

# The FOOD MAGAZINE

## Campaigning for safer, healthier food

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# Cyclamate levels 'may cause testicular atrophy'

**The artificial sweetener sodium cyclamate (E952), banned by the UK government until last year, is now on sale in popular food products and food supplements, and is permitted at levels which may put boys and men at risk of testicle damage.**

**C**yclamates, whose hazards include a shrivelling of the testicles in experimental animals, were banned under UK legislation until 1996, when pressure from manufacturers and harmonisation with European additive laws led MAFF to re-write the regulations, permitting the chemical to be used in soft drinks, desserts, confectionery, chewing gum and food supplements.

But re-writing the regulations has required a fudge. MAFF had approved the earlier ban because scientific advisers on the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) had been alarmed at the 'irreversible testicular atrophy' shown in rats. Subsequent tests on monkeys also showed testicular toxicity and lowered testosterone levels. But by claiming that the monkey reaction to cyclamate was 'less severe' than that in rats, and that the reactions 'were more likely to be reversible' the sweetener was effectively cleared for use.

In fact the monkey data showed reactions in the range 34-100 mg of the cyclamate metabolite CHA per kilogram bodyweight per day - higher levels were not tested because of the 'high systemic toxicity' of the CHA. COT chose to ignore these findings when setting their revised safety levels, and used instead the earlier rat data which found no adverse effects below 100 mg/kg/day. Using the rat data, and assuming that not all cyclamate will be metabolised into CHA, and allowing a safety factor of only ten to account for differences between rats and humans (instead of the usual 100) the COT allowed up to 6mg/kg/day

as an acceptable daily intake of cyclamates.

But with soft drinks permitted to contain 400mg cyclamate in a single litre it will, as we show on page 3, be easy to consume far more than the daily limit.

See *Cyclamate Overdose*, page 3

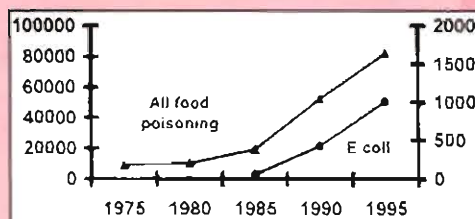


***E Coli* and *Salmonella* bacteria are killing more people than ever... and other bacterial diseases are on the rise.**

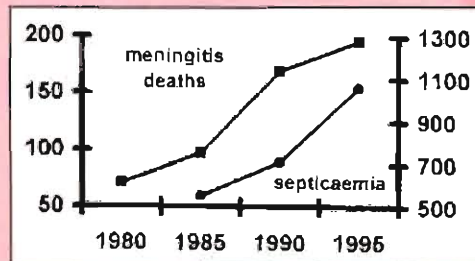
**Is it now time for a Europe-wide ban on the routine use of antibiotics in animal feed as growth promoting agents?**

The UK has huge reservoirs of infectious organisms in its livestock population despite using large amounts of antibiotics as a routine feed ingredient for animals. In Sweden antibiotics are not used routinely and the livestock is virtually salmonella free.

See our special feature on pages 6 and 7.



Notifications of *E coli* food poisoning (right scale) and all food poisoning (left scale) have reached record levels. Source: Food Commission, using OPCS, ONS and *Health Which?* data.



Deaths from meningitis (left scale) and septicaemia (right scale) have both doubled in the last decade. Source: Food Commission, using OPCS and ONS data for England and Wales.

**Get the facts with The Food Magazine**

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

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

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

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## Another fine mess!

The rising political temperature this winter makes every statement a loaded statement, and every food issue an outrage.

But in some cases outrage is justified — be it the death of *E Coli* victims or the victory of US grain corporations over EU member state scientists and politicians. Rates of food poisoning have shot up, and the *E Coli* outbreak is just the most visible, and fatal, of a succession of alarming incidents. Does it strike out of the blue? Or can it be traced to bad hygiene practices?

The butcher's shop at the centre of the storm is an easy target. But a recent study of abattoir practices<sup>1</sup> shows that *E Coli* and other coliform bacteria can contaminate up to 85 per cent of carcasses, and that the contamination rate is closely linked to poor slaughtering and dressing procedures along with poor personnel training and hygiene practices. Furthermore, our farming, veterinary and medical practices are increasingly leading to untreatable infections. We look at these in detail on pages 6 and 7.

Genetically modified crops certainly do not strike out of the blue. They are the most human-made of all crops, in a world already bursting with human-designed products. They are arriving in Europe despite fierce opposition from environmental groups, great concern from food and health organisations such as the Food Commission, and the apparent anger of the supermarkets.

The decision by the government not to require labelling of all GM products (the Labour party has announced it will reverse the decision) looks increasingly hard to justify, given the government's professed support for consumer choice. Who advised them? Their main body is the Food Advisory Committee, who have failed to defend consumer interests on this matter. Consumer representation has to mean more than one or two easily muffled voices, when the food industry has five well-financed voices.

We have seen an incredible series of food problems over the years. Consumers have suffered these without recourse to proper advocacy in government, and — thanks to our restricted legal aid laws — without proper redress through the courts for the government's negligence. Our outrage is justified.

And may you have a happy 1997!

<sup>1</sup> Relevance of abattoir hygiene assessment to microbial contamination of British beef carcasses, Hudson et al, *The Veterinary Record*, 139, 187-189, December 1996.

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**Turn to page 8 for subscription details.**

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# Cyclamate overdose

**Amounts of cyclamate, the newly-approved artificial sweetener, being permitted in popular foods will easily take consumers over their acceptable daily limits, according to MAFF's own figures obtained by the Food Commission.**

As revealed on the front page of this magazine, the Committee on Toxicity set an acceptable 'safe' limit of 6mg of cyclamates per kg of body weight per day, but even at this generous level many consumers will exceed the limit, putting their health at risk.

A child of five, weighing 20kg (just over 3 stone) would reach their acceptable limit if they consumed 120mg of cyclamate. An adult weighing 65 kg (a little over 10 stone) would reach their limit at 390mg cyclamate.

