.

The most worrying advert in the brochure is one for Prostamex Gold Prostate Formulation. It suggests men take this if they are suffering from prostate problems such as difficulty urinating, inability to empty the bladder, a weak urine stream, and frequent urge to urinate.

All of these are symptoms of prostate cancer, the most common cancer in men. Approximately 9,000 men die from prostate cancer every year in England and Wales, many because they did not visit a GP until it was too late. It is important to note that these symptoms may simply be caused by an enlarged prostate gland or inflammation, but the Prostate Cancer Charity is clear on what you should do if you have these symptoms – you should visit your GP.

The page advertising these pills has no such recommendation and as such we believe it could be putting men's lives at risk, as well as breaching advertising guidelines. If you look closely there is some very small print on the back page which does suggest a consultation with a GP or pharmacist, "if you are on medication or suffer from any medical conditions," but this warning is several pages away from the Prostamex advert. We are reporting the brochure to the Advertising Standards Authority.

According to the FSA, total sales of vitamins, minerals and dietary supplements in the UK were estimated to be worth around £550 million in

2006, with vitamin and mineral supplements accounting for £220m. However, if you have health problems of any sort we would urge you to take the advice of a doctor and not the companies that make money by selling this stuff.

## X Wake up to Nutella

They ASA recently received 53 complaints regarding a TV advert which featured mums giving their children Nutella on toast. The ad stated, "We all want our kids to have a balanced breakfast with something like toast. But there's so much to choose from; what do we put on it? Nutella. Surprisingly, each jar contains 52 hazelnuts, the equivalent of a glass of skimmed milk and some cocoa. Nutella releases energy slowly, so it can be part of a balanced breakfast that can help to keep them going. Wake up to Nutella."

Complaints that Nutella does not release energy slowly were dismissed, as the product has a low Glycaemic Index, despite having high levels of sugar and fat. The ASA accepted that fatty acids in the product reduce the rate at which glucose is absorbed by the body.

Further complaints that Nutella contained ingredients other than just hazelnuts, milk and cocoa were also rejected, as advertisers are not obliged to list every ingredient in a product.

Clearcast, the company responsible for the pre-broadcast clearance of television advertisements, reckoned that most consumers would understand that products of this sort would contain sugar,

but failed to back their opinion up with any evidence.

However, the advert did fall foul of the ASA for over-egging the nutritional goodness of Nutella. The watchdog considered that the ad created a misleading impression that Nutella made a significant contribution to a balanced breakfast, when it is in fact a high sugar and high fat product. Nutella were told not to repeat the advert in its current form.



*How the 'ell should I know if it's an ethically sourced, organic, fair trade apple!*

**Prostamex<sup>™</sup> Gold**  
The most advanced Prostate Formulation in the UK - Containing 29 Ingredients!

**Do you suffer from Prostate Problems?**  
Frequent, urgent need to urinate, particularly at night  
Difficulty urinating, inability to empty the bladder  
A weak urine stream or stopping or burning during urination?

**Minimal Success?**  
If you're one of those men who has only had minimal success with other prostate, urinary and/or standard saw palmetto pills, then we strongly urge you to try Prostamex Gold. Containing an unprecedented 29 active ingredients, Prostamex Gold is the most comprehensive Prostate and General Men's nutrition supplement on the international market, containing every natural ingredient known to provide vital nutritional support for optimal prostate health.

**Tests and Research**  
Researchers estimate that prostate problems affect at least five million men in the UK - some in their forties, half of all men older than fifty and four out of every five men older than eighty. An enlarged prostate usually affects men after 60 years of age.

