

# The FOOD MAGAZINE

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

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## Fast food chains under pressure to label menus

**In a *Food Magazine* quiz, 82% of parents and childminders failed to get more than one correct answer when asked about the nutritional content of items listed on kids' menus at fast food chains.**

**T**hough families eat out more than ever before, restaurant chains in the UK do not provide clear, easy-to-use nutrition information at the point of ordering; for example, listing calorie information on the menu board next to item price. If you want to know what is in the foods on children's menus at KFC, Burger King, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, or Subway – you will need to do some advance research on company

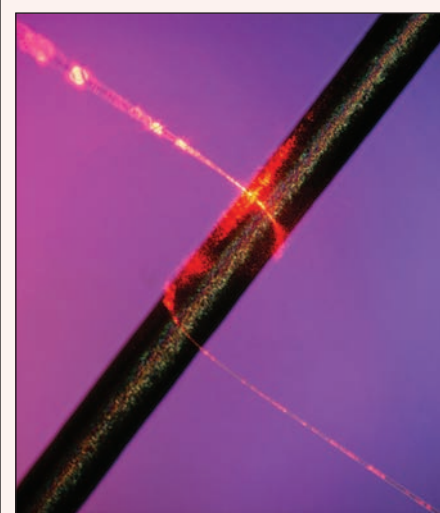
websites, ask staff for leaflets, or scrutinize the small print on packaging or tray liners.

A new *Food Magazine* survey shows that children often get more calories, fat, sugar and salt from fast food meals than parents realise. Without easy-to-use nutrition information at the point of ordering, it is difficult to make healthier choices at restaurants.

■ See page 4 for full story



Our survey shows parents and carers want more easily available information about the nutritional content of kids' menus.



A silica nano-wire wraps a beam of light around a human hair. Nanotechnology can build working systems – like this wire – out of individual particles as small as one eighty-thousandth the diameter of a single human hair. Credit: Limin Tong/Harvard University

### Size matters

Nanotechnology – the science of very small particles – is big business, with industry predicting a market of more than \$20 billion by 2015. Already more than 100 food and food-related products containing nano-ingredients are on sale around the world. These include food additives sold for use in processed meats, diet replacement milkshakes and cooking oil. The science is poorly regulated, and evidence is emerging of toxic effects. With no labelling requirements in place, consumers are unable to tell whether foods they buy contain nano-particles. *The Food Magazine* takes a critical look at the use of nanotechnology in our food supply.

■ See pages 10-11 for full story

## Free school meals a pipe dream in England

**T**he Government recently announced that primary school children in three local authority areas in England will be given free school meals for two years beginning in September 2009. Health Secretary Alan Johnson says it is part of a £20 million project to get, "solid evidence from a nationally-assessed pilot," about the possible benefits of rolling out such a programme on a national basis.

In launching the programme, the Government admits that poverty could be at heart of low take-up for new, healthier school meals. Around 47% of primary kids eat school meals; the cost of meals varies, but in some schools it has risen to £1.75. Children whose families are on certain benefits get free meals, but working people on low incomes do not.

According to Alan Johnson, "For many children from poorer backgrounds, a school lunch is their only hot and healthy meal of the day," and according to Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, "we want to make sure that children, particularly children from disadvantaged backgrounds who need it most, are getting a free hot meal every school day."

If they do indeed have such laudable aims, why the paltry offering of three pilots? Why don't they just get on with solving the problem – there is plenty of evidence already available about the wide range of benefits from healthier school meals, and about the extent of child poverty in the UK – including in families in work, but earning low incomes.

The eminent ministers say the pilots will investigate whether free school meals: reduce obesity / have an impact on a child's Body Mass Index; change eating habits at home; impact on behaviour and academic performance at school; improve school standards; and improve general health and well being.

They have set high hurdles indeed for the pilots to prove their worth. I for one think we could find the evidence right now to show that children not going hungry would contribute to most of these

outcomes. And let's remember that it never was an aim of the recent revolution in school meals to tackle obesity. But why should they need any of this so-called proof from the pilots? Do children in England not have the right to not go hungry without it proving anything at all?

But if the ministers want evidence... We report in this issue (pages 17-18) about research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that shows low earning families with children able to spend much less than they need to in order to access a healthy diet. In FM79 we reported on the fantastic successes of the three year 'Eat well, do well' programme in Hull which offered free school meals to all children – sadly it was scrapped when there was a local change of political administration, despite being very positively evaluated. In Scotland free school meals are now to be rolled out to all children in the first three years of primary school after a successful pilot.

Even Alan Johnson says, "Local initiatives such as that in Hull seem to show that children who eat a healthy lunch are more likely to be better behaved, better able to learn and more likely to see their general health improve." Well, enough said really.

Evidence must be one of the most used and abused words in public health and policy making – you could drown in the millions the Department of Health is spending on various aspects of their anti-obesity initiative – and where is rock solid proof that awarding millions of that budget to advertising agencies such as M&C Saatchi will make us all thinner? The need for evidence just sounds a more convincing reason for policy making decisions than other excuses which eminent ministers might offer.



*Janis M. Al*

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Chew on this website: [www.chewonthis.org.uk](http://www.chewonthis.org.uk)

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# Take a stand for free speech

**T**he corporate infiltration of government is growing apace, as Jessica Mitchell reports on page six. The Department of Health's latest Change4life programme is being backed with £200 million of food companies' cash (almost three times the amount the Government is investing). Meanwhile, more and more national and local health campaigns are accepting funding and sponsorship from corporations whose overriding agenda is not to improve public health, but to simply ensure increased profits each and every year.

Meanwhile, industry lobbyists cosy up to Government decision makers, ensuring that their corporate concerns are far more widely heard than the voices of genuine, independent health campaigners. Out on the front line, trading standards officers fear they cannot take action against large, locally based food manufacturers and retailers, as few councils will dare to upset companies which employ large numbers of local people. In a similar vein, planning permission is given to supermarkets to rip the heart out of local communities, all for the promise of a few extra jobs and perhaps a new access road or playing field.

In such times it is essential that independent voices are protected and supported. One such voice is this magazine, *The Food Magazine*, which has remained defiantly free of commercial advertising and food industry influence for over fifteen years. The magazine is not glossy, it is not even printed in colour, but it does tell the truth and it does get things done. By spearheading the campaign for healthier, safer food, the magazine has played a hugely influential role

in changing the UK's food and drink for the better.

*The Food Magazine* cannot and will not accept money from the food industry, but it can accept the donations and support of its readership. If you can help us with a donation, whether small or large, please do so. Please see the box on page 8 for ways in which you can donate, or subscribe, to *The Food Magazine*.

## New website and reader benefits

*The Food Magazine* has launched a new version of its website, which can be seen at [www.foodmagazine.org.uk](http://www.foodmagazine.org.uk). The website is intended to be easier to use, and features new, reader-only content which can only be accessed by subscribers. In particular, back issues dating back to 2003 are available to view or download.

Please visit the website, and do let us know if have any comments or suggestions, especially if you think something could be improved. The cover sheet which came with this issue of *The Food Magazine* has

the access information you need to log into the website, but if you have lost, or did not receive this information, we can send you the password information you need. Just drop an email to [access@foodmagazine.org.uk](mailto:access@foodmagazine.org.uk), with your name and address (the address to which we send the magazine), and we will email you back with a password.

If you run a website which links to *The Food Magazine*, please update any links to the website which you may have. Happy browsing!

## No standards for nursery food

Nurseries are feeding toddlers with foods that are banned or heavily restricted in primary and secondary schools in England and Wales. Crisps, chocolate, lollies, sweets, cakes, biscuits, burgers

and chips are regularly found on menus according to a new report *Georgie Porgie Pudding And Pie: Exposing the Truth About Nursery Food*.

The report's authors say, "the Government does nothing to stop this happening," through its failure to put any nutritional standards in place for nursery meals. While new guidelines for school dinners in primary and secondary schools have raised standards, more than 600,000 children attending nurseries are vulnerable because of Government failure to monitor their meals, provide funding for improvements or a clear lead on what food should be provided.

The report found some nurseries spending as little as 25 pence per child per day on food. Others serve meals containing additives that are actually banned from manufactured foods aimed at the under-threes. Many parents and nursery staff are unhappy with the, "unregulated," state of the meal service.

The Nursery Food campaign is calling for, "changes to be made urgently," and has set up a website [www.nurseryfood.org](http://www.nurseryfood.org) where you can sign a petition calling for nutritional standards to be put in place immediately.

## Food 4 thought

The new British Heart Foundation 'Food 4 Thought' campaign is targeting parents and children to help them make healthier food choices in the face of food manufacturers' marketing tactics. Central to the campaign is a soon to be launched report on the techniques used to market high fat, salt, sugar children's foods to parents.

The Food Commission conducted the research for the report which will be available at [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk) and [www.foodmagazine.org.uk](http://www.foodmagazine.org.uk).

## Plaudit for additives website

Our Action on Additives campaign has been shortlisted for a Good Housekeeping Consumer Award 2008 in the category of best consumer campaign of the year. Check out our latest work at [www.actiononadditives.com](http://www.actiononadditives.com).

## Fishy business

Get a free copy of the Marine Conservation Society's new *Pocket Good Fish Guide* at [www.fishonline.org](http://www.fishonline.org) to help you when you shop. The handy carrying card lists fish to eat, avoid and eat with caution.



## Good food for the future

As part of its campaign to place good food firmly on the political and public agendas, the Caroline Walker Trust (CWT) is calling for independent voices to challenge policy decisions and to lobby for better nutritional standards for, “those whose voices may not be heard.”

In a definitive and challenging report, *Public health nutrition: challenges for the 21st century*, CWT’s Director, Dr. Helen Crawley, takes a critical look at the state of our nation’s diet and asks why so many of us remain tied to, “nutritionally depleted high-fat, high-salt and high sugar foods.” The report challenges the status quo on a number of issues, and takes a closer look at accepted wisdoms.

For example, in a closer look at the Food Standards Agency’s *Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey*, Crawley challenges the Agency’s assertion that low income households have no worse nutrition than the rest of the population, and that they therefore do not merit special attention. Crawley shows data from *LIDNS* which indicates, for example, that three times as many women aged 35-49 from low income households have low vitamin C and folate status, and twice as many are iron deficient as compared to the rest of the population.

Crawley suggests that some of the key challenges for the next twenty years will be to:

- Ensure better investment in promoting breastfeeding;
- Expand entitlement to free school meals;
- Ensure clear nutritional labelling on foods;
- Support people with learning difficulties to eat well;
- Review policy around vitamin D;
- And to invest more in supporting older people in their own homes.

■ [www.cwt.org.uk](http://www.cwt.org.uk)

### Vitamin D deficiency

Evidence is emerging that many people in the UK may be deficient in vitamin D. Such deficiency leads to bone problems such as rickets in children, and is implicated in the development of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, some cancers, multiple sclerosis, tuberculosis and diabetes.

We get most of our vitamin D via exposure to sunlight, but we now spend less time out of doors, and cover-up when we are, due to worries over sun cancer. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition says a review of evidence and policy is urgently needed. The National Heart Forum is bringing together experts this December to

consider: what are the optimum levels of vitamin D for health; what are the benefits and potential risks of different approaches to improve vitamin D status through sunlight exposure, dietary advice, food fortification and dietary supplements; and how this analysis should inform future public health strategies. In the meantime, please make sure you speak to your doctor if you are concerned about your vitamin D levels, or if you have questions about how long to spend in the sun.

### Private catering kicked out of Scottish hospitals

Scotland’s hospitals are to be banned from contracting out catering services to private firms. According to Rosie Blackburn of Sustain’s Good Food on the Public Plate project, “We hope that this is good news – bringing services in house should make it easier to improve nutritional quality of foods, and to ensure more environmentally friendly sourcing of ingredients.”

Blackburn stresses that it will be a missed opportunity, however, if the service is not properly budgeted, with nutritional standards, staff training and development, particularly with regard to sustainable sourcing.

## Sustainable communities in action

Campaigners are calling on councils around the UK to take advantage of the new *Sustainable Communities Act* to help build thriving communities, and vibrant local food systems. The *Act* gives local communities and their councils the power to demand help from central government to promote local sustainability. From October 2008, councils can submit specific proposals to central

government, so long as these have been developed in collaboration with citizen’s panels representing all of the groups in their locality.