Yet the regulations permit normal use of cyclamates in soft drinks at levels of 400mg per litre. Recent government surveys show children under five on average consume more than a third of a litre of soft drinks every day — which, if the drinks contain cyclamate, could mean they exceed their acceptable cyclamate consumption routinely (see box below). Some children that age consume a full litre or more daily, giving them over three times the acceptable safe level.

Similarly, an adult drinking three cans of soft drink sweetened with cyclamate could find they have unwittingly exceeded their acceptable limit.

'Cyclamate levels as high as these may cause hormonal problems and wasted testicles in human males,' said Dr Tim Lobstein of the Food Commission. 'We don't know what levels may affect humans, but the hazard levels for this chemical are far too low for comfort, and many consumers will exceed the acceptable limits. At the very least, every product should carry a clear hazard warning telling males to restrict their consumption.'

'The use of cyclamate for the first time in the UK comes at a time when health experts are expressing concern over declining sperm counts in human males. Now we may be adding to the problem by exposing children to unnecessary additional hazards,' he said. 'We are seeking an independent review of the data. Much of what is available has been produced by trade interests.'

## Excessive intake for children

- Average daily soft drink consumption by children aged 1½ - 4½ is 363ml
- Amount of cyclamate permitted in soft drinks is 400mg per litre
- 363 ml of cyclamate-sweetened drink can provide 145mg cyclamate.
- Average weight of a 4-year-old child is 17kg
- Average child's cyclamate intake could be 8.5mg/kg/day
- Acceptable levels are 0 - 6mg/kg/day

**On average, young children could exceed their acceptable cyclamate intake by 140% on a daily basis.**

## Organic body spurns GMOs

UKROFS, the UK Register of Organic Food Standards, which determines the legal status of organically produced food, has stated that genetically modified organisms 'have no place in organic production systems'. Apart from enzymes produced by GMOs being used as processing aids (eg chymosin for cheese) products and processes using GMOs should be specifically excluded from organic production regulations, UKROFS said.

Individual organic and 'alternative' food companies have been striving to

ensure they can obtain supplies of non-GMO raw ingredients. Most have publicly stated their opposition to GMOs in food, but one of the largest companies, Haldane, has been more reticent.

Haldane promised the *Food Magazine* a statement but they never sent one. We understand Haldane is actually owned by Archer Daniel Merchant, a large US corporation trading in food and food ingredients, thought to have commercial interests in promoting GMO products.

## EU forces HVP clean-up

The European Scientific Committee for Food has advised member states that some types of hydrolysed vegetable protein (HVP) — the flavour boosting savoury ingredient of processed foods — develop a toxic contaminant, chloropropanol, during processing.

MAFF's Food Advisory Committee had been aware of the problem and had advised 'that the industry should

be consulted about switching to alternative manufacturing methods within an envisaged timescale of two years'. Now, perhaps worried that they may be sued for their lackadaisical approach, the FAC has recommended that industry 'should take all steps necessary to ensure that this contaminant cannot be found in any foods or ingredients' and to do this within 18 months.

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## CA calls for tighter food supplement regulations

The Consumers Association has called for a tightening of the regulations governing the marketing of dietary supplements including vitamin pills, fish liver oils and herbal products such as ginseng and herbal teas.

Amid fears that the government is under pressure from European pharmacy interests, to restrict the nature and potency of products and make them 'prescription only' or at least 'pharmacist only', the CA has argued that products should be available over the counter from any retailer, just as aspirin or cough pastilles are at present. At the same time, the CA wants to see close restrictions on the health claims that can be made on products, with independent examination of the supporting evidence, along with warnings about possible side effects and safety issues.

The CA also calls for improved quality standards for dietary supplements. The Food Commission reported in 1993 on the lack of adequate quality control of food supplements, with some iodine supplements containing barely a tenth of the amount claimed on the label and others containing ten times the stated amount and potentially causing hazardous levels of intake. A further test by the Food Commission, examining the absorption of nutrients from vitamin pills, showed several products failing to break up in stomach acids and likely to be excreted as undigested pills.

■ *Dietary Supplements - CA Policy Report, November 1996, from the Consumers Association, 2 Marylebone Road, London NW1 4DF, tel 0171-830 6000, price £20.*

## Beef dumped at sea

British beef exported to South Africa has been dumped at sea, according to a reported statement by Dr Gideon Bruckner, director of veterinary public health at the South African Department of Agriculture. The meat had been dumped in the ocean about 50km off the ports of entry, under his department's supervision, he said (*Star and SA Times International* 30.10.96).

Over 1.2m cows had been slaughtered and incinerated by the end of last year, and MAFF has allocated £3.3bn to the eradication of BSE for the period 1996-9. The industry is rife with reports of overpayment to abattoirs, corrupt deals between some stock keepers and abattoirs, farmers threatened with violence for whistle-blowing, and continuing problems of failure to comply with regulations by abattoirs (5 last August, 3 more last October), knackers (4 last September, 3 in October), renderers (4 in August, 2 in October) and feed producers (9 in September).

## Olestra PR from MAFF

When a *Food Magazine* reader wrote to her MP urging him to oppose the approval of the fat-free fat substitute olestra, currently being examined by MAFF's Food Advisory Committee (FAC). She was surprised by the reply she got.

Her MP replied with a letter sent to him from MAFF minister Angela Browning, stating:

'You may be interested to see the enclosed Press Release which was issued in the USA in January by Procter and Gamble and which naturally emphasises the potential benefits. The FAC Secretariat has sent a copy of this to (your constituent) ... suggesting that if she requires any further information she might wish to contact them direct.'

### The FAC has looked at food labelling

and felt that, apart from health claims — which it is dealing with separately — food labels were fine: 'there was no real evidence to suggest that the general laws which applied in this area and the self-regulation undertaken by industry were not working satisfactorily.' We beg to differ.