**Try Prostamex Gold**  
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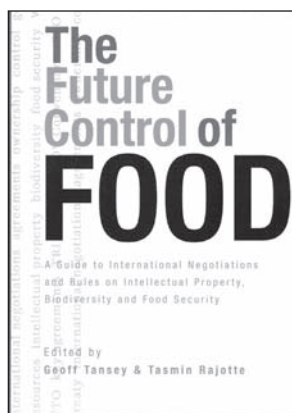
## The Future Control of Food

A Guide to International Negotiations and Rules on Intellectual Property, Biodiversity and Food Security. Edited by Geoff Tansey and Tasmin Rajotte. Earthscan ([www.earthscan.co.uk](http://www.earthscan.co.uk)) 2008. ISBN: 9781844074297. £19.99

As the longer title indicates, this book provides a guide to the issues currently dominating food trade – genetics, intellectual property rights, biodiversity and food security – and the chambers where the policy debates are held – in the Convention on Biological Diversity, the World Trade Organization, Codex Alimentarius and the many other assemblies set up to make high-level, multi-government agreements.

It is a goldmine for those who need to understand the nuances of the debate on the ownership of genetic codes, the patenting of life forms, the use of risk and of precautionary principles in the negotiation of health regulations, and the setting of standards for trade in plant and animal products.

Almost half of the book is devoted to five examples of internationally-negotiated



conventions, agreements and treaties concerning their special focus on ownership of the primary resources of food production. These

provide plenty of material for drawing larger conclusions on the subtleties of influencing policy-making, and the interweaving of the policy mix: legal argument, scientific argument, economic argument, and political argument.

The outcome is a treasure trove for those engaged in the negotiating process in almost any context, and the editors have made a good job of mixing technical complexity with real examples and case studies. For anyone entering the world of international negotiation this is a book to take on the plane and read, and re-read as you prepare.

But how many of us are actually in that position? Civil society representation, although a little more developed than it was in earlier years, is still very limited. Good as the book is, it may be hard to find its core audience.

It is commonly assumed that either inexperience or lack of understanding about the world of high-level meetings of these international bodies leads many civil society groups to shun the meetings and carry on their arguments outside the buildings. But even assuming they want and get permission to attend, a serious lack of the necessary funds also hampers these groups' ability to participate, especially when the negotiations are extended over many meetings over a period of years.

Optimistically, it might be possible for campaigners to be included in government delegations at the government's expense, with induction and training programmes to ensure their competent ability to represent their constituency, but this relies on a willing government with a generous purse.

Too often the reverse is true – campaigners and civil society representatives are aware of the issues, and know the language, but are excluded because their message may challenge the status quo, the established relationships and understandings between government and industry. And so, not surprisingly, they take their message to the streets.

Tim Lobstein

## Movable Feast

Arab and Bangladeshi Healthy Meals, £5 (£4 if you buy ten or more at once), ISBN 978-0-9558729-0-7, published by A Moveable Feast Healthy Living Centre. See [www.a-moveable-feast.org.uk](http://www.a-moveable-feast.org.uk)

This book of recipes is a little gem. The collection of 17 main courses was put together by a women's cooking club in south Westminster, under the guidance of a community dietitian. Meals such as – Basra grilled fish; Sylhet Curry (with beef, ginger, cumin and cardamom); Mediterranean vegetables – are all based on dishes cooked at home, for families.

They are easy to cook, low cost, and children should like them. The book itself takes the form of a fan of recipe cards at a size that will fit into your pocket for when you go shopping. Purchase the book and eat well while knowing your money is going to fund more family food projects.



Rowshanara Islam (left) developed the recipe for lamb and lentils and Shahana Begum the one for tuna roti wraps. They want people who have never tried their hand at this type of cooking to buy the book and have a go. Islam also thinks that the, “younger generation of cooks who grew up on these type of dishes, but didn't learn to cook them by themselves will find it useful.”



## Pesticides on a plate

A consumer guide to pesticide issues in the food chain. Pesticide Action Network UK. ISBN: 978 0 9549542 6 0. Free.

This is an excellent consumer guide to pesticide issues in the food chain, produced by Pesticide Action Network UK. The booklet provides a simple, non-technical overview on what pesticides are, and the hazards they pose to both us and the environment, with a focus on pesticide residues in food, and how to avoid these. It also discusses how farmers and farm workers can be affected, particularly in developing countries, and the cost that society must pay for pesticide problems.