This new law sets up a participation process whereby government must “co-operate” and “reach agreement” with ideas put forward by citizens. This wording in law is unprecedented and is why this *Act* is such good news for all those who think our food systems need radical change. From April 2009, the *Act* also opens up the opportunity for some central government functions, and related budgets, to be transferred to local control.

Local sustainability is defined as, “encouraging the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of an area.” For food this could mean:

- Restrictions to the number of fast food outlets in a specific area;
- Forcing supermarkets to source more local and/or organic food;
- Increasing the level of local and/or organic food provided in public buildings like schools and hospitals;

**Farmers’ markets like this one help to support local agriculture and build friendlier communities.**

- Granting communities and councils powers to leveling the playing field between large food retailers and small food growers and suppliers;
- Promoting farmers markets and protecting allotments.

But it will be up to communities to come up with their own proposals – and if these are not submitted to government nothing will happen. For more information on how to make this happen, visit [www.localworks.org](http://www.localworks.org).

■ **Steve Shaw, Local Works Co-ordinator**

### Goodnight Milks criticised

The UK Government’s Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) has issued a statement expressing criticism of Goodnight Milks (see Expanding the baby milk market, FM82) suggesting that claims made on the products could undermine breastfeeding, and that there is no evidence that they offer nutritional advantages. SACN is also concerned that use of these products to settle babies at night could promote poor dental hygiene.

■ See [www.sacn.gov.uk](http://www.sacn.gov.uk)



# Europe starts to rule on health claims

Early this year more than 3,000 dossiers were submitted to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) with lists of the health claims food companies use or plan to use, and the scientific evidence they hope backs the claims up. At the time of writing, EFSA had so far ruled on 22 health claims, giving positive opinions on just five.

The full UK list is available on the Food Standards Agency's website [www.food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/ull/claims](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/ull/claims). EFSA has to rule on diverse claims submitted from companies and trade associations around Europe including, for example, whether vitamin D is essential for the bone growth of children. A positive opinion was given for the claim, "vitamin D is needed for normal growth and development of bone in

children," so long as it is used within correct parameters of vitamin D content on products aimed at young people up to aged 18.

However, with fewer claims than expected receiving positive opinions, companies are complaining that EFSA is being too tough in requiring evidence from clinical trials, and that this is slowing ingredient innovation. With consumers all over Europe increasingly willing to spend over the odds on products that are perceived to be healthy, companies are keen to ensure that health claims can be placed on products.

Companies are pinning their hopes on the fact that EFSA's opinions are not binding – they are scientific assessments, and it will be up to the

European Commission and its 27 Member States to decide whether the rejected health claims can actually be used on products.

For instance, EFSA has deemed that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate a cause and effect relationship between the consumption of *Lactobacillus helveticus* fermented Evolus® low-fat milk products and the reduction of arterial stiffness in mildly hypertensive subjects. But it may be that the EC will consider this opinion within the scope of other nutritional data and approve some kind of claim.

The international food standards setting body Codex has already indicated it will accept lower standards of evidence in its consideration of health claims. So industry may get its way after all.

# Energy drinks likely to fuel flab

Weary consumers should be cautious when reaching for bottles of 'pick-me-up' energy drinks, which can contain up to 22 teaspoons of sugar in a single bottle. The bottles promise ENERGY but fail to explain that this energy is mostly derived from added sugars – nor do they explain that the excess calories are naturally stored by our bodies as fat.

Even those with an active lifestyle, incorporating plenty of exercise, would take time to burn off the excess calories supplied by these drinks. For those with less active lifestyles, the surplus calories are far more likely to be laid down as flab. Meanwhile, all those concentrated sugars can play havoc with our teeth.

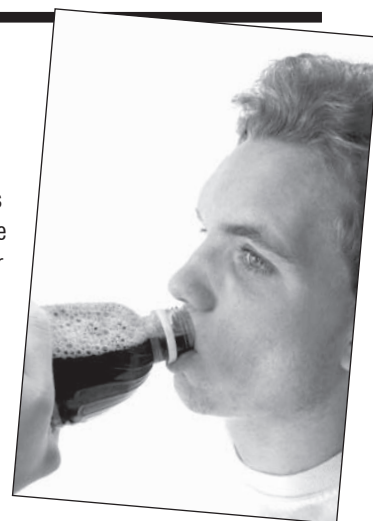
Alongside energy drinks, which typically contain large quantities of glucose, are the more specialised 'sports' drinks. Interestingly,

these typically contain only half the calories of an energy drink, and focus on providing both rehydration and energy, for those who are actively engaging in sport. Despite massive advertising campaigns which explain how these drinks have been 'scientifically formulated' and 'independently tested', experts, at least those who are independent of the industry, recommend you drink water or dilute fruit juice instead.

Energy drinks may also contain caffeine, such as market leader Red Bull. The drinks typically contain between two and four times the amount of caffeine found in a bottle of cola, and those containing caffeine at levels of 150mg/litre or more must display a warning of 'high caffeine content'. The Food Standards Agency has recently issued advice that pregnant women should not consume more than 200mg of caffeine a day, whilst general

health advice is that the average adult consumer can safely consume up to 400mg a day.

Meanwhile, sales of energy and sports drinks have risen by 15% over the last year to £683.2m (Nielsen Oct 2008), suggesting that the massive advertising budgets of the soft drink manufacturers continues to eclipse health advice to cut back on sugar consumption.



**Table shows energy and sports drinks, calories and caffeine content. Hours column on right shows how many extra hours one would have to work in an office to burn off the surplus calories.**

	Calories	Bottle size	Caffeine content	Approx hours
<b>Energy drinks</b>				
M&S Energy – with caffeine	350	500ml	300mg/l	4.7
Lucozade Energy – original	350	500ml	120mg/l	4.7
Relentless Energy Drink	230	500ml	320mg/l	3.1
Rockstar Energy Drink	300	500ml	320mg/l	4.0
Tesco Active Glucose Drink	280	380ml	yes, unknown	3.7
Red Bull Energy Drink	160	355ml	320mg/l	2.1
<b>Sports drinks</b>				
Lucozade Sport	140	500ml	0	1.9
Sainsburys Isotonic Sports Drink	135	500ml	0	1.8
Powerade Isotonic Sports Drink	120	500ml	0	1.6

See [www.foodmagazine.org.uk/articles](http://www.foodmagazine.org.uk/articles) for a larger version of this table

## Drinks should carry warnings

In March this year the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), based in Germany, published a new assessment of the safety of energy drinks. The report, which looked specifically at energy drinks containing caffeine, called for tighter labelling to warn consumers of potential health hazards. BfR advised that children, pregnant women and consumers with high blood pressure and heart disease should cut back or refrain from using energy drinks. The group also said that warnings about the danger of consuming energy drinks such as Red Bull whilst undertaking intensive physical activity or drinking alcoholic beverages should be mandatory.

■ [www.bfr.bund.de/cd/738](http://www.bfr.bund.de/cd/738)

# Fast food chains under pressure to label menus

**The UK is lagging behind the USA in requiring fast food chains to put calorie information on menu boards.**

**T**he Food Magazine is campaigning for nutritional labelling of menu boards at fast food chains. At a recent meeting with public health specialists, and the food industry, Public Health Minister Dawn Primarolo sounded very positive, repeatedly noting that consumers here should have this information available when they are deciding what to eat in chain restaurants. She asked why, if calorie labelling works for New York city, "can't it happen here?"

However, the Department of Health (DoH) and the Food Standards Agency are failing to require that companies give this information. In cities such as New York, where prominent calorie

CREATE A COMBO	
1 1/4 LB.* SINGLE	2 1/2 LB.* DOUBLE W/CHEESE
	
\$4.59 SMALL COMBO 930 CAL	\$5.59 SMALL COMBO 1200 CAL
\$2.59 SANDWICH 430 CAL	\$3.89 SANDWICH
3 3/4 LB.* TRIPLE W/CHEESE	4 BIG BACO CLASSIC
	
\$6.69 SMALL COMBO 1480 CAL	\$4.89 SANDWICH 980 CAL
5 ULTIMATE CHICKEN GRILL	6 CRISPY CHICKEN FILET
	
\$5.59 SMALL COMBO 820 CAL	\$3.79 SANDWICH 320 CAL

New York City now fines chain restaurants that do not post calorie information properly, as illustrated in this suggested calorie labelling ([www.cspinet.org](http://www.cspinet.org)). An educational poster campaign (below) is also running in more than 2,000 subway cars.



Calorie information is easy to understand, and easy (and low cost) for restaurants to list on menu boards. In New York City, it has begun to lead to healthier reformulation of menus, with reductions in fat, sugar and salt

labelling is now mandatory, it has taken a tough regulatory lead to get systems in place – systems that most chain restaurants have fought tooth and nail against.

content. Early evidence shows the vast majority of consumers use the information to choose lower calorie options – reducing average energy intake by about 100 calories when they choose a meal.

Dr. Lynn Silver, Assistant Commissioner, New York City Department of Health says, "The important issue in terms of making an impact on public health is to make companies put the information on the menu boards, at point of sale, that is the key. Most hate doing this, so it needs to be forced through."

Clearer salt information at point of sale could be the next target – as calories are generally a good marker for fat and sugar levels in foods, but low calorie options can be high in salt, making clearer labelling even more useful to consumers.

■ Check out our report *Ignorance is not bliss when eating out* at [www.foodmagazine.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.foodmagazine.org.uk/campaigns).

## Spot the calories

The Food Magazine quizzed 125 parents and childminders about the nutritional content of items listed on kids' menus at fast food chains. 40% of people got no answers correct, and none got more than four out of six. Few guessed that turkey breast made for a saltier choice at Subway than roast beef, ham or tuna with cheese. Or that on the Pizza Hut Kids Menu, the thin tortilla pizza had more calories in total (573) than macaroni cheese (360), thick pizza margherita (480), or three chicken goujons and wedges (412).

One parent told us, "I tried to make best guesses from what I know about food, but that did not help. I just didn't expect nuggets to have fewer calories (175) than McDonald's Happy Meal fish fingers (195) or a hamburger (250)." The parents and childminders who took part in our survey told us they want clearer information at point of sale in fast food restaurants.



Nutritional labelling of menu boards has begun to happen in some places in the USA, why not here? Yum Brands! announced in October 2008 that calorie labelling will appear on all their menu boards at their member restaurants in the USA, including at KFC and Pizza Hut. The Food Magazine is calling for them to do this in the UK, but the company has taken no action so far.



# Action on additives

**A year after The Food Commission launched [www.actiononadditives.com](http://www.actiononadditives.com), Ministers have agreed to pursue a voluntary ban on the use of six artificial colours.**

**T**he Food Standards Agency (FSA) is now charged with the responsibility to work with industry to encourage the reformulation of products containing any of the six colours (E102, E104, E110, E124, E122 and E129). The voluntary ban follows the publication of the so-called Southampton Study in September 2007, that showed the colours increased the risk of hyperactivity in children. The intention behind the policy is a voluntary phase out by manufacturers of the use of the six colours by the end of 2009.

FSA chief executive Tim Smith said that the Agency will, "shortly be contacting the food industry and retailers for information regarding product categories where a longer phase out period may be required, before engaging in further discussions with the industry." Smith also announced the Agency's intention to engage with stakeholders to make further information available to consumers regarding products that contain the six colours, and noted the work already done by The Food Commission.

The Southampton Study also tested the behavioural effects of the preservative sodium benzoate (E211), but the FSA remains unconvinced that it provided enough evidence for a ban. The Agency has told *The Food Magazine* that whilst colourings clearly have no role in food, other than a cosmetic one, the preservative is still important with regard to food safety. The FSA has promised to re-visit the issue of sodium benzoate at some point in the future.

In other action, a European wide requirement that foods containing any of the six colours will be required to sport a warning label reading, "consumption may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children" is expected to come into force around mid-2010. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) review of all permitted food additives is still ongoing, but this has not yet ruled on the six colours.

## Foods with the colours

The Action on Additives team began re-surveying the market to update our product lists from this September. A number of companies have reformulated their products to eliminate artificial colours; however, we have already found over 500 products. Among the products being named and shamed on the campaign website [www.actiononadditives.com](http://www.actiononadditives.com) are household brands including Fanta (from The Coca Cola Company), Swizzels Matlow sweets and Cadbury. In April Cadbury pledged to become free from artificial colours by the end of 2008, a deadline that is fast approaching.