## Sweet messages

Readers in Norwich have been annoyed to find their mail franked with a Nestlé ad for KitKat, while those in Croydon (home of Nestlé's UK headquarters) have had to suffer



Nestlé Quality Street franking. The Norwich franking came just as Nestlé closed the local Rolo factory, with 400 lost jobs.

Complain to Nestlé on 0181-686 3333, and the Royal Mail Customer Centre on 0345 740740.

Nearly a quarter of a million people in the UK suffer allergies to peanuts, with a third of the sufferers experiencing severe symptoms, according to a survey of 16,000 households undertaken by the Food Research Association.

One in five hundred people suffered breathing difficulties, wheezing and fainting or loss of consciousness, indicating potential anaphylactic shock. Minute amounts of peanut can cause adverse reactions in sensitive individuals, and peanuts are the most common cause of food-related fatal and near-fatal anaphylaxis. An increasing incidence of peanut allergy in infants has been linked to peanut consumption by the pregnant mother or peanut ingredients in baby formula milk drinks.

■ *MAFF Food Safety Information Bulletin 78, 10/96; BMJ, 313, 31/8/96.*

PepsiCo International's interests in Burma, where the military government has been criticised for human rights abuses, has led to calls for a boycott of Pepsi products by the Free Burma group. PepsiCo is reported to have co-

sponsored the Burmese dictatorship's first trade show in 1994, and allegations are made that PepsiCo, through the state bottling plants, supports the employment of child labour.

Pets are being fed the meat and bone meal from possible BSE-carrying cattle, according to an admission by MAFF to Labour MP Martyn Jones.

Angela Browning confirmed that the powdered residue from the cattle cull, which is strictly forbidden from entering the animal feed chain, is instead being sold to pet food manufacturers.

The ban on meat and bone meal also specified that its movement and use 'have to be recorded and accompanied by appropriate documents' but Ms Browning admitted to Mr Jones that MAFF had no idea how much meal was going into pet food.



Burger chain McDonald's have scored a publicity coup by



persuading well-reputed Early Learning Centre toy stores to promote McDonald's children's parties.

If you think that ELC should not be sliding down the slope to junk food, write to their Customer Services, Early Learning Centre, South Marston Park, Swindon SN3 4TJ.

# Aspartame 'may cause brain tumours'

The widely-used artificial sweetener aspartame (Nutrasweet, Canderel) has been identified as 'a promising candidate to explain the recent increase in incidence and degree of malignancy of brain tumours' by researchers at Washington University Medical School, St Louis.

**T**he major producer of aspartame is the Nutrasweet Corporation, a subsidiary of the Monsanto Corporation (producers of genetically modified soya beans and the milk-boosting hormone BST — see past issues of the *Food Magazine*). World-wide sales of Nutrasweet have been put at over \$1000 million, and consumption in the UK has risen from around 200 tonnes in 1988 to over 800 tonnes in 1993.

Citing the unexplained rise in brain tumour rates in the USA since the mid 1980s, and referring to animal experiments which indicated a link between aspartame and brain tumours, the authors of a new study call for a reassessment of the carcinogenic potential of the additive. The authors show that the introduction of aspartame in the USA in 1981 was followed by a 10% increase in the reported incidence of brain tumours from 1985 onwards, including a rise of over 25% in the incidence of certain types of tumour (glioblastomas and anaplastic astrocytomas up 27% and rarer composite tumours up 68%), corresponding to an extra 1500 cases of brain cancer per year in the USA.

Tests of aspartame on laboratory animals in the late 1970s were reviewed by the US Food and Drug Administration which went to the unusual length of forming a special Public Board of Inquiry (PBOI) in 1980 to report on the matter. The tests had been carried out by the company seeking approval (G D Searle, subsequently acquired by Monsanto) and the PBOI panel found that the evidence in one study was 'bizarre' and unreliable and the evidence in another appeared to show that aspartame was indeed linked to the development of brain tumours.

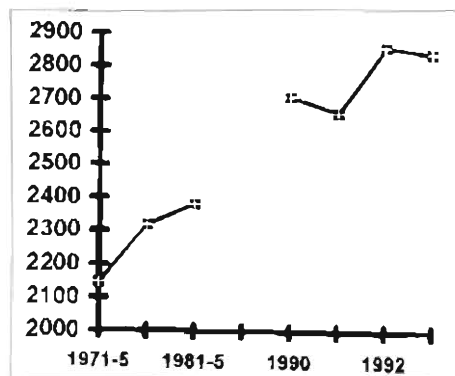
The PBOI recommended that additional research be carried out and that approval for aspartame should be withheld until the studies were done. The FDA commissioner referred the report to additional expert consultants who agreed with the PBOI conclusions. However, in 1981, a newly-appointed FDA commissioner, Arthur Hayes, gave aspartame FDA approval on the basis of his judgement that brain tumour risk was minimal and

further research was not necessary. Arthur Hayes was reported in 1986 to have left the FDA and taken a post as advisor to Burson Marsteller, public relations consultants for G D Searle.

According to the recent research report, further evidence against aspartame has come from experiments showing that the sweetener, or its breakdown product diketopiperazine, can interact with nitrogen to produce nitroso-urea-like molecules, and nitroso-ureas are among the most effective agents for producing malignant brain tumours in experimental animals.

Professor Olney's paper lists three criteria for suspecting an agent causes of cancer: (i) that the agent has *in vitro* mutagenic potential, (ii) that experimental animals show increases in specific cancers when exposed to the agent, and (iii) humans show an increase in the same type of cancer when exposed to the agent. He concludes that, based on the available evidence, aspartame meets all three criteria.

■ Increasing Brain Tumour Rates: Is There a Link to Aspartame?, J W Olney et al, *Neuropathology and Experimental Neurology*, 55, 11, November 1996.



Does aspartame, introduced in the early 1980s, explain the rise in brain cancer deaths in England and Wales?

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# Growth promoters...