A recommended read, which can be downloaded for free from [www.pan-uk.org/Publications/Publist.htm](http://www.pan-uk.org/Publications/Publist.htm)







We welcome letters from our readers, but we do sometimes have to edit them for publication (our apologies to the authors). Write to The Editor, *The Food Magazine*, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF or email to [letters@foodcomm.org.uk](mailto:letters@foodcomm.org.uk)

## Baby milk court case

You told us in the last edition about a court case taken by formula manufacturers against new advertising rules, did they lose? And, how is Baby Milk Action's boycott against Nestlé going?

**David Stacey, London**

A legal win by baby formula manufacturers has delayed the introduction of new government guidelines to control the labelling of their products. The Infant and Dietetic Food Association's success means that companies have two more years before they must ensure labels include a clear distinction between follow-on formula for older babies and infant formula for newborns, or display the essential information on how to reduce the

known risks of using powdered formula. Companies will have to comply with all other parts of the regulations immediately, including new advertising restrictions which they had hoped to delay.

Meanwhile, their approximate £200 million annual market continues to grow while UK breastfeeding rates languish at the bottom of European league tables. The new UK regulations, stemming from a European Union (EU) Directive, are nowhere near as tough on companies as the World Health Organization backed *International Code on the Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes*.

Campaigner, Patti Rundall, Baby Milk Action (BMA), says, "The UK Government has repeatedly said that it wants to implement *The International Code* but has still not done so – fearing repercussions if it goes further than the EU Directive. Through the European Ombudsman we are now challenging the European Commission over its failure to acknowledge its duty to protect health in all its policies; its lack of transparency and its failure to listen to the pleas from the UK and other Member States to interpret the European Directive in a way which protects health."

To make matters worse, many companies routinely flout labelling laws, while over stretched trading standards departments struggle to monitor violations and have little budget to take companies to court over their failures to obey the law.



The food giant Nestlé is waiting in the wings to enter the UK baby food market but fears the backlash which is sure to come from UK consumers who support the Nestlé Boycott. UNICEF states, "It has been estimated that improved breastfeeding practices could save some 1.5 million children a year." The annual demonstration, highlighting Nestlé's marketing practices which contravene The International Code and undermine breastfeeding was on 17th May, at Nestlé's Headquarters in Croydon.

Thanks to fantastic campaigning by BMA, it looks as if lobbyists targeting policy-makers in Brussels could soon have all of their dealings made very public. The European Commission is concerned that lobbying by big business is having too much influence on decision making. The President of the EC will decide by the end of May whether to require that all meetings by EU officials with lobbyists will have to be logged. Pressure by BMA was instrumental in getting this on the European agenda, after they made clear their concerns that Nestlé was snuggling up to European policy makers.

## Is my fruit fresh?

When I buy fruit and veg in the supermarket, sometimes it seems to go off very quickly even though the dates on the packaging look okay. How long do supermarkets keep hold of fresh produce?

**D. Weaver, Yorkshire.**

Date labelling of the fruit and vegetables sold in many leading supermarket chains can mislead consumers about the freshness of products.

When you buy fruit and vegetables there is no information to tell you when that produce was harvested. So, how can you tell if it is fresh? Display until and best before dates found on pre-packed produce tell you nothing about the age of what you are buying.

Many supermarket chains work with middle men whose business it is to be able to respond immediately to requests for say, 10,000 lettuces or 50,000 cabbages. These middle men purchase vast quantities of produce to have it in stock when the supermarkets come calling, as they are judged on response time. So, 50,000 lettuces may be picked and stored one day, then gradually sold off to stores. Each time a batch goes on sale, 'display until' and 'best before' dates are added – but those are related to when the items came out of storage, not when they were picked.