## Medicines

Our campaign has twice written to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency asking it to follow the lead of the FSA in recommending at least a voluntary ban on the use of these additives in medicines. In refusing our request a spokesman told us, "the amounts ingested via medicines may be considerably smaller than in food, and often taken only for a short period." The Action on Additives campaign believes these colours should be removed and we will be naming medicines which contain the additives on the campaign site. Some of these products – such as teething gels can be recommended for use



more than six times a day if a child is feeling poorly.

■ Take action by adding products that contain any of the additives (like this children's lolly) to the website at [www.actiononadditives.com](http://www.actiononadditives.com)



School teachers should look out for our primary and secondary Schools Additives packs available at [www.actiononadditives.com](http://www.actiononadditives.com). This primary school student took part in an additives workshop run by the campaign.

## Action on Additives campaign

The campaign will: keep pressure on for a mandatory ban on the six colours in foods, and will monitor the voluntary ban in the meantime to see if it works. The campaign will also call on the FSA to quickly reconsider the use of E211 in foods; and call on the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to recommend at least a voluntary ban on the colours in medicines.

Anna Glayzer, campaign co-ordinator says, "The voluntary ban is good, but we want to see a mandatory ban – these chemicals are not necessary in our food and drink. We will be purchasing products to see if companies are removing these chemicals, and if they are sticking to their promises. We want real change, not just empty promises."

# Government asks junk food companies to save us from

**Jessica Mitchell**  
**investigates government and industry partnerships and asks whether they are necessary to promote dietary health.**

If you attend too many meetings about food and ill health, you cannot fail to miss an oft repeated mantra emerging from the industry's side of the room. We are all in the same business – government, campaigners and industry – we just want people to be healthier, and to help them make better food choices.

I never really did think anyone was convinced by this – in my view Pepsico, Kellogg's, Pizza Hut, Tesco and so on are in the business of selling food and making money. If nodding in the direction of public health boosts their balance sheets, well then they nod in that direction. But most of the time they keep right on selling high fat, sugar or salt (HFSS) products – with a bit of healthy spin on top.

But it seems that the Government, and its key agencies, has been convinced by the industry. The past few months have seen an unprecedented public and financial linking of

many of our key institutions for safeguarding the public's health, including with regard to diet, with brands and businesses that manufacture, sell and promote such HFSS foods.

The Department of Health (DoH) is fronting 'Change4Life', what it calls, "a new movement... which aims to improve children's diets and levels of activity so reducing the threat to their future health and happiness." The Government is stumping up around £75 million for that, but in partnership with Business4Life, a consortium of companies whose high profile members include Cadbury, Coca-Cola, Mars, Kellogg's, Kraft, Tesco, Nestlé, Unilever and Pepsico. Business4Life is promising a spend of more than £200 million over four years. It is early days, but the big money side of the venture is like a roll call of specialists in high fat, salt, sugar products, mixed in with companies which have flouted Government policy recommendations, for example on front of pack traffic light labelling.

The DoH and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) are joint leads on the so-called *Healthy Food Code of Good Practice* – another joint public sector / industry programme of action. I spoke about menu labelling at the launch event for the *Code*, and listened as our public health minister, Dawn Primarolo, told industry she wanted to work ever more closely with them,

and to, "celebrate," what it had already achieved. She praised the work of many companies, such as Disney for offering healthy side dishes at its theme parks, a Tesco and Disney partnership to use characters such as Pooh and Tigger on fruit, Unilever and United Biscuits for cutting saturated fat. The minister's speech prompted headlines in thrilled food industry trade mags 'Industry praised for pushing healthy food'.

Even school food is not immune, with the School Food Trust (SFT) partnering up with Disney's *High School Musical 3*. The SFT says no money changed hands in the deal, but the partnership has a special joint website devoted to competitions, goodies and tips on healthy eating.

## Business4Life promises

- Pepsico has promised it will advertise the benefits of active play. However, one 500ml bottle of Pepsi has 53g of sugar, it would take about half an hour of football to burn this off. Surely it is better to just give up the Pepsi? If you drink one 500ml bottle of Pepsi a day for five weeks you will consume around 7,000 calories which is roughly equal to one kilogram of body fat.
- Kellogg's will extend its breakfast clubs and Swim4Life programme. The breakfast clubs are non-branded but presumably will serve the company's own high sugar cereals, making a lot of swimming necessary to burn off the excess calories. The company still refuses to use traffic light labelling.
- Tesco has promised to run promotions encouraging healthier eating and lifestyle amongst its customers and staff – presumably not foregoing sales of HFSS foods such as those Yule Logs, and presumably not finally committing to traffic light labelling for its own brands.
- Nine new healthy towns will encourage a mix of exercise initiatives, and urban food growing – great, but how about dropping the chocolate and soft drinks?

## So what is the problem?

Disney has been praised by public health minister Primarolo for healthier side dishes at its theme parks, and seemingly has the backing of the School

Food Trust. Disney characters are also used to promote some fruit sold at Tesco. But, as public health nutritionist, Dr. Helen

Crawley, points out, Disney still has 15% of its licenses devoted to so-called indulgence items. As Crawley says, "that is a lot of chocolate, lollipops and cupcake mixes."

Disney characters, including those from *High School Musical*, also adorn these Yule

**SCHOOL FOOD TRUST**  
Eat Better Do Better



Logs on sale in Tescos. The logs weigh in at just 95g, but pack in more than 50g of sugar – making them a high sugar product. They also offer about 18g

of saturated fat – so high in that too. The back of the packaging has a cartoon logo of a boy with a

football – saying Get Active.

If this mix of messages and branding confuses me, won't it confuse young people and their parents? What is certain, Disney wins, whatever happens.



# obesity

## What happened to cutting back on junk food?

All of this emphasis on promotional partnerships, physical activity and urban food growing feels like a smokescreen – when really we should be shouting equally loudly that some companies and some foods should have no official role to play in building a happier and healthier nation. According to the terms of engagement in Change4Life, a company must develop genuinely new and incremental activity to influence eating and lifestyle habits – but just what this means and how closely it will be monitored remains to be seen. And it shouldn't.

I count on Government to wield the stick, to draw the line in the sand, to clarify the mixed messages put out by companies. By all means, work with industry on initiatives to reduce the reduce fat, salt and sugar content of foods in order to improve the public's diet – but keep the stick in use. I know The Food Commission is not in the same business as commercial food manufacturers, but until now I didn't realise we weren't in the same business as our public health champions either.

## Scots sceptical on sponsorship

Consumer Focus Scotland has launched *Guidelines on Commercial Sponsorship in the Public Sector*, the findings from this work show that: Scots do not want the public sector to team up with companies that produce HFSS foods; and that acceptance of such sponsorship implies public sector endorsement of the companies. Sponsorship covers a range of activities including the type happening in Change4Life.

■ [www.consumerfocus-scotland.org.uk](http://www.consumerfocus-scotland.org.uk)



# A feast for wasps and us

## Jessica Mitchell joins in harvesting apples for free distribution to low income communities.

**O**n one of the last Indian summer days of this colourful autumn, volunteers picked a tonne of apples from a disused commercial orchard in Peterborough. The fruit would have been worth about £2,000 if bought in the supermarket. As the rich smelling apples were stowed away in the transport van, co-ordinator Stephen Watts reflected, "It is a great day's work by the ten of us. It will all go for free to community projects, sure start schemes, and others who need it."

The band of enthusiasts are all part of a project called Abundance – the group is made up solely of volunteers who get together to harvest the seasonal glut of fruit trees that go unpicked. Based in Sheffield, most picking is of individual fruit trees around the city – the orchard in Peterborough was an experiment.

The 8½ acres of trees were picked commercially until a couple of years ago – when the owner sold up and moved into growing fancy salad crops for supermarkets – apparently more lucrative than apples. Watts was visiting friends when he saw the orchard, and decided to knock on new owner Peter Clapton's door to ask about it.

"It was a surprise, but I am really happy to be involved now," says Clapton. He took over the land when the commercial owner sold it – and intends to look after the orchard for non-commercial fruit production, encouraging less intensive



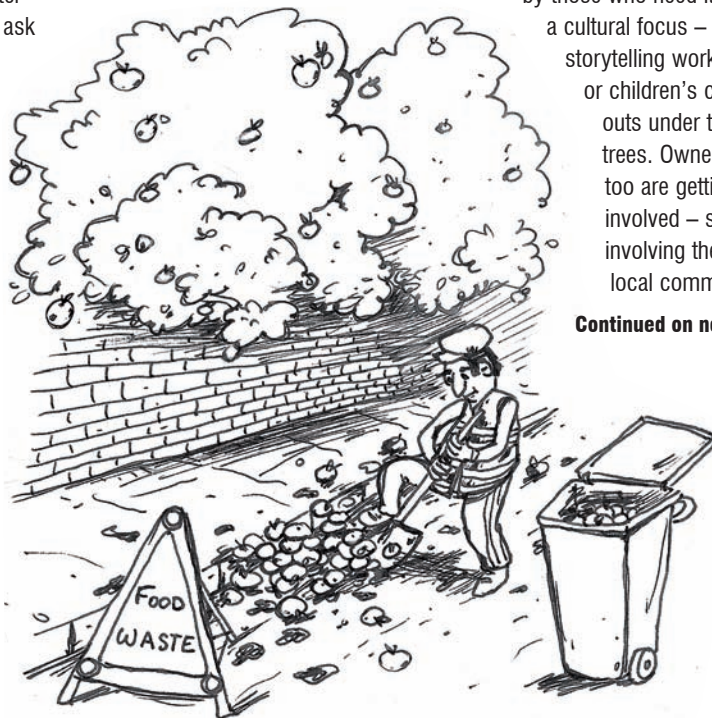
Stephen Watts clammers up and down trees to get out-of-reach apples. He now co-ordinates volunteers to pick more than 500 trees around Sheffield – with more trees coming in all the time. Sometimes when they go back to pick a tree again the owners refuse, noting they want to pick the tree themselves. Watts says, "That is good – people are reclaiming possession of what's in their area after they see us picking."

production, more wildlife and community involvement.

All over the UK, communities are finding their own solutions to unpicked fruit trees and abandoned orchards. Many projects combine a food element – making sure the fruit gets eaten by those who need it, with

a cultural focus – hosting storytelling workshops, or children's camp outs under the trees. Owners too are getting involved – some involving their local community,

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

and others finding new uses for monoculture orchards – such as rearing chickens or pigs underneath the trees.

As for Abundance, the focus is on harvest and free distribution, and Watts says it is unlikely that commercial orchards will be a focus as, “small individual trees seem to have plenty of mouths around them to fill.” Watts says individual trees can be picked in half an hour – some yielding more than 200 kilos; mostly they just shake the trees, and the fruit falls onto strategically placed tarpaulins. The group has specially designed push bikes to wheel away the produce for

immediate distribution – or to turn into jams and chutneys, also for free distribution.

As for me, I left feeling incredibly heartened that people can find imaginative, local solutions to food poverty and land use. It is just a shame that it is left to these under-funded projects to sort these solutions out – and it is to be hoped government shows more of their imagination sometime soon.

■ **If you are concerned about an orchard near you, visit [www.commonground.org.uk](http://www.commonground.org.uk) or [www.growsheffield.com](http://www.growsheffield.com) for advice and information.**

**Sean Gibbons (standing, centre) is the managing director of Food AWARE, a charity which redistributes surplus food to people living on low incomes in south Yorkshire. Sean and his daughter came to pick apples, and to transport the fruit back up north – much of it to go in the charity's free box scheme. Many of the apples are funny shapes, and have less than perfect skin – but he says that people are happy to have it.**



## Ripe for the picking

The commercial, non-sprayed, Victoria plum orchard in Kent (pictured below) was not picked this summer – leaving more than 300 trees full of fabulous fruit to the wasps, and to scrumping. The owner said that, “Sadly, it was just not worth it this year.” A combination of bad weather leading to a poorer crop, high labour and transport costs, and low wholesale prices meant he would lose money on picking. Local people were encouraged to come and take what they wanted, but the majority of the fruit went to the wasps.

Victoria plums are delicious – but can be very delicate – perfect one day, overripe the next. The owner says that supermarkets are dropping smaller suppliers, and that they now import even traditional varieties such as Victoria plums. That imported fruit will have been picked when under-ripe.

As for me, I thought I did not like plums very much – but the three sacks picked that August day were so good that I realised it was because I had just never had a good plum before – how sad. The future of this orchard is in doubt – with the owner considering his options.