**Bacteria that thrive on antibiotics? *Salmonella* and *E coli* killing more people than ever? Other infectious diseases on the rise? Sarah Newman and Tim Lobstein argue that it is time to call a halt to the widespread use of antibiotics in animal feed.**

**T**he headlines in the run up to Christmas included *E coli* deaths in Scotland, meningitis deaths in Cardiff and new strains of bacteria that thrive on the very drugs designed to kill them. We are entering, it seems, the era that medical scientists have long feared, when the power of the post-war generation of drugs – the antibiotics – is slipping away, no longer able to contain and destroy the agents of infectious disease.

The media focus on the disasters, when bacterial diseases kill dozens, or even hundreds of people. What is rarely discussed is the much more frequent and painless transfer of information carried in and out of our gut every day.

Many of the bacteria that we consume each day are harmless but a critical few have developed resistance to the drugs that can destroy them. Once in our gut, these bacteria are able to pass the information needed for drug resistance to other, previously non-resistant bacteria. In this way the host bugs in our guts, both good and bad, can accumulate resistance to a range of antibiotics.

Such resistance only becomes a problem when the bacteria multiply and cause an illness needing treatment with an antibiotic drug. Such treatment, in either animal or human, may take several courses of antibiotics, each failing to take effect and each wiping out helpful bacteria and undermining the immune system. People whose health is already compromised are particularly at risk, as are the young and the old.

It was in response to rising concern over the abuse of antibiotics fed routinely to animals as growth promoters — increasing metabolic efficiency and preventing weight-losing infections — that in 1986 Sweden opted to ban antibiotics from animal feed, reducing the overall tonnage of antibiotics used by 40%.

But since they entered the European Union in 1995, Sweden has been under pressure to conform to the practices in the rest of Europe in order to compete in the harmonised market.

Sweden has until 1999 to harmonise with other member states. There is only one alternative to Sweden abandoning its position, and that is if all other states agree to adopt Sweden, is principled stand.

Pressure to ban antibiotics for general use in livestock has been growing for several years. In 1968 the British government banned farmers from using antibiotics needed for human health, but since that date there has been some evidence that cross resistance, in which bacteria that develop resistance to a veterinary drug also show resistance to human medication, may be occurring.

Avoparcin is one antibiotic widely used by farmers which had been assumed to have no impact on human health. But several studies are now showing that transfers of glycopeptide resistance may be occurring<sup>1</sup>, putting at risk patients who depend on one of our most important antibiotics, vancomycin.

Eighteen months ago, both Germany and Denmark responded to these reports by banning the use of avoparcin. They are now awaiting an European Commission decision on whether the ban can continue, following an earlier recommendation from the EC's advisory body on animal nutrition that there were no grounds for the avoparcin ban and it should be lifted.

*Swedish chickens are not given antibiotics, and are virtually salmonella-free.*

In Sweden the consumer lobby was the main source of pressure which led to the restriction on the use of routine antibiotics in animal feed. Farmers' organisations responded to consumer pressure by drawing up a policy aimed at restrictive and controlled use of antibiotics. Livestock husbandry methods were improved and there appears to be little evidence of an illicit market in the drugs. From 1988 virtually all chickens have been raised without antibiotics, and Sweden claims to be the main EU producer of salmonella-free chickens.

In the UK, where the number of animals reared is much greater and intensive methods much more widespread, the 'animal health' industry claims that growth promoters are necessary for the 'proper development' of young animals. They claim farmers

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# or disease producers?

need to produce the 'high quality, good value food products that the modern consumer demands'. They blame doctors and hospitals for the spread of antibiotic resistance and claim there is no proof that the agricultural use of antibiotics has contributed to the spread of resistant bacteria.

Now the Public Health Laboratory has warned of a new epidemic of a highly resistant *Salmonella* strain (DT104) transferred to humans from the farm. Are hospitals to blame, and are GPs over-prescribing? The answer, as a World Health Organisation conference agreed last autumn, is that we need to take all the measures we can to reduce the reservoir of resistant bacteria — both in medical practices and farming practices. If Sweden, Denmark and Germany's consumers, with support from the veterinary profession, are prepared to press for better practices, then why not Britain?

Pressure now could make all the difference, as the EU is considering two test cases, and Sweden's farmers face an enforced decline in their standards.

## Statement by the Federation of Swedish Farmers

‘In the early 1980s the growth-promoting use of antibiotics was criticised in Swedish mass media. The public were surprised to learn that 30 tonnes of antibiotics were being given annually to healthy animals.

The criticism led to the Federation of Swedish Farmers drawing up proposals with the following results:

- Since 1986 no antibiotics or chemotherapeutics are added generally to the feed for growth promotion in Sweden. Antibiotics to farm animals are only used for curing disease and after a veterinary prescription.
- The total consumption of antibiotics to farm animals since 1986 has reduced by over 40%. The amount added to animal feed has reduced by 90% from 30 tonnes in 1984 to 3 tonnes in 1995. There is no sign of a black market.
- Swedish research has shown that less use of antibiotics has led to less risk of residues in food and less risk of building up antibiotic resistance.
- The restrictions on antibiotic use have led to improved animal welfare, animal environment and management. To maintain production efficiency, Swedish producers have improved their skills and knowledge.’

Gunnela Stahle, Economic Policy Division 1.8.96

### You can...

- write to your MP and especially your MEP expressing your concern and calling for a speedy reduction in the use of antibiotics as routine feed for livestock. You may wish to recommend that Europe adopts the highest standards such as those being tried in Sweden and Denmark. Ask your MEP to pass your letter to the relevant office in the European Commission.
- contact trade secretaries at the London embassies for Sweden (0171 724 2101), Germany (0171 824 1300) and Denmark (0171 235 1255) expressing your support for a reduction in the use of antibiotics in animal feed across Europe — they

need to show they have support for continuing their ban on animal antibiotics such as avoparcin

- send copies to MAFF Consumer Protection Division so they cannot deny there is a consumer issue (Nobel House, Smith Square, London SW1A)
- and send copies to us at the Food Commission
- Ask at your supermarket whether their meat and poultry is bred using antibiotics as growth promoters, and whether they allow the use of avoparcin. If you don't get a satisfactory answer, write to their customer services offices — ask at the store for the address or phone the Food Commission.