If supermarkets were required to add the harvest date to labels, this could boost the market for local foods and cut down on waste, with many tons of produce pitched in the bin in UK homes every year.

## Meat and bleach

I heard from a friend that the chicken for sale in supermarkets and butchers may have been sprayed with bleach to kill off germs. Is that true?

**Alix Dove, Birmingham**

The use of bleach or any other antimicrobial substances to treat poultry is forbidden in the EU, but this may be about to change. Over in the US, a range of antimicrobials are routinely used to disinfect chicken carcasses, but the US cannot export any of that chicken to Europe, where the chemicals are banned. The US is not happy about this, and has lobbied the European Commission to ease the sanitary rules that keep their factory-farmed poultry, treated with anti-microbial agents, out of Europe. Despite the opposition of 16 agriculture ministers from across Europe, the Commission is proposing that the ban be lifted. This will allow treated US chicken into Europe, and will encourage EU farmers to use bleaching agents such as chlorine dioxide to 'sanitise' chicken meat.

The US argues that antimicrobials increase food safety, but many EU farmers and campaign groups, including The Food Commission, argue that the

use of such substances may have the opposite effect. Some producers and processors, knowing that their meat will be decontaminated before being sold, may make less effort to avoid bacterial contamination. This in turn could have a negative affect on animal welfare. Interestingly, surveys by the Consumers Union found that US poultry meat had higher rates of bacterial infection than meat produced in Europe, possibly because European slaughtering conditions were more hygienic.

The EC proposal currently states that poultry plants would need to rinse carcasses after treatment with chemicals, and would require that poultry cleaned with the anti-microbials be labelled as such, but these steps are vigorously opposed by US industry. Even if chicken were labelled, no provision is made for meat included in other dishes or eaten in restaurants or take-aways – so consumers would be unable to know if they were eating treated meat.

■ **The Food Commission, the Soil Association, Sustain, and other campaign groups are urging the UK government to join the 16 other countries which already oppose the EC proposal. We will let you know what happens.**

## Where there's misery there's brass

Climate change and the rising price of basic foodstuffs are gold mines if you are in the right line of work. Some of the world's biggest agri-business companies – Monsanto, Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland – are posting enormous profits off the back of global price rises for grains such as rice, wheat and corn due to poor harvests, the boom in biofuels, and increased demand for meat (all of those animals are gobbling up grain supplies).

And, at their recent conference – Arable Cropping in a Changing Climate – the Home Grown Cereals Authority (HGCA) hosted a vote on the motion: Climate change delivers more opportunities than threats to UK agriculture. Delegates voted 67-41 in favour.

That's a load off our minds then, so start enjoying it, keep an ear out for the business opportunities – we are starting up a social enterprise to keep us going, and thinking of calling it 'The restaurant at the end of the universe'.

■ Thank you to Richard Sanders of the Organic Research Centre at Elm Farm for the HGCA story.

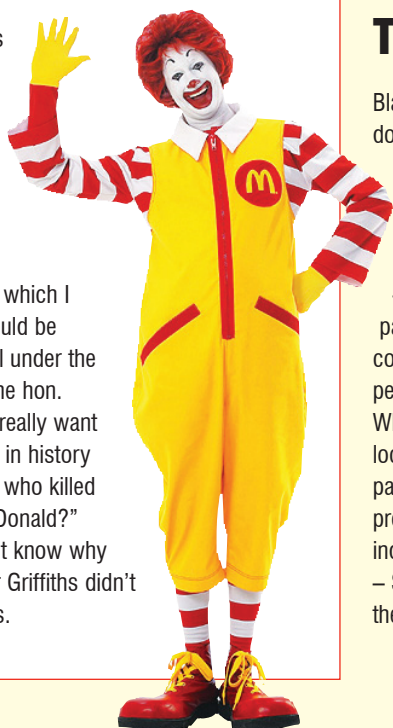
## The man who killed Ronald McDonald?