According to Sue Clifford, of the charity Common Ground, the shame of underused orchards is not just in lost fruit, it goes deeper, “Never imagine that the fruit is wasted, given the terrifying demise of the bee, we will be relying more and more on wasps to do our pollinating, and there will be other creatures taking advantage too. The orchard is not making money, but its presence is part of what we need to be re-inventing. They are the best example we have found of being able to have it all – culture, food and rebuilt relations with nature.”



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# Stuffed & starved



**Raj Patel  
explains  
food  
sovereignty  
for  
beginners.**

If you've been following the debates around the ongoing international food crisis, you'll have spotted a new and odd bit of language coming from the progressive corner. In defence of a sustainable food system, activists are summoning up a new and portentous term – 'food sovereignty'.

It all sounds grand, but many people, even in the progressive community, are a little baffled by it. It sounds like it means that countries should be able to grow their own food, an idea minted in the seventeenth century, when it rejoiced in the name 'autarky'. But food sovereignty is a very twenty-first century idea – though it is sometimes a little hard to tell. There are a few, lengthy, definitions floating around – the online encyclopedia Wikipedia has one of the best – but even the definition seems to give little away. The abridged version of food sovereignty is that it is the, "right of peoples to define their own food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries systems."

It is a right, in other words, to have a say about the food system. It is, to use the words of the German political philosopher Hannah Arendt, a call for a right to have rights about the food system. It is a call that comes from those who have systematically been excluded from the formulation of food policy, who have long been forced to live with the consequences of agrarian policy

authored by those in cities with few, if any, links of accountability to those whose lives are wrecked by their ideas.

To get a grip on the idea, it is helpful to put food sovereignty in its historical context. Since the 1970s, the international community has shaped its food policy with a goal of 'food security' in mind. Food security is a term that has had a few definitions and incarnations itself, but today it is commonly understood to be this:

"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

But this definition, from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, says nothing about how we get to food security. All it says is that people have enough to eat. The idea of food security is entirely compatible with a dictatorship – as long as the dictator provided vouchers for McDonald's and vitamins, a country could be said to be 'food secure'.

Admittedly, this is an extreme example, but the history of the world food system is one of a few elites in a handful of countries telling the world how it was going to eat, and how best to feed itself. Today, these elites are not dictators in third world countries. Today's architects of the food system are policy makers in institutions like the World Bank, the US Department of Agriculture and the European Commission, from where they write the food policy that affects the rest of the planet.

Food security, in other words, has a built-in democratic deficit. This has long been a central point of contention for Via Campesina, the international peasant movement organisation that developed the

idea of food sovereignty. Their argument is that it is impossible to have food security if the people affected by the policy do not get to have a say about it, and take it into their own hands to make it happen. A precondition for everyone having something to eat, they argue, is genuine and direct democracy. And that's something that has been systematically denied to the world's rural poor.

This is why food sovereignty is important – it is a call for the right of everyone to be able actively to shape the food system, rather than being shaped by it. It is a call for a democratic debate and action around food, and about redistributing power more equitably in the food system.

If this sounds like high-minded rhetoric but still leaves you confused about what food sovereignty is about, take heart. Via Campesina itself is still exploring the idea, and what exactly it means. But that exploration is part of the idea of food sovereignty – it is not up to a secretariat to come up with a definition of how we have the democratic conversation. Part of what a democratic conversation means is that it requires our involvement, and an engagement from each of us.

Via Campesina has a few ideas about how this democratic process will happen. For a start, they demand women's rights, rights not just to property but to health, welfare, education, dignity, work and leisure. There's something very modern in the understanding that if democracy is to work for everyone, then everyone needs access to the resources and services that make informed and sustained democratic engagement possible.

Women's rights aren't the only demand – for democracy to work, resources need to be equitably distributed, so there's a call for land reform as part of food sovereignty. And there's a demand that Europe and North America lay off their agricultural subsidies so that developing country rural producers can get a foothold in the market.

All of these are, Via Campesina's insists, preconditions for food security. And it is a compelling argument. When democratic choice, in rich and poor countries, has been reduced to the act of putting a cross next to almost indistinguishable candidates once every four years, what food sovereignty offers is not just a way to reclaim the food system, but a way of reclaiming our society too.

■ Check out Raj Patel's fascinating, funny, and challenging book *Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World Food System*, Portobello Books, Pages 448, 2008, ISBN-13: 978-1846270116 or his great website [www.stuffedandstarved.org](http://www.stuffedandstarved.org)

■ [www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org) (International Peasant Movement)



Peasant farmers have long been forced to live with the consequences of food and farming policies authored by people with few, if any, links of accountability to those whose lives are wrecked by their ideas.

# Size matters when nano is on the menu

**Dr. Naomi Salmon explores the tiny particles of nanotechnology and how industry is using them to drive its own food agenda.**

**A**gricultural and food biotechnology can hardly be described as passé, but already the corporate giants at the forefront of the food industry are enthusiastically pushing forwards with the next stage of their technologically driven food revolution. Over the course of the next decade or two, it is likely that a whole new generation of 'novel' foods will begin to find their way into our 'daily bread.'

Some commentators are already warning that nanotechnology will entirely transform the landscape of food production and consumption. Global campaigners, the Action Group on Erosion, Technology, and Concentration (ETC) has expressed this view in dramatic terms, "Over the next two decades, the impacts of nano-scale convergence on farmers and food will exceed that of farm mechanisation or of the Green Revolution."

## Size matters

In essence, commercial nanotechnologies are technologies that in some way or another exploit the

## Nano-hazard labelling

Assuming that European policy continues to evolve along current lines, the best that dissenting consumers (opposed to nano-foods on safety or ethical grounds) can hope for is the introduction of stringent labelling laws. The ETC Group has invited people to submit their ideas for nano-hazard labelling, and



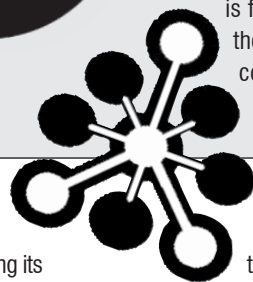
hundreds have done so. These logos are just two examples.

At the very least, consumers should be able to make informed decisions about what they choose to feed themselves and their families. Unfortunately, the issue of 'nano-labelling' is fraught with difficulties and the timely introduction of a comprehensive, mandatory EU wide labelling regime seems highly unlikely.

specific properties of materials at the nano-scale. Reduced particle size can significantly alter a substance's key characteristics including its strength, chemical reactivity, electrical conductance, magnetism and even its colour. Gold, for example, is transformed from yellow (in macroscopic form) to red when held in solution in nano-particulate form, whilst carbon nanotubes have been shown to display quite incredible mechanical and electrical properties.

## Toxicity

Whilst some nano-particle size-related properties may prove to be commercially useful, on the down side, reduced particle size can, in some cases,



be associated with increased toxicity. Crucially, although the clinical consequences of exposure to engineered nano-

particles (NPs) currently remain uncertain and ill-understood, evidence of pathogenic behaviour of some categories of manufactured NPs is beginning to emerge in the scientific literature. One recent study published recently in *Nature Nanotechnology* found that carbon nanotubes exhibited asbestos-like qualities when injected into mice.

To date, the majority of research has focused on the behaviour and toxicity of inhaled NPs. However, there are a number of other routes via which nano-scale particles might enter the body including, of course, via the food chain. Worryingly, researchers have found that once NPs have entered the body, their small size enables them translocate around the body by entering cells, crossing cell membranes, and moving along the axons and dendrites that connect neurons.

Some NPs have been shown to be capable of crossing the blood brain barrier under certain circumstances.

## Food and related products

A report this year from Friends of the Earth, *Out of the laboratory and on to our plates*, begins with the dramatic claim that, 'in the absence of mandatory product labelling, public debate or laws to ensure their safety, products created using nanotechnology have entered the food chain.'

This report then goes on to state that over 100 food related nanotech innovations have, apparently, already reached the global market. Significantly, the majority of the items listed by FoE are not foods per

## Small size particles, big worries

The pre-fix 'nano' originates from the Greek for 'dwarf', and in science and technology it is simply used to denote scale: one nanometre (nm) equates to one thousand millionth of a metre or one millionth of a millimetre (i.e  $10^{-9}$  metres). The reality of materials at this scale can be hard to appreciate but it may help to know that a chain of five to ten atoms measures approximately 1nm (i.e. one millionth of a millimetre) and a single human hair has a diameter of around 80,000nm.



It is generally accepted that in the context of nano-science and nanotechnology, and for regulatory purposes, the 'nano' label should be applied to engineered (as opposed to naturally occurring) particles measuring no more than 100nm in any one dimension.

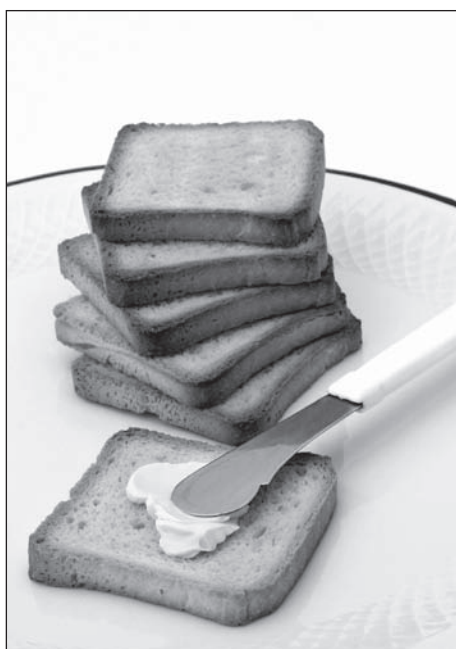
**The food industry thinks there is big money to be made out of these small particles. But, without adequate labelling, how will consumers know what is going into their food?**

se, but are more peripheral 'food products' – such as cookware and packaging materials designed to prolong shelf life and reduce spoilage. Nonetheless, in addition to a number of health supplements containing nano-ingredients, the report does identify another seventeen additives, beverages and foods that could reasonably qualify for the 'nano-food' label. Information on products on sale commercially is patchy at best as there is no mandatory reporting scheme in place for nano-products.

Key Industry players (including Unilever, Nestlé and Kraft) are now busy developing an impressive nano-menu; it will not be long before nano-foods begin to find their way onto our dining tables. Products that are likely to find their way into European supermarkets in the not so distant future include:

- 'functional foods' such as nano-capsules containing key nutrients in nano-particulate form designed to enhance dietary uptake and absorption (nano-ceuticals);
- spreads and ice creams containing nano-particulate emulsions that are designed to improve the texture of the food whilst also reducing the fat content;
- nano-encapsulated pesticides designed to facilitate a more efficient up-take of chemical treatments by crop plants;
- nano-encapsulated animal vaccines and medicines designed to promote more effective or better, targeted absorption.

Although the last two examples fall under the umbrella of 'food related' rather than food products per se, obviously the possibility that such innovations may lead to nano-particulate residues of chemical pesticides and veterinary medicine finding their way into (and contaminating) the food chain cannot be ignored.



## Could we be spreading invisible nano-particles onto our toast in a few years time?

©iStockphoto.com/thebroker

nanotech revolution have witnessed a flurry of activity in annals of power.

As is amply evidenced by the numerous policy documents, reports and statements emanating from national and European Community institutions, policy-makers are now devoting significant energies to plugging both knowledge gaps and regulatory gaps. Profit and safety are both high on the agenda and the drive is on to develop a coherent nanotechnology policy as quickly as possible.

## Profit drives the agenda

However, even at this early stage it is already clear that when push comes to shove, safety is likely to be relegated to second position. The underlying rationale of the EU effectively ensures that nano-food safety regulation is likely to be rather more reactive than proactive in character. After all, a truly precautionary approach would severely inhibit the growth of a prosperous European nano-food market.

Product safety is, of course, a major concern for consumers but what about the other broader, societal and ethical concerns that commercial applications of new technologies are prone to give rise to? Unfortunately, notwithstanding repeated official acknowledgements of the importance of prompt and meaningful public engagement and consultation, the route to a bright nano-future seems depressingly familiar. Already the policy debate has been captured by the pro-nanotech lobby and largely reduced to an economically-oriented balancing of (uncertain) material risks (to human health and environment) against commercial benefits.