<sup>1</sup> Donnelly *et al*, Does the use in animals of antimicrobial agents, including glycopeptide antibiotics, influence the efficacy of antimicrobial agents in humans? *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy*, 37, 398, 1996; and Bates *et al*, Farm animals as a putative reservoir for vancomycin-

resistant enterococcal infection in man. *Journal of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy*, 34, 507-514, 1994.

■ Sarah Newman is an independent researcher on food and social issues.

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# CHECKOUT

The UK has the most advertising of unhealthy food to children in Europe. *Checkout* takes a look at junk dealing to kids.

## Selling junk to juniors

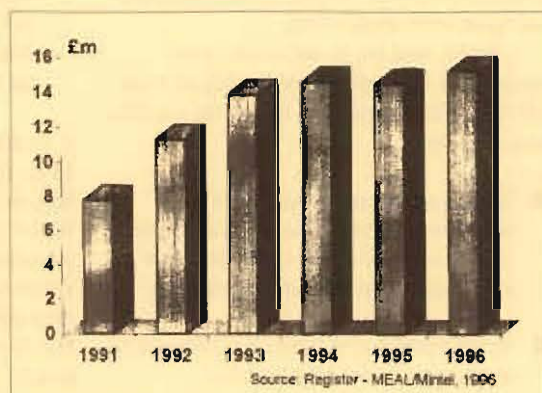
Children have become an important market for food companies. Not only do they have their own money to spend but they also have considerable influence over family food shopping. The commonest way to reach youngsters is via the TV set and despite the recession in the advertising industry, the amount of money spent on advertising children's food in the UK has doubled in just five years (see graph). According to new survey from Consumers International (see over) the UK tops the European league for the amount of TV advertising to children.

But that isn't all. Kids and parents may try to ignore the persuasive intent of TV advertising, but there are more subtle forms of promotion. Cartoon characters, celebrity endorsements, TV sponsorship, on-pack promotions, products given away through schools and commercial internet sites are all part of what are known as 'below-the-line' promotional techniques. A new report<sup>1</sup> on the use of sponsorship and character licensing in

children's food and drink says that such promotional techniques are not only cheaper than television advertising but also more effective.

With such promotions reaching unprecedented levels, many are asking whether aggressive marketing to children and teenagers is socially responsible. Alcopop manufacturers have caused widespread concern with their cynical attempts to woo young drinkers with alcohol dressed up as a soft drink, and a public outcry followed plans, apparently endorsed by the Department of Education, for schools to display advertisements in return for cash. Now snack food companies are offering youngsters the chance to win thousands of pounds in promotions which some say break the spirit of rules preventing children from gambling (see page 12).

Yet, in moves that will weaken UK television



Children's food advertising budgets have doubled in five years

advertising controls, the Independent Television Commission is proposing to liberalise the rules on TV sponsorship and to abandon the special requirements that currently exist to protect children. In contrast, as we describe overleaf, several European countries restrict advertising to children, or ban it completely during children's viewing hours, and many do not permit sponsorship of children's programmes.

The Food Commission believes that it is time for food and drink companies to stop exploiting children with cut-throat competitive promotions and to show far greater social responsibility in their marketing practices. If voluntary codes are not sufficient, then regulations such as those in Scandinavia should be introduced.

<sup>1</sup> Sponsorship and Character Licensing in Children's Food and Drink, *Financial Times Management Reports*, 1996 (tel: 0171 896 2222 for details)

### The hidden persuaders

New forms of marketing are making it harder for children to distinguish between 'advertising' and ordinary entertainment. Commercial pressure has become part of the fabric of children's daily lives with more covert marketing techniques being used alongside regular advertising.

These are the conclusions of a recent report from the Dutch consumer organisation, Consumentenbond, and the European consumer organisation BEUC<sup>1</sup>. Europe-wide marketing practices include sponsored children's clubs, contests and sweepstakes, advertorials in children's magazines, sponsorship of children's sports and cultural events, collectable free gifts, character merchandising linking food products to movie characters or toys, and in-

school marketing.

The survey also found that distance-marketing to children – including direct mail, teleshopping, premium-rate telephone services and the Internet – is increasing. A leaflet, *Teach Them How to Look*, has been produced to help parents and their children become more aware of such marketing techniques. It is currently being trialled in the Netherlands, though Consumentenbond hopes funding will be available for its translation and distribution throughout the EU.

<sup>1</sup> *Children and Advertising*, Consumentenbond/BEUC. For details contact BEUC, Av. de Tervueren, 36 bte 4, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium. Tel: (32) 2 743 15 90 Fax: (32) 2 735 74 55.

## Advertising to children

Children around the world are bombarded with television advertisements telling them bad food is good. *Checkout* reports.

**T**he UK has the highest level of advertising to children in Europe, according to a study by Consumers International released in November<sup>1</sup> comparing advertising during 20 hours of children's television. Only the USA and Australia had higher levels of advertising.

In the UK there are no restrictions on the amount of TV advertising to children beyond those which apply to all advertising. Many other countries have restrictions:

- Sweden and Norway do not permit any television advertising to be directed towards children under 12 and no advertisements at all are allowed during children's programmes.
- Australia does not allow advertisements during programmes for pre-school children.
- Austria does not permit advertising during children's programmes, and in the Flemish region of Belgium no advertising is permitted 5 minutes before or after programmes for children.

### Cybertots on the net

A survey of Internet advertising directed at children by the Washington-based Center for Media Education discovered unfair and deceptive forms of marketing which are outlawed in other forms of media and which invade children's privacy through solicitation of personal information.

'Advertising and content are seamlessly interwoven in online 'informercials' for children,' says the report. 'Children can spend hours playing with such popular 'spokescharacters' as Tony the Tiger, Chester Cheatah and Snap! Crackle! and Pop! The report calls for greater safeguards on Internet marketing.

- *Web of Deception, Threats to children from Online Marketing*, Center for Media Education, 1511 K Street, NW, Suite #518, Washington DC 20005, USA. Tel: (202) 628 2620 Fax: (202) 628 2554.