Labour MP Nigel Griffiths' *Food Products (Marketing to children) Bill* sadly failed to make it through Parliament but the award for failing to grasp the point goes to Conservative Nigel Evans.

His contribution to the debate consisted largely of the following, "Youngsters walking down Victoria

Street past McDonald's would come to one of those plastic Ronald McDonald characters, which I suspect would be made illegal under the Bill. Does the hon. Gentleman really want to go down in history as the man who killed Ronald McDonald?"

We don't know why the hon. Mr Griffiths didn't just say yes.



## Wholemeal goodness or sugary, fatty badness?

McVities is currently promoting its digestive biscuits as a good source of 'wheat and wholemeal goodness' with, for example, a statement on Milk Chocolate Digestives saying they are '45% wheat and wholemeal goodness.'

What the company does not make so clear is that these same biscuits are also '53% sugary and fatty badness,' (each biscuit contains almost 30% sugar and over 23% fat).

Getting more wholegrains into our diet is a great idea, but McVities are really taking the biscuit when they imply that gobbling biccies is a sensible contribution to a healthy lifestyle.

By examining the on-pack 'Eat Healthily' nutrition information *The*

*Food Magazine* worked out we would need to eat 48 biscuits to get a day's worth of fibre. Those same biscuits would also give us nearly five times the maximum recommended daily intake of saturated fat, and over two and a half times the maximum recommended daily intake of sugar.

That's healthy eating the McVities way.



## Breaking into Tesco

*The Food Magazine* thought that the series 'Breaking into Tesco' meant something else entirely, so we made sure we sat down to watch... the world's longest ever TV advertisement. The geniuses at Channel Five really did turn over hours of programming to the big retailer, with some punters trying to get a ready meal they had created onto the supermarket shelves. It basically consisted of weeks of these keen cooks saying how it would be a dream come true if they succeeded, how nice it would be, wonderful, a dream... you get the picture. Of course, upon reflection, maybe they had to say that, Tesco might have sued them if they hadn't.

Oh well, it's all good fun, it's what people want to see, say the defenders – as they herd us all like lemmings over the Cliff of Lost Hope into the Cynical Abyss.

## The running man

Hats off to the Japanese for including exercise in their 'food guide spinning top,' their equivalent to the UK's 'eatwell plate' that aims to help us choose a healthy diet.

Their running man may be destined to spend eternity running around a glass of water, but he will certainly be fit.

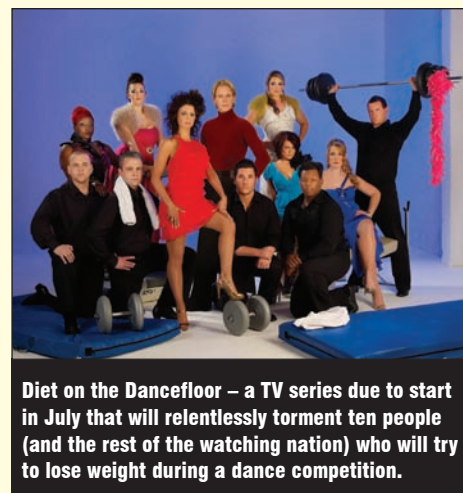


## There's gold in them thar fat rolls

Blame yourself for weighing too much? Partner doesn't fancy you anymore? Are your love handles sending your business down the pan, are your bat wings turning your kids into pariahs?

Your local council can probably help – because loads of them are going into partnership with Slimming World, yes, the commercial diet company, to enable GPs to refer people for a free course of slimming treatment. When the free course is done, and your share of local tax money handed over, you have to start paying for the sessions yourself, but hey, it is probably worth it. I am sure there is some kind of independent evidence somewhere that this works – Slimming World's website says it does. Yes, there is gold in them thar fat rolls... but not for

you, plump readers of *The Food Magazine*. Don't say thin people didn't warn you.



**Diet on the Dancefloor – a TV series due to start in July that will relentlessly torment ten people (and the rest of the watching nation) who will try to lose weight during a dance competition.**