Despite the unique status of food in the consumer consciousness, there appears to be little or no room for any proper consideration of either the safety or the ethics of this latest generation of new technologies before nano-foods enter the EU market. Despite the general climate of uncertainty, certain assumptions have been made; the starting point for all policy discussions is that nanotechnology offers many benefits across all market sectors – including the agricultural and food sectors.

There is now little doubt that nanotechnology will have a part to play in our food future – whether we like it or not. But the power of the consumer lobby should not be underestimated. After all, despite initial objections to such a regime, we do now at least have some labelling of GM food and feed in the supply chain. If consumers shout soon enough and loud enough policy-makers may be forced to adopt a more proactive and consumer-oriented approach to the governance of the nano-food sector. And so the (Food) Revolution continues...

■ **Dr. Naomi Salmon, Department of Law, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.**

■ **For more information see [www.nanotechproject.org/consumerproducts](http://www.nanotechproject.org/consumerproducts).**

## Some caution in Europe

It is important to appreciate that, as was the case with GM food and feed, Europe is lagging behind lead players such as the US as the nano-revolution gathers steam. Hence, the repeated assurances from the European Commission and industry groups that there is, as yet, very little use of nanotechnology in food production and processing across the EU. At present, here in the UK, consumer exposure to nano-foods is still negligible. But, (technological) revolution is in the air and there is no time for complacency.

Europe's recent food history has ensured that Member States' eagerness to benefit from a hearty share of the global nanotech feast has been tempered, to some degree at least, by an awareness of the need to proceed cautiously. In particular, governments (individually and collectively under the banner of the EU) are keen to avoid a repeat of the GM food saga that they believe stilted the development of the European life sciences industry in the 1990s. Hence, the first four years of the

## Nano-additives in our food

**Nano-additives can now be found in some soft drinks, ice cream, sausages, dairy products, margarines and other processed foods. These do not need to be labelled as containing nano-particles, so consumers cannot avoid them.**

**Although relatively few food products currently contain nano-particles, this market will grow. Questions about the safety of this technology need to be addressed now, before more products appear on the shelves, not after.**



# Food safety specialists under threat

**The Food Magazine investigates continuing cutbacks to funding for our frontline food safety experts – public analysts.**

**W**ant to know before you eat them that your chocolates do not contain melamine? That the meat from your local shop is not past its sell-by date and falsely labelled? That the fried chicken from the take-away is not full of pork proteins or contains more than a day's worth of salt or saturated fat? That your baby's formula milk really does contain the health giving ingredients the company says it does? It is only public analysts that can tell you for certain – their tests tell us what is behind the labels, and company spin about their products.

But, the public analyst service is being allowed to run down, new staff are not being recruited, and labs are closing. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) lets local authorities decide how much they spend on this type of food surveillance and many are just not taking this work seriously enough. For example, this year, the City of York Council has cut their food sampling budget by approximately 1/3rd as part of their savings plans.

According to Duncan Campbell, public analyst for west Yorkshire, "People notice immediately when their bins aren't emptied, or if potholes are not filled. With council budgets under pressure, cuts are made in areas where there won't be any immediate effect, such as the work carried out to ensure the safety of food."

Part of the problem is that we in the UK have too easy a confidence in our food supply – the deaths

in China relating to melamine poisoning seem like stories from afar – something that would never happen here. But, such a scenario is not all that far fetched according to Campbell, "Fortunately risks so far have been slight but fraud is getting more sophisticated and more difficult and expensive to detect. Global food prices are rising and this will put more pressure on unscrupulous businesses to cut corners on quality and safety."

Although emergencies such as melamine contamination get the headlines, it is the more routine, and harder to detect, effects on public health that most worry some. Public analysts are an essential part of the wider framework of food quality checks as they provide the data for council trading standards departments, who also monitor the nutritional quality of food, to check, for example, how high take-away food might be in saturated fat or salt. Poor funding means that the wider public health role for public analysis is in danger despite the increasing demand by consumers for better quality food.

Dr Helen Crawley of The Caroline Walker Trust, also makes the point that routine and regular analysis of some food items is essential, "There is no routine testing of baby formulas to see if what is on the label is actually in the products. When you think that many babies in the UK have this as their only source of nutrients for several months, ensuring that the milk is nutritionally complete is



***I think we'd better subscribe to The Food Magazine Watson!***

essential, and funding for this type of analysis should come from central Government."

The Association of Public Analysts (APA) wants the FSA to set standards for levels of spending on food testing, but it seems the FSA is determined to leave this a local issue. In a letter to the APA, Dame Deirdre Hutton, chair of the FSA wrote, "I am convinced that local authorities are the primary partners here, and that they hold the key to your current difficulties."

A sceptical Campbell says, "The money for analysis to ensure safety and discourage fraud is locally controlled. In today's global economy the quality of our food supply is a national issue and the work should be funded and coordinated nationally with local delivery."



## More must be spent

If you live in Croydon, your council sets aside just £7,000 a year for analysis of food samples. With a population of nearly 350,000, that means just 2p per head of population. Those funds have to cover food tests to determine all aspects of food quality including keeping watch on what is served at the estimated 250 take-aways in the borough. In comparison, some councils spend as much as 50p per head of population.



## Who are public analysts?

- Public analysts are scientists with expertise in the chemical and compositional analysis and testing of foods and drink. They can tell us whether food is safe to eat, and if it is what companies and labels claim it is.
- There are currently 24 public analyst laboratories left in the UK. 11 have closed in the past 13 years.
- Work carried out by public analysts in the UK costs less than £10 million – a drop in the ocean compared to the nearly £150 billion grocery market.
- Whilst local food authorities in the UK are legally required to appoint a public analyst, they are not bound to employ them or support them financially.

# Going hungry at home

**Dr. Helen Crawley of the Caroline Walker Trust considers whether current systems of home care for people over 65 are in a fit state.**

**M**any people are keen to stay in their own homes in their 'old' age, but the reality can be far from rosy – with clear evidence of suffering, including people going hungry. Current Government policy aims to keep as many people over 65 as possible in their own homes, but forecasts show there will be a 54% increase in those with a high level of need over the next 20 years. At the same time, there is increasing evidence to suggest that the current home care system will struggle to support these changes.

Home care services provide both practical and personal care to older people in their homes, and include ensuring access to appropriate food and drink. Government policy to help people stay in their own homes as long as possible and support them to lead full and active lives in their communities is to be commended; but there are concerns that people continue to fall through the 'net' when care is needed.

Many older people who could benefit from home care do not receive it and some who cannot manage without home help, but who do not qualify for free care, may be forced to choose between sufficient home care services or spending money on food and fuel as prices rise. Older people are disproportionately affected by rising food prices,

as they spend a larger percentage of their budget on food and shopping. Where food is the only flexible part of the weekly budget this can lead to inadequate diets and poor nutrition.

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*There are now more people aged over 65 than under 16, and those over 85 are the fastest growing age group.*

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## Home care provision

Home care is provided by both local authority and independent agencies and since the 1990s councils have increasingly purchased care from independent sector providers (2% in 1992 to 73% in 2005). Whilst the number of hours of home care funded by councils has doubled in the last decade to over 3.5 million hours per week, fewer people are actually receiving home care provided by their local council now than in the mid-1990s. The Council for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in their first review of home care services in 2006 concluded that this sector is a fragile one, already struggling to provide services of sufficiently high quality for those who need them, with concerns that the sector may find it difficult to rise to the challenge to expand.

Since 1948, local authorities have been able to charge for care and support provided and under current legislation can recover such charges as they consider 'reasonable'. There have been a number of reports looking at charging issues and the variations between authorities, but in general councils have increasingly targeted their services to those who need more intensive support. The current tough eligibility thresholds exclude thousands of people

who would benefit hugely from a small amount of additional care and the very high prices of home care (which have risen more steeply than inflation and can be up to £15.50 an hour) put many off. A recent survey from the Coalition on Charging found that the cost of home care meant that some people were reducing the amount of care they had and for many their quality of life had been severely reduced.

## Care not good enough

The CSCI review also reported that both carers and the cared-for complained of being rushed, demoralised and unable to form meaningful relationships due to high staff turn over and frequent changes in responsibilities. The '15 minute slot', in which a care worker is expected to visit a person, wash them, get them dressed, breakfasted and ready for the day for example, was identified as a symbol of a regime that will be unable to handle the growth of Britain's older population.

As a result of councils targeting their services to those most in need, preventative services that help keep older people independent and healthy for longer are being withdrawn. Little attention is paid to the importance of providing adequate and nutritious food to older people, and enabling them to eat well. The only statutory training related to food for home care workers is based on food hygiene practices and few home care workers are likely to understand the importance of good food and fluid for health in old age or be able to spot warning signs of malnutrition. Many are also unlikely to have the skills needed, or the time, to cook food for their clients or are unable to stay long enough to ensure that meals and snacks are eaten.

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*At least one in 10 people over the age of 65 years in the community are malnourished and a recent study among those aged over 80 entering hospital and care homes reported that about a third were malnourished or at serious risk of malnutrition.*

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## The way ahead

Little research has been done on the role of home care workers in ensuring vulnerable older people are able to eat well, but the current system is unlikely to offer a healthy solution for many older people in the years to come. A thorough review of the role of home care in the 21st century, the charges that should be reasonably made and the training required to ensure a competent, health promoting workforce is urgently required.



**Some older people need help at mealtimes to make sure they eat well. Home carers provide an essential service, but are limited by the time they have available.**

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## A reader's story

My 92 year old aunt lives alone in a residential complex in the Midlands. After being widowed and recently discharged from hospital after a fall, she was given a home care package to support her living independently at home. As she is immobile, has failing hearing and shows some mild confusion, she was allocated a care package of four visits a day. Wake up, lunch time, tea time and bedtime. The times of the visits were however quite variable, and my aunt quickly complained that she was not helped to get up until too late in the morning and the consequence of a late breakfast and early lunch meant that she ate inadequately at those two crucial times.

In the first few weeks it became obvious she was losing weight and had lost her previous enjoyment of food. Although her poor eating was recorded in her home care notes, no action was taken to address it. I am a dietitian, so when I visited

I spoke to several carers and none had any training in helping an older person to eat well, although all the carers were keen for suggestions for them to follow. Most of the issues I tackled with the home care team were practical ones, such as making sure meals were served at the dining table and not in front of the television and that carers should sit with my aunt at meals and offer encouragement to eat.

The carers had no ideas for nutritious snacks or quick meals to offer if my aunt was hungry or had missed a meal, but once a list of ideas was compiled the carers all followed it carefully and they were stunned to see how quickly my aunt responded. Had her poor eating not been addressed she would have been back in hospital, and ultimately in residential care, a much more expensive option for social services and a move my aunt did not want.

Whilst she has done well to date, we have just been informed that the home care contract in her area is changing to a new private contractor and



**Most older people want to live independent, healthy lives, but may need support to do so.**

this will mean new carers and a loss of shopping provision. I do wonder how other older people fare if they don't have advocacy to ensure they get the care they deserve.

# Poor meat hygiene

**P**oor hygiene practices in abattoirs could be jeopardising public health, according to meat hygiene inspectors. A survey by the trade union UNISON, which represents the inspectors, reveals that dirty animals coming into abattoirs is leading to high levels of faecal contamination (literally, poo on meat) of animal carcasses. More concerning, the situation is no better than two years ago.

Meat hygiene inspectors are a little known group of public servants, standing at the front line of public health and safety in the production of meat. Before chickens, steaks, or pork chops arrive at the butchers or on the supermarket

shelf, the meat hygiene inspector ensures the animal is healthy before slaughter, and that the meat produced is safe to eat.

But the European Union is about to review its regulations amid pressure for more 'self-regulation' of abattoirs. Already poultry plants can employ their own inspectors (PIAs) rather than use independent government ones. In 2006 the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) introduced a 'clean livestock' procedure which gave abattoirs responsibility for ensuring animals were clean before they were killed, instead of Inspectors doing it.

However a survey of meat inspectors reveals that only 6% of inspectors thought that the 'self-regulation' of livestock was making any improvements, and that over 40% said that most of the carcasses presented for inspection were faecally contaminated. This is almost unchanged from a similar 2006 survey. A BBC Wales 'Week In, Week Out' programme recently exposed these problems.

But the FSA, along with sister agencies in France, Denmark and Holland are pressing ahead by looking at pilots for this 'risk-based' approach. A seminar in July in Lyon on 'modernising' meat hygiene proposed that the role of abattoirs and official inspectorates be revised, and the balance of giving advice rather than enforcement should be reviewed.