- Sponsorship of children's programmes is not permitted in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden while in Germany and the Netherlands, although it is allowed, it is not used in practice.

In virtually all the countries in the survey (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the USA) there were more ads during kids' TV for food than for any other type of product, with ads for confectionery, breakfast cereals (mainly sweetened) and fast food restaurants making up over half of all food advertisements in the survey (see chart opposite).

### McDonalds topped the European list

The most prolific advertiser overall was McDonald's with commercials for the fast food chain found in virtually every country. A previous study has shown that just over half of Australian 9 and 10 year-olds think that Ronald McDonald knows best what is good for children to eat.

'Advertising is often credited with promoting that bastion of consumer freedom – choice,' the report states. 'But the choice that food advertising presents children is largely between one candy bar and another, the latest savoury snack or

sweetened breakfast cereal or fast food restaurant – hardly the kind of choices which encourage a healthy balanced diet.'

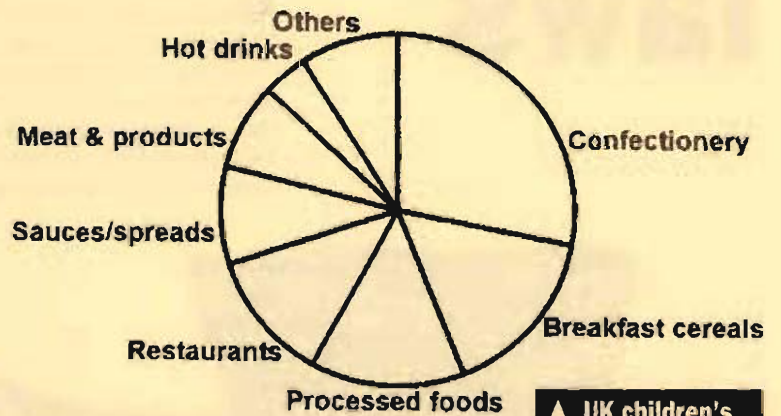
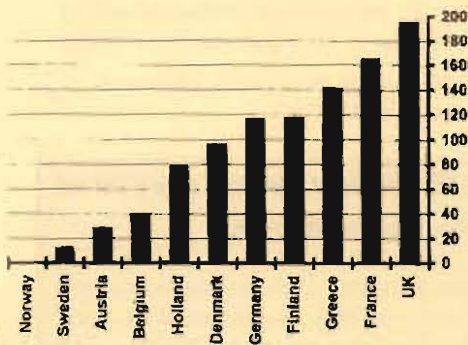
The report calls for greater protection of children from misleading, unfair or excessive amounts of advertising particularly for foods which discourage healthy eating, and for more positive nutrition messages to children on television.

- *A Spoonful of Sugar – Television food advertising aimed at children: an international comparative survey*, Consumers International, 24 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RX (tel 0171-226 6663, fax 0171-354 0607) November 1996.



# CHECKOUT

## UK the worst in Europe



▲ UK children's food ads - largely sweet and processed foods

The survey found over 50% of UK children's food adverts were for these 11 products.

- Kellogg's Coco Pops*
- McDonald's*
- Birds Eye Potato Waffles*
- Sugar Puffs*
- Campbells Meat Balls*
- Milky Way Magic Stars*
- Cadbury Wispa Gold*
- Mattesers*
- Mars bar dark*
- Kentucky Fried Chicken*
- McCain Southern Fries*

British children are exposed to the most food advertising in Europe, and the majority of products encourage poor eating habits. The graph above shows the number of food advertisements reported in 20 hours of children's television. The UK topped the list with nearly 200 such adverts.

This picture is very similar to that found in previous surveys by the Food Commission and others<sup>2</sup> all of which have found that food advertising is dominated by adverts for foods

that do little to encourage a healthy diet while adverts for healthier foods rarely appear.

The 1996 figures from Consumers International show a staggering 95% of advertisements were for foods that encourage a fatty, salty, sugary diet (see pie chart) - 62% of ads were for foods high in fat; 50% were for foods high in sugar and 61% were for foods high in salt. The survey found only a handful of advertisements for healthier foods, such as kiwi fruit, frozen peas and low-sugar cereals.

<sup>2</sup> The Food Commission (1990) *Sweet Persuasion*, *The Food Magazine*, 9; The Food Commission (1992) *A Diet of Junk Food Adverts*, Part 2, *The Food Magazine*, 18; National Food Alliance (1995) *Easy to Swallow: Hard to Stomach*.

## Loopholes in the gambling laws

Under UK gambling laws it is illegal to sell lottery scratch cards to children under 15, yet snack food companies are encouraging underage gambling – quite legally. Top selling brands of crisps, confectionery and soft drinks are cynically boosting sales by offering youngsters the chance to win thousands of pounds with scratch cards, lucky wrappers or instant win coupons.



How do they get away with it? The companies get round the law by selling the food, not the scratch card or lucky wrappers. Technically, participation does not require a betting stake (and the small print even allows children to send their names in for a 'no purchase necessary' chance of winning) so the

law does not apply. It is certainly good business for the companies – youngsters on BBC's *Watchdog* programme in November admitted they bought the snacks, even ones they didn't like, because they hoped to win cash prizes.

## Parents want healthier children's food

Parents from all social classes say health considerations are the most important factor in their choices of food for their children. Market analysts, Mintel, found that 83% of mothers claimed to 'try to ensure my children eat a healthy diet'. Health has now become even more important than convenience, says the survey, with parents most concerned about high levels of fat and sugar in their children's diets. 42% said that it was a constant battle to avoid crisps, cakes and sweets while 48% said they would be interested in giving their children food with extra vitamins or minerals.

■ *Children's Food*, Mintel, August 1996. For more information: 0171-600 5703

### 1995 sports events sponsored by food companies

After Mars and McDonald's sponsored the 1994 soccer World Cup, questions were raised about the appropriateness of promoting fatty or sugary, processed foods in association with sport. But little changed, as the 1995 leading sponsor list shows.