The EU regulations come up for review in 2009, and look set to be amended. At a conference at the recent EU veterinary week, Robert Madelin, the Director-General for Health and Consumers at the European Commission, spoke of the breadth of EU food safety legislation

"from farm to fork", yet also of the "proportionate response" of giving more responsibility to food operators.

High standards were introduced in Britain following the outbreak of *E.coli* in Wishaw, Scotland in 1996 which killed 17 people. Bad practices such as cleaning carcasses with hoses, which hid contamination rather than removing it were banned. However the 'risk-based' approach may open the way for similar bad practices to recur.

This is a vital health issue. The respected Professor Hugh Pennington is completing an enquiry into the 2005 outbreak of *E.coli* in Wales, and another inquiry is about to start in Scotland. Yet, partly due to cost pressures the FSA is supporting incremental moves to 'self-regulation'.

We have just seen what happened to the economy and city of London after years of self-regulation. Could we be putting our health at similar risk?

■ Simon Watson, UNISON



**In a survey of meat inspectors, 40% said that the majority of carcasses presented for inspection were faecally contaminated.**

©iStockphoto.com/alle12

## New strain of *E.coli*

**An antibiotic resistant strain of *E.coli* 26 has been discovered for the first time in the UK. Although this strain could trigger life-threatening infections in people, no restrictions have been placed on the animals at the dairy farm where the outbreak occurred. This means they can be sold in the UK and abroad, making campaigners worry that the *E.coli* 26 will spread to other animals.**

# Crunching on Kellogg's all day, every day

**H**ow many times a day do you or one of your children eat a high sugar Kellogg's product? Do you wake up to one of the company's cereals, then stick a cereal bar in your children's school lunch packs, head off to work and snack on cereal bites at your desk, then give your children a reviving bowl of cereal after school, and then perhaps each have a couple of their Soft Oaties biscuits for dessert?

The Food Magazine has been collecting adverts for Kellogg's high sugar products over recent months – in the form of food packaging and TV ads. The company sells these products as sensible nutrition options for every meal throughout the day – except your evening meal. Table 1 gives some of the examples of products we have found – cereals, cereal bars and snacks.

Nutri-grain Soft Bake Bars has packaging noting 'Lunch time', 'On the go!', 'Tea break', 'Afternoon break'. Special K Mini Breaks are advertised with a TV ad and packaging showing slim women munching away at their work desks. Coco Pops have been sold with a TV ad that shows a mum, and kids in school uniform with a voice over saying, "If you're looking for an after school snack, Coco Pops and cold milk make perfect partners." Obviously the breakfast market is not enough for Kellogg's.

## Portion sizes

All of the products in Table 1 would have a red traffic light for sugar – if Kellogg's actually followed the Food Standards Agency's recommended style of labelling. Traffic lights are based on 100g portions – for ease of comparison across products. High sugar products have more than 15g sugar per 100g. The company complains that it is harsh to be judged in this way – and suggests its own portion sizes – for

example, 30g for Coco Pops Coco Rocks cereal. The problem with this method is confusion – who says you eat just 30g of cereal at once? What is to stop you from opening a second packet of Mini Breaks, or scoffing another Soft Oatie biscuit? The company's own suggested cereal portion sizes vary across products, and research from the FSA, *Investigation of consumer understanding of sugars labelling on front of pack nutritional signposts on breakfast cereals* (2007) shows an average 85% of self reported breakfast cereal portions were greater than the manufacturers' recommended serving size.

## Are cereals always a healthy choice?

Breakfast cereals, and cereal snacks, tend to get an easy ride from dietitians – the view is that many may be high in sugar, but as they contain added vitamins, minerals and fibre, they can be a better option than other foods people might choose. Companies such as Kellogg's are keen to promote this view, and it seems many consumers are convinced. Sales are certainly booming, with Coco Pops sales alone up this year at nearly £65 million. The company has made nearly £130 million on cereal snacks this year, and the company notes this is because they are seen as, "healthier options."

There is evidence that for some young people breakfast cereals provide significant amounts of some vitamins and minerals, but this is often because their diets are generally poor and low in foods such as fruits and vegetables. Breakfast cereals are therefore one of the better high sugar foods they may eat in a day, but simply because they are not as bad as some other options does not mean that high sugar breakfast cereals and cereal bars are necessarily the best choices in these categories.

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Table 1: High sugar Kellogg's breakfast, lunch and snack products			
All of these Kellogg's products are high sugar (more than 15g per 100g of product). For comparison: Coca-Cola has 10.6g sugar / 100ml portion; puffed wheat cereals have approximately 0.3g sugar / 100g and Weetabix has 4.9g sugar / 100g.			
Product	Sugar content (g) per 100g	Product	Sugar content (g) per 100g
<b>Cereals</b>		<b>Cereal Bars &amp; biscuits</b>	
Frosties	37	Coco Pops Cereal and Milk Bars	41
Bran Flakes	22	Frosties Cereal and Milk Bars	32
Chocolate Wheats	19	Nutri-grain Soft Bake Bars (raspberry)	32
Coco Pops Coco Rocks Multi-grain	32	Nutri-grain Soft Oaties (oat and choc' chip)	31
Coco Pops Mega Munchers	34	Nutri-grain Soft Oaties (oat and raisin)	33
Coco Pops	34	Coco Pops Coco Rocks Cereal & Milk Bars	43
Honey Cornflakes	27	<b>Other Snacks</b>	
Optivita Raisin Oat Crisp	27	Fruit Winders (all three flavours)	37
Rice Krispies Multi-grain Shapes	18	Special K Mini Breaks (original)	27



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Government dietary guidance suggests that 'added' sugars (ie not sugars already in foods such as fruit or milk) should make up a maximum of 11% of food energy. Yet, many people consume far more than that; on average young people consume around 17% of their daily energy in this way.

### Sample Kellogg's menu

We have used the standard pack portions sizes for some items such as cereal bars, but for breakfast cereals we have based portion sizes on the FSA information in Table 2.

Breakfast	Sugar per serving (g)
Frosties (55g bowl)	20.4
Lunch	
Coco Pops Cereal and Milk Bar (20g)	8.0
After school	
Coco Pops (70g)	23.8
Dessert	
Soft Oatie (oat and chocolate chip) (2 biscuits 80g total)	24.8

This menu provides 77g (19.2 teaspoons) of sugar in a day, about 308 calories, and about 14% or 17% respectively of the average daily energy intake for a male or female aged 11-14.

Once other foods and drinks with added sugar are consumed during the day it is likely that young people will be consuming a quarter of their daily energy intake from sugar, and this means that they are likely to be having too little energy from foods such as bread, pasta, potatoes, vegetables and fruit that will also provide other important nutrients.

Cereal companies suggest people like to have pre-sugared cereals as this controls the amount of added sugar and that if people choose



#### KELLY'S ACTIVE CHALLENGE

Kelly Holmes on Coco Pops Coco Rocks cereal telling us we can 'Perform Better' with loads of photos of active families outdoors.

Kellogg's spent £800,000 on the Wake up to Breakfast marketing push.



**Table 2: Cereal portion sizes.** Research by Food Standards Agency

Cereal	No. of records	Manufacturer's suggested serving size (MSS)	Average actual serving size	% more than MSS
Flakes	187	30g	55g	80
Muesli	30	50g	125g	90
Coco Pops	34	30g	70g	85
Cheerios	24	30g	50g	75

a low sugar type, they may add significantly more sugar themselves. This, however is a peculiar argument, especially where children are concerned, since parents can supervise the addition of sugar and offer other choices such as fruit or yoghurt.

For example, a typical 70g portion of Coco Pops gives six teaspoons of sugar; the same portion of puffed wheat would give half a teaspoon of sugar – a considerable difference.



High sugar Coco Pops advertised as an after-school snack.

### Marketing high sugar products

There is likely to be some confusion in the minds of consumers about the health benefits of cereals since these are foods that are encouraged in greater amounts in dietary guidelines. However

the types of cereal foods recommended by nutritionists are generally low in added sugar and it could be argued that these high sugar products may mislead consumers to believe they are a healthy option.

### The Food Magazine says

Consumers should be better protected from marketing spin for high sugar, fat and salt products. Front of pack traffic light labelling should be made mandatory, and rolled out more widely across product categories. At the moment little more than 20% of packaging space is required to be given over to mandatory information such as ingredients listing and nutritional tables – this imbalance needs to be addressed.

The Food Magazine calls on companies like Kellogg's to shift their marketing to healthier products and to stop using sports and other personalities to sell less healthy ones. We would like to see such personalities refuse

to endorse high fat, salt and sugar products and we will be writing to those that do. We continue to support a 9pm watershed ban for TV advertisements for high fat, salt and sugar foods.



At a personal level – take a look at the FSA's Eatwell Plate ([www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk)) – and add fruit, nuts, whole grains, and lower sugar cereals to your diet. Read the labels on processed foods and avoid those that are high in fat, sugar or salt. Do not just replace the cereal products with other high added-sugar products. Sweeten your cereal with a banana and snack on fruit and nuts.

■ Drop us a line if you would like to receive a free, wallet-sized card to help you compare sugar, fat and salt in products. The card is easy to use when you are out shopping. Just send a stamped, sae to The Food Magazine, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF.

#### Estimated daily calorie requirements

Male / Female 11-14 years: 2,200 / 1,850 Adult Male / Female: 2,500 / 1,950

# Hardship amongst plenty

**Nina Oldfield undertook research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that shows more than 20% of people in the UK do not even have a minimally acceptable standard of living.**

**T**he UK minimum wage for adults is £5.73 an hour – but no one could tell you why in any way that makes genuine sense. Government did not check to make sure people could live decently on it before it was set – and is now ignoring clear evidence that shows people cannot.

But new research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation offers Britain, for the first time, a so-called Minimum Income Standard (MIS) for 11 types of family. Set to ensure people have at least a socially acceptable 'minimum standard' of living, defined as: more than just, food, clothes and shelter; it is about having what you need in order to have the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society.

Each MIS has been hammered out through a process involving the pricing up of goods and services, in discussion with experts and 39 groups from a range of social backgrounds who defined just what is meant by a minimally acceptable standard of life. The focus has been on needs, not wants.

## Minimum wage means hunger

In April 2008 a couple with two young children needed a disposable income of £370 per week (excluding rent/mortgage) to achieve a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. To achieve this living standard, this household with one earner working 37½ hours each week would need a gross wage of £13.76 per hour (more than twice the minimum wage).

Of this, £97.47 each week was needed to provide a basic nutritionally adequate diet. Yet, the average spending on food for this type of family on Income Support, according to the government's survey on spending, is £67.58 each week. £30 per week less than what ordinary people say is needed to provide a healthy diet.

Those who took part in this study were particularly concerned about the longer-term consequences for children if the minimum income standard was not met.

"If the Chancellor's not willing to invest in children now what does he expect children to achieve, because if you're not giving them healthy meals they are going to get obese... he's not

putting the money into what children need for them to develop into people who are going to want to go to university..." (Woman, parent of primary school age children group)

Since the budgets were priced, food inflation has taken hold especially for staple foods such as potatoes, cereal, bread and fresh meat. By August 2008, the couple with two children would need to spend £103.87 each week to buy the same basket of food (£6.40 more than in April 2008). If food prices continue to rise at this rate we could be seeing an unprecedented increase of more than £19 by April 2009 for this particular basket of food.

## The food standard

The method of working out the food component of the budget combined the views of experts whose aims were to promote a healthy and balanced diet, with those of ordinary people who were best placed to agree a diet that is reasonably healthy, practical in terms of lifestyle, realistic in terms of preferences and treats and basic in terms of cost.

All foods consumed for one week were included in the assessment of nutritional adequacy, that is, food and snacks eaten at home, outside the home and any alcohol included in the diet. A common eating structure for weekend or weekdays including snacking, eating out, takeaway meals; catering for visitors; the higher costs of holiday food and festive spending was agreed. If social eating and drinking was incurred an agreement was sought on the frequency this took place. Layers of detail such as: standard portion sizes, food weights, volume and quantities of drinks, snacks and sweets were added. Recipe ingredients and cooking methods were identified and described.

The nutritionist, who was advisor to the research, suggested only essential adjustments to the menus to compensate for readings outside the acceptable margins of nutritional adequacy. The most common change suggested by the expert was to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables to 400g per day where low. Some menus needed no changes, others minor changes.