Aqua Pura	Athletics
Britvic	Soccer
Coca Cola	Soccer, Golf, Rugby, Tennis, Surfing, Motor cycling, Table Tennis, Athletics
KP Foods	Athletics
Lucozade Sport	Athletics
Mars	Soccer
McVities	Swimming
MD Foods	Horsereading
Muller Yogurt	Soccer
Nestlé	Tennis
New Zealand	
Kiwi Fruit	Athletics
Pepsi Cola (7Up)	Basketball
Sainsbury's	Basketball
Sun Valley	Soccer
Tilda Rice	Athletics
Uncle Ben's	Swimming
Van den Bergh	Athletics, Cricket, Rugby Union
Vimto	Soccer
Walkers Crisps	Soccer
Weetabix	Golf
Yoplait Dairy Crest	Tennis

Source: *RSI SportsScan* quoted in *Sponsorship and Character Licensing in Children's Food and Drink*, *Financial Times Management Report*, 1996.

# Roads leading from Rome

**The World Food Summit, which met in Rome in mid-November, agreed a prepared statement and dispersed. What should we do now? Simon Maxwell makes some suggestions.**

There were not many Heads of State in evidence in Rome, but the other ingredients for a successful international meeting were in place. The streets were closed. The Pope turned up. Protesters took their clothes off. A weighty declaration was approved by acclamation.

In fact there were few surprises. The *Policy Statement and Plan of Action* had been approved a full two weeks before the Summit opened. The cake was safely in the oven, so to speak, and could be brought to table when Government Heads, or more often their juniors, came to eat.

The FAO press release said that the end of the negotiations was greeted with applause. Not surprising, perhaps, that weary civil servants should give themselves a clap, after months of haggling and the obligatory all night sitting to finish the job. But should the rest of us join in? The answer to that question depends on our expectations.

In the event the Summit held to the 'middle' ground. The negotiators saw off the extreme Malthusians, who believe the answer to world food problems lies in a combination of rigorous population control and massive efforts to produce more food in high potential areas. The document acknowledges a human right to food, despite reservations from the USA who wanted this right to be an 'aspiration'. It recognises that reducing poverty is the key to food security for the 800 million people who now go hungry. And it argues, rightly, that any strategy for world food security must address the needs of poor and vulnerable people living in low potential areas. That's one in the eye for some in FAO, and for many outside.

The drafting of the document also saw off the emphasis on food self-sufficiency, and the hostility to trade, of many NGOs. Trade, it says, allows local food consumption to exceed food production, helps to reduce fluctuations, and relieves part of the burden of stock-holding. Furthermore, it has a positive effect on growth, income and employment.

The document seems balanced and reasonable — but that's about as far as it goes. The Summit did not adopt new targets or approve new funds. It ducked the pressing question of reforming the smorgasbord of UN institutions which deal with food.

The real action, we are told, will take place after the Summit, at country level. Every country will produce an action plan, to be monitored by the FAO and reported to the UN General Assembly. Maybe, but we've been here before. The Action Plans are stacking up, from Rio, and Beijing, and Cairo, and Copenhagen.

In any case, the food problems of poor countries are not going to be solved within poor countries alone, but also in their relations to rich ones, and in the international arena. Nor should rich countries sit comfortably, viewing it as an overseas problem — as the UK did by handing Food Summit matters to the government's Overseas Development Administration and pointedly ignoring the relevant food issues within Britain.

We shouldn't give up, however, either as citizens of our own country, or as members of a world community that stands in solidarity with the poor and hungry. Individually, we should confront Heads of Government or their Ministers with three tough questions. First, do you now accept that food is a fundamental human right? Secondly, how much more money do you think your Government needs to provide in order to tackle hunger? Thirdly, will you resign if that money is not forthcoming? It's time to launch a 'three questions movement', worldwide.

Collectively, we have much to do. We need a food charter, setting out the guarantees states will offer their citizens:

- Guaranteed yearly health and nutrition checks for mothers and children.
- Guaranteed access to a nutrition programme for mothers and children.
- Guaranteed incomes, in cash or kind, adequate to ensure a nutritious diet.

- Guaranteed standards of care for refugees.
- Guaranteed access for farmers to inputs, technology and fair prices.

Without guarantees like this, statements about the human right to food will be no more than platitudes, and accountability will vanish in the mist.

The World Food Summit was haunted by the image of refugees in Rwanda and Zaire. Their right to food is violated by conflict. But poverty is also a form of violation. And there are 800 million people, over half of them children, demanding redress.

■ Simon Maxwell is Fellow and Head of the Food Security Unit at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 9RE.

A suggested food charter can be found on the IDS web site at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/news/wfs/index.html>

The FAO World Food Summit site can be found on <http://www.fao.org/wfs/homepage.htm>

What's in the bowl? This publicity shot boasts how UK aid brought a road and jobs for women in the Caribbean



# Why are Britons getting

**If obesity were a disease we now have an epidemic. Huge numbers of the population are overweight and the figures have been rising for at least 20 years. What, asks Eric Brunner, is going on?**

In 1994 the *Health Survey of England* recorded the worst ever obesity rates for the general population. Some 58% of men and 49% of women were overweight, and 13% and 16% respectively were obese. While many other measures of health and disease — from heart attacks to tooth decay — appear to be improving, the obesity figures are stubbornly worsening.

In order to examine the possible reasons for this we need to look at the main factors which are linked to excess weight. Take **age**. The 1994 survey showed that mean body mass index (BMI — see box) tends to increase with an individual's age, for both men and women, and is particularly common in the age range 55-64 (26% of men and 17% of women). Obesity rates tend to fall in old age — in men over 75 and women over 65 — possibly because some of those most overweight have not survived.