## So what did people think?

All groups agreed a 'minimum' food budget did not mean unhealthy diets or insufficiency or even eating different foods to what is common for particular types of households.

Many participants, male and female, and of all ages, referred to the 'five-a-day' campaign and the importance of creating a healthy diet and that this sometimes would come at an additional cost. For example, "She should not be in position where she is forced to buy things that are not healthy because they are cheaper." (Partnered mothers)

Some participants thought additional costs reflected high quality produce. For example, "And

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when you buy again the basic range of stuff, like you were saying frozen chickens, they are like £2... I mean there is no taste. I know if you buy organic chicken it tastes absolutely fantastic. You know there is a huge difference (in cost and taste). And if we had the choice we wouldn't be buying the frozen chicken, we would be buying the one that has got taste, that is probably not pumped full of water and those sorts of things." (Lone parent)

In general the groups agreed 'minimum' could mean lower prices, perhaps achieved through a combination of 'basic' or 'no-frills' cost items for some foods and a little higher spend for important foods such as meat or vegetables. Although some thought costs might be higher for people with specific dietary requirements (vegetarian or food intolerance) they did not think it necessary to build in these additional costs as standard.

Brown bread was thought to be more expensive than white, and although it was acknowledged to be the healthier choice participants mostly said their children preferred white bread. Most groups therefore decided on a compromise and specified Hovis 'Best of Both' would be acceptable to the majority of people. All groups agreed that some provision for alcohol should be included, but not all agreed consuming alcohol outside the home was necessary.

Parents of school children talked about lunch boxes; what they should include and the importance of children not being seen to be different by their peers. Packed lunches were seen as being cheaper to provide than buying school meals. The common theme was sandwiches, crisps or a small chocolate bar and a piece of fruit. Sandwich filling suggestions were jam, peanut butter and ham or cheese with salad.

"It's best not to have fancy sandwich fillings because the other kids laugh. If you have anything unusual for your packed lunch the other kids kill themselves laughing." (Parent of primary school child)

Secondary school parents said it was common for children to reject what they saw as being 'budget' buy or bargain food items. As one mother put it, "If I buy Sainsbury's basic crisps she says – I am not taking them to school the kids will laugh at me. It is true! I have seen kids dump crisps in the bin on the way to school so they will not be seen eating them." (Secondary school parent)

Pricing the basket

A shopping list was produced from the basket of food, which stipulated whole loaves of bread and suitable packet sizes for family size. Food items and alcohol consumed in the home were priced in a local branch of a well-known supermarket.

As some groups had specified branded items, the final prices included a mixture of value items, own brands and named brands. Part packets not used during the week and not suitable to be saved for later use were treated as waste. The cost of social eating or drinking outside the home was collected from external catering sources (cafés, restaurants or pubs).

The cost of a basic but nutritionally adequate diet

Table One shows the total cost of providing each family with a minimum, socially acceptable and healthy diet each week. The types of family, which range from pensioners to couples with four children, represent 79% of all single unit households in the UK. Food described as the 'extra cost of food eaten outside the home' includes food purchased as takeaways and meals in restaurants, pubs or cafés. Small amounts shown in the extra costs of food or drink outside the home may indicate that this happens infrequently, for example once per month rather than weekly.

Basket of food

A single week's menu for a couple with two children in pre and primary school is produced in full at [www.foodmagazine.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.foodmagazine.org.uk/campaigns) and should dispel any idea that the budgets were produced to allow anything that could be called excess. The menu includes just four cans of beer and one bottle of wine – well below safe drinking recommendations, especially as the amount allows for company. There are no ready meals unless you include small amounts of tinned fruit soup or ravioli, frozen veg, sandwich meats or fish fingers. Sweets are also at a minimum.

Comments

Compared to actual spending on food, in most cases the MIS is more, and at times substantially more, than actual spending on food for those people who have incomes made up of Income Support/Pension Credit and, to a lesser extent, those households living in social housing. It seems that where hardship occurs food is likely to be subject to cutbacks that may well effect the nutritional intake and so the future health of families at the lowest income levels.

MIS is not a perfect tool for policy makers. It cannot accommodate the huge range of human diversity in needs and circumstances nor produce a single figure to suit all needs. The end of this initial research project represents the mere beginning. The task is now to ensure its continuing relevance by periodic uprating of prices and reviewing trends over time.

■ **A minimum income standard for Britain: what people think (Bradshaw et al. 2008) Published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.**

■ **Nina Oldfield was a research consultant on the above project.**

Table 1: The cost of weekly food baskets for 11 types of families. April 2008 prices in £s.

	Food eaten at home	Extra cost of food outside the home	Alcohol at home	Extra cost of alcohol outside the home	Total cost (Errors of +/- 1p)
<b>Households with no children</b>					
Single person working age *	28.60	11.75	4.38	0.00	44.73
Couple working age	50.33	18.97	9.39	4.46	83.16
Single pensioner *	29.73	6.25	2.63	0.37	38.98
Couple pensioner	47.13	6.12	6.53	0.87	60.65
<b>Households with children</b>					
Lone parent, one child (aged 1)	41.54	5.51	3.04	0.45	50.53
Lone parent, two child (ages 3, 8)	59.08	6.63	3.04	0.45	69.19
Lone parent, three child (ages 3, 8, 14)	75.39	9.32	3.04	0.45	88.20
Couple, one child (aged 1)	63.69	5.10	6.06	0.00	74.85
Couple, two child (ages 3, 8)	90.74	6.73	6.06	0.00	103.53
Couple, three child (ages 3, 8, 14)	96.12	8.97	6.06	0.00	111.15
Couple, four child (ages 1, 3, 8, 14)	113.12	8.97	6.06	0.00	128.15

\* the mean of male and female cases.

# Legal, decent, honest and true?

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

## X Offensive Oasis

Coca-Cola managed to offend TV viewers with an ad for their soft drink Oasis which showed a pregnant, young teenager running away from home with the 'Cactus Kid'. The girl stated that, "me and my new man Cactus Kid only drink Oasis and don't mess around with no water," and onscreen text carried the message, 'FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE WATER.'

The ASA agreed with complaints that the ad condoned underage sex and teenage pregnancy. They also found that the ad was irresponsible to suggest that young girls could replace water with a sugary drink. Coca-Cola were told to never broadcast the ad again.



**Coco-Cola implied teenage pregnancy was cool in this irresponsible advert for soft drink Oasis.**

## X Supplement brochure did mislead

Readers may recall that *The Food Magazine* complained to the ASA about a supplements brochure which advised men suffering from prostate problems to purchase Prostamex Gold Prostate Formulation. The brochure described symptoms typical of prostate cancer, but the advert failed to advise men to visit a GP. Prostate cancer kills approximately 9,000 men in England and Wales every year.

*The Food Magazine* also referred the ASA to other suspect health claims in the brochure. For instance, omega 3 fish oil was described as, "may be effective for conditions including Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and arthritis," and as, "Brain Food For Children! ... it can help a child's brain development and has shown positive results in scientific trials so far." Another supplement of

## X Maltesers the lighter way to enjoy chocolate?

The ASA has ruled against a TV advert which misleadingly implied Maltesers were a low energy product. The ad featured a voice-over which stated, "Maltesers. At less than 11 calories each, you'll need new ways to be naughty." The ad then showed Maltesers floating in the air and wearing haloes. On-screen text stated 'Maltesers THE LIGHTER WAY TO ENJOY CHOCOLATE.'

Regulations on health claims state that any claim that a food is low in energy, and any claim likely to have the same meaning for the consumer, can only be made where the product contains no more than 40 calories per 100g. In reality, Maltesers contain 505 calories per 100g – and are definitely not a 'low energy' food.

For guidance on health claim regulations, see <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/nhcguideuk07.pdf>

## X Jaffa cakes not 'low in fat'

A TV ad for McVitie's Jaffa Cakes showed two women laughing at their friend Michelle's claim that Jaffa Cakes contained, "only one gram of fat." A male voice-over stated, "Michelle isn't lying. Each delicious McVitie's Jaffa Cake really does have only one gram of fat."

The ASA considered the message was that the amount of fat in a Jaffa Cake was much less than expected. They considered the claim "only one gram of fat" was likely to suggest to viewers that a Jaffa Cake was low in fat and that the ad was making a 'low fat' claim.

Regulations state that a claim that a food is low in fat, and any claim likely to have the same meaning for the consumer, may only be made where the product contains no more than 3g of fat per 100g for solids. Jaffa Cakes actually weight in at 8g of fat per 100g for solids, and the ASA found that the ad misleadingly suggested that Jaffa Cakes were low in fat.

The Jaffa Cake website helpfully points out that most of the calories in a Jaffa Cake come from sugar and if you eat five to eight jaffa cakes you'll need to play football for 30 minutes to burn off the calories.



**Jaffa cakes. Lots of sugar, and not 'low in fat'.**

## X Eye-q capsules and chews

Equazen make omega-3 and omega-6 supplements and, despite previous slaps on the wrist from the ASA, continue to make misleading claims about the efficacy of their products. In October the ASA upheld a complaint about a press ad for Equazen's eye q capsules and chews, which featured the headline "PAY ATTENTION!" written in chalk on a blackboard. Further text super-imposed onto the board stated, 'What will you choose for your child?' and included the text, 'Independently tested The Durham Trial Naturally-sourced Omega-3 & Omega-6 oils.'

The ASA declared that the ad misleadingly implied that the product could help to improve the attention levels of all children. Whilst studies have

indicated that omega 3 and omega 6 oils may improve concentration in children with Developmental Co-ordination Disorder and Child Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), there is no evidence that such supplements have any effect on children from the general population.

The ASA also concluded that the ad indirectly offered a treatment for a serious condition (ADHD) and was, therefore, in breach of the advertising code.



## Christmas books round up

Tis the season to be jolly and to give food and cook books as presents if the publicity flood in *The Food Magazine* office is anything to go by. If you like your recipes with a bit of celebrity gossip, maybe *The Bollywood Cookbook* is for you. Littered with posters from Indian films, the book is actually more fun, and the dishes more tasty, than you might first think.

Not all personality projects are as appealing – a big yawn for the subject of Gilly Smith's sort-of biography, *The Jamie Oliver Effect: The Man, The Food, The Revolution*. The same for *My China* – an account of Australian TV chef Kylie Kwong's wanderings in the region. It manages fewer than 80 recipes in a nearly 500 page tome full of nice pictures, and pseudo deep musings on politics and culture.

If you want to buy a cook/history book that really is delicious – make it *The Book of Jewish*



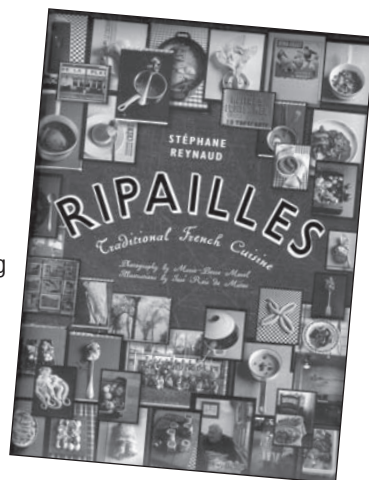
*Food*. Roden's book has more than 600 recipes – every time you open it you will find something

new to cook that will not be very hard even for cooking newcomers. It is scholarly, and incredibly moving – capturing the historical vibrancy of Jewish cultures around the world, so many of which were destroyed in the Holocaust.

Stéphane Reynaud's *Ripailles* is also a lovely book – a wonderful, recipe filled love letter to the good food culture of France. It is hard to decide if one wants to cook his foods, so much as live as the French do – spending long, pleasure filled hours eating and drinking at table with friends.

As for the recipe and activity book *Custard and Crayons with Polly and Jago* – if you want to

pretend your family life is like something out of a Laura Ashley catalogue, do buy it – perhaps at the local charity shop where we are depositing our copy.



### My China

Kylie Kwong, ISBN 978-0-00-727-1047, £30, Collins, 2008, Pages 496

### The Book of Jewish Food

Claudia Roden, Penguin Books, 1999, £20, ISBN 9780140466096 Pages 592

*Custard and Crayons with Polly and Jago*

## Expert's choice

**Sheila Dillon, presenter of Radio 4's The Food Programme, recommends some essential food reading.**

A couple of months ago some mention of sugar made me think that I must reread that great, scientific attack on it, John Yudkin's *Pure, White and Deadly*, published in 1972. We have a copy in The Food Programme's office but I wanted my own – not easily bought it turned out. It's long been out of print but as it had been published in numerous paperback editions, including a mass-market Penguin, I thought there would be lots around. Not so, the only copy I could find was a £46 paperback on the Alibris website. £46! – enough to provoke a few paranoid thoughts about the long arm of the sugar industry even all these years after Yudkin's death. It is still a fascinating read, even without footnotes and an index (though I wonder if the hardback copy – £59 on Amazon – has them?).

Yudkin was a great populariser (see his '50s best-seller *This Slimming Business* – easily available for just 1p on book websites – long predating the fashionable GI diets) which gave the medical establishment an excuse to ignore much of his work. It's a diet book based on his theory of refined carbs disturbing the insulin response, but it was a mass market book and it was that appeal over the heads of his professional colleagues that damaged his reputation in the scientific world (helped along by the relentless hostility of the sugar industry of course).



But his research from the 30s through the 60s (in the latter years at Queen Elizabeth College at London University) showing the complex hormonal changes caused by a high sugar diet and the relationship of those changes to the degenerative diseases that afflict us, has still – as far as I know – not been rigorously followed up. His identification of triglyceride levels in the blood as a more serious marker of heart disease than cholesterol levels is still not acted on the UK – in fact, it's almost never measured in routine screenings.

*Pure, White and Deadly* is also a great nutritional period piece. Early in the book Yudkin gives his readers a series of sweeping assurances about how little the *quality* of our diet matters: "I can assure you that it really does not matter to your health whether your chicken is produced by the broiler system or whether you eat potatoes grown with chemical fertilizers or whether your bread is white or brown." Up to a point Professor Yudkin.

Other books worth anyone's time and money are *Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives* by Carolyn Steel and *The Future Control of Food*

edited by Geoff Tansey and Tasmin Rajotte. Steel is an architect and she brings her sense of pattern and space, of cause and effect to bear on an analysis of how through the millennia food has fashioned our cities, our countryside and us. I read and thought: I know that, but in fact I didn't really know it at all until Steel drew back the veil and showed how this city around me took its form from the way we have eaten at least since Roman times. She also shows how the process goes on now – with many local authorities happy to pass their planning powers to supermarkets.

There's Asda Walmart's £30m development in Poole including waterside apartments, massive underground parking, shopping arcade & all the rest. While around Peterborough, Tesco and its competitors have been given complete freedom to develop four new towns based around the superstores they own at the heart of each development. The government's Leave-It-to-Tesco food policy taken to a whole new level.

*The Future Control of Food* is equally eye-opening, tho' a tougher read, on the battle over who will own the living world, with the global corporations and the global institutions that do their bidding on the one side and civil society on the other. The subtitle is: a guide to international negotiations and rules on intellectual biodiversity and food security – and that is what it is. We really do need to know what this book so rigorously tells us.

■ Sheila Dillon is presenter of BBC Radio 4's The Food Programme



# Readers' letters

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)

## Sat fats in my loaf

I have written to several major companies asking why they need to add saturated fat to their bread. Many wholewheat breads contain 0.4g of saturated fat per roll / slice. To date, no one has replied. Experts are advising a reduction in our daily intake of saturated fat, yet it turns up in a product such as bread which is often assumed to be healthy. Manufacturers should be making changes to their ways, would it be any more trouble or expense to use a healthier polyunsaturated fat?

**E Miles, Nottingham**

*The Food Magazine* asked real bread expert Andrew Whitley to respond to this question.

There is no need to add any fat to ordinary bread (the Pain de Campagne which I developed in 1991 and which has been selling in Waitrose and other shops since then uses no added fat of any kind) but it is often done to 'improve' breads in two ways – to increase loaf volume and to extend shelf life (understood as crumb softness over time). Fat can also enhance bread flavour, but only if it has some flavour to start with (palm oil

hasn't, butter may have) and only if that flavour can survive the baking process.

Fats that are hard at room temperature (such as butter, lard or palm oil or fractionated or hydrogenated vegetable oils) produce a bigger effect on loaf volume than fats that are liquid at room temperature (eg olive oil). This may explain why even good bakeries add palm oil to their breads.

When I started baking in 1976 I used lard because that was what the books recommended, and it is true that lard gives both good flavour and good volume. But I soon realised that many of my customers were vegetarians and so I looked for an alternative. I tried oil (sunflower) but found that the volume penalty was significant, especially when I was using only English wheat which was often challenging in terms of loaf structure and volume. I settled on a vegetable fat, which was almost certainly hydrogenated. When I learned about the dangers of hydrogenated fats I changed to butter, but that was a) a problem for vegans, b) expensive and c) impossible to get in organic form at the time. So I ended up using organic palm oil for my tin breads.

I think that the 'answer' is to use sourdough or overnight sponges or 'old dough' additions to such breads. These seem to me to provide the loaf volume and shelf life increases that hard fats can give to quickly-made yeasted breads.

■ You can find out more about Andrew Whitley's work at [www.breadmatters.com](http://www.breadmatters.com) or read his wonderful book *Bread Matters*, Fourth Estate, ISBN 978-0007203741.

### Correction

An article, 'Which fast food meals are healthiest? Anyone's guess!' (FM82) stated that a menu of chicken and fries that has 57grams (g) of fat would give you a, "whole day's fat." This is incorrect. Fat has approximately 9 calories per gram, so 57g is 513 calories. Adult males need an average of approximately 2,500 calories a day, so this is about 21% of your daily energy. However, it is worth noting that the FSA suggests that a maximum 35% of daily, dietary energy should come from fat.

Sarah Rowden, Joanna Vestey, Mark Beech, Wigwam Press Ltd, ISBN 9780955219221, 2008, £12.99

### The Bollywood Cookbook

Bulbul Mankani, £14.99, Kyle Cathie, 978-1-85626-765-6, Pages 176

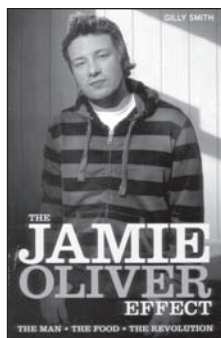
### Ripailles

Stephane Reynaud, £25, Pages 480, Murdoch Books, 9781741962345

### The Jamie Oliver

Effect: The Man, The Food, The Revolution.

Gilly Smith, Andre Deutsch, ISBN 978-0-23-00256-9, 2008, £8.99



## Beautiful swimmers

*Watermen, crabs and the Chesapeake Bay.* William M. Warner, Pages 352; Little, Brown and Co., 9780316923354, £9.35

## Distant water

*Fate of the North Atlantic fishermen.* Little, Brown and Co., Pages 338, 1983, 9780316923286, William M. Warner

William M. Warner died earlier this year – leaving his readers with two wonderful books to remember him by. I was a teenager when a friend persuaded me to read *Beautiful Swimmers* – and despite any scepticism that a book about crabs could be that good, I was hooked. The accounts of the crabbing communities, how they live, how they cook, are just great, but it is the evocation of the underwater life of the stylish, and characterful crabs that is unmissable – and not the remotest bit twee or trite.

If anything is to make you feel sympathy for the men of many countries who helped to fish the world's oceans into emptiness, it is *Distant water*. Join Warner on his lengthy stays on board ships from all different countries – and find out how English, Spanish, Russians and German factory fishermen felt about their trade.

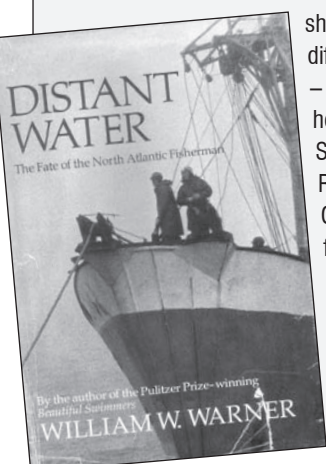
**Jessica Mitchell**

## Spotting the sat fat

The Food Standards Agency has started work on a programme to help people in the UK reduce the amount of saturated fat they eat. This includes working with food manufacturers to reformulate products. On average, saturated fat makes up about 13.3% of dietary energy when it is better for health if consumption of all fats is below 11%.

Bread is not generally a high saturated fat product. 'High' is more than 5g saturates per 100g per product and 'low' is 1.5g saturates or less per 100g. *The Food Magazine* bought five loaves – and the highest in saturated fat had 0.5g per 100g of product (two thick slices) – this is low.

High saturated fat products include some meat pies; sausages; hard cheeses; pastry; cakes and biscuits.



## Cadbury's, McDonald's, Coca-Cola – sponsors of London 2012

A trade magazine, *The Grocer*, accused The Food Commission and other of the, “nation’s moralists,” and, “anti-obesity set,” of deafening silence when Cadbury was recently announced as a high profile sponsor of the 2012 Olympics.

Sadly, the announcement conflicted with our annual Gruel and Misery Ball, and the end of season Doing Penance Polo Championship. But, now that the vitamin juice hangovers have faded, yes, we do think that handing over the incredible array of marketing opportunities offered by the Games to purveyors of high fat and sugar products should stun anybody into silence.

But London 2012 needs to be paid for, and so Lord Coe, Chairman of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG), has abandoned the promised focus on, “improving healthy living.” It means we

will all be paying more in the long term – when the costs of diet-related ill health start landing on our tax bills – by which time Cadbury and its ilk will have milked the branding for all its worth, and banked the profits.

If those are morals, so be it – we hope that Lord Coe pulls the tattered remnants of his out of the bag and uses them to refuse other unhealthy food and drink companies rights to sponsor the Games – the International Olympic Committee has put Coca-Cola and McDonald’s unavoidably into the mix, but LOCOG has the right to make other choices. Although perhaps we need not worry, as a spokesman for Cadbury has told *The Telegraph*, “We would not do anything that would seek to encourage people to eat more chocolate.” Yeah, sure.



## Modest Jamie

In his own style of language, or sort of, he ain’t f\*\*\*\*\* modest is he Jamie Oliver?! When he’s not launching new pasta ranges (to go with his ready made sauces collection), or advising the working classes about how to eat as part of his Sainsbury’s ads, he’s making cooking programmes with them, “I’ve changed their lives and that’s brilliant.”

Oliver was most recently found testifying to the House of Commons Health Committee which is conducting an enquiry into health inequalities – after his *Letter to Ministers* outlined a ‘mere’ £50 million spend he feels Government should stump up for projects such as food centres and food buses. In the *Letter*, he generously offers to help – although presumably for the usual fee.

Oliver does a fine line in being persuasive, and wields considerable influence through his

TV shows and advertising deals – but there are organisations, and individuals all over the UK with better ideas about improving the nation’s diet, just less famous public profiles.

By all means Government – spend fifty million and do a better job tackling health inequalities! But don’t give undue weight to the views of a television chef in deciding how to do this.

## Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas from *The Food Magazine* – we hope subscribers enjoy our new website as our present to you. Thank you for all of your support over the years.



## Apple plastic

It was sad to find this overly attired piece of fruit in the heart of France. It was part of a pile of plastic packed apples, bananas and pears at an autoroute service station. No variety is stated, just that it was grown in France. The fact that the service station was surrounded by orchards, and it was within apple season, just highlights that our continental friends sometimes have as crazy a food production and distribution system as we do.

## Ploughman’s Lunch?

How is this for a Ploughman’s Lunch? We picked up this snack, made by Freshers Foods Ltd, in one of our local corner shops. As anyone who has experienced a dodgy pub lunch will know, the quality of a Ploughman’s Lunch can vary greatly, but there cannot be many people who would expect to see an ingredients list like this:

### One triangle of Processed Cheese:

(Rehydrated Milk Powder, Cheeses, Butter, Emulsifying Salts (E450, E452, E331), Salt, Stabiliser (E410), 43%

### Two Cream Crackers:

Wheat Flour, Vegetable Fat, Malt, Salt, Yeast, Raising Agents (E503) (E500), Soya Lecithin (E322), Vitamins. (41%)

**Three Pickled Silverskin Onions:** (Contains Acetic Acid, Preservative (E223). 16%



The ingredients may not look that appetising, but all those additives do ensure a long shelf life. Interestingly, the popular understanding of a Ploughman’s Lunch – as a meal of cheese, bread and pickled onions – apparently stems from advertising produced by the English Country Cheese Council in the early 60s, in a successful attempt to sell more cheese in pubs. At least they used proper cheese back then.