These high rates continue to rise in the British population. Between 1991 and 1994 the average BMI increased by 0.33 to 25.8 for men, and by 0.35 to 25.5 for women. Obesity levels appear to be rising fastest among men and women aged 65-74,

and women aged 35-44

Average BMI and the prevalence of obesity vary by **region** in England, after age adjustment. Both show higher levels in the north and recent surveys suggest that Scottish adults tend to be slightly more obese than English. Further analysis of these data should reveal the extent to which regional differences in BMI can be accounted for by geographic differences in social class composition.

Among women, the prevalence of obesity increases down the **social classes** (12% in social class I, 22% in social class V). Among men this link is less strong. The prevalence of obesity rises from social class I (10%) to IV (14%), but is slightly less in V (13%). Educational attainment is inversely related to BMI in women but not men. Data from the Whitehall studies (shown below) illustrate the considerable increase in obesity between the late 1960s and early 1990s among men — women were not included in the first cohort — and the link between occupational status and obesity in both sexes.

At first sight it seems easy to explain weight-gain as a problem of **energy imbalance**. If intake of energy exceeds expenditure of energy over a period of time then increased weight, mainly as fat tissue, is the inevitable result. This crude balance-sheet model takes us a little way towards a useful understanding, but does not tell the whole story about obesity.

There is evidence that average energy intake may have fallen over the last 40 years, but it seems that the decline has been insufficient to compensate for the reduction in energy expenditure. A very small degree of energy imbalance over several years will produce substantial weight gain. It has been estimated that an average daily excess energy intake of 1% over one year would lead to a 1kg gain in body weight.

Research at the Dunn Laboratory, Cambridge has identified **energy density of the diet** (calories

per gram of food) as a key factor in determining energy balance. Low energy density diets do not appear to provoke excessive energy intake, even among sedentary adults. High energy density diets seem to provoke a small positive energy balance among the physically active, and a larger positive energy balance among the inactive. These short-term studies also indicate that the weight of food consumed is a key factor in determining when the appetite is satisfied. If the energy density of the food is low, energy intake tends to be low, and vice versa.

Because fat yields 9 cal/g, compared with 4 cal/g for carbohydrate and protein, high-fat foods tend to be energy-dense foods. However, the evidence shows that using fat-reduced food

## Measuring fatness

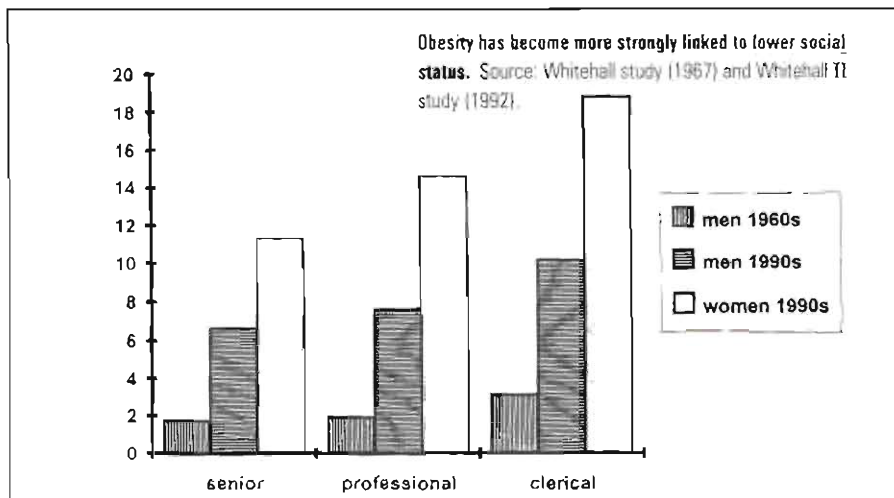
Body mass index (BMI) is the most widely measure of fatness. This is calculated by dividing bodyweight (in kilograms) by height squared (in metres). An 80kg man (about 12.5 stone), 1.8 metres tall (about 5 feet 10 inches), would have a BMI of  $80/(1.8)^2$ , which is 24.6.

	BMI
underweight	20 or less
'normal' weight	20.1-25
overweight	25.1-30
obese	over 30

BMI does not distinguish between heaviness due to fat or to muscle. Nor does it distinguish the location of the fat — fat around the abdomen is linked to higher risk of heart disease than fat around the thighs or buttocks.

Earlier UK obesity data for women need to be treated with caution: obesity has been defined as a BMI over 28.0 in Wales, over 28.6 in Northern Ireland, while in Scotland and England a BMI of 30 and over was defined as obese\*. The effect has been to inflate the obesity rates in Wales and Northern Ireland compared with elsewhere — one study\*\* found that redefining obesity from 28.6 to 30 led the women's obesity rates to fall from 12.7% to 9.0%.

\*Hansard — repeated in a series of parliamentary questions asked by Martyn Jones MP during 1996  
 \*\*Hill & Roberts, *BMJ*, 313, pp815-6, 28.9.1996.



# Getting fatter?

products, artificial sweeteners, and other 'slimming' foods does not usually provide an effective means to reduce calorie intake. Individuals unconsciously compensate for the 'lost' calories. An effective diet for prevention of obesity, or for weight reduction, therefore appears to be one which is based on a high content of low energy-dense foods — cereals, beans, vegetables and fruit — and a low content of refined, energy-dense foods, such as sweet or fatty, processed foods.

There is little reliable data on changes in **energy expenditure** or physical activity levels over the past fifty years but it is probable that occupational activity levels have declined in Europe and N America. Recent surveys in the UK showed that exercise levels in childhood were remarkably low, with half of primary schoolchildren taking no vigorous activity at all. Concern about the sedentary habits of British children has led to the reintroduction of compulsory sport in schools.

Among adults, official UK statistics show strong associations in the period 1965-1990 between the

prevalence of obesity and car ownership and TV viewing (which increased from 13 to 26 hours per week over the period). Among women, there is a close correspondence between levels of inactivity and prevalence of obesity by social class.

Increased indoor environmental temperatures, due to central heating and better building insulation, may also have contributed to declines in energy expenditure. There is little systematic evidence on the size of this effect, but warm environments are linked with lower levels of activity. Energy utilisation while watching TV in a warm room appears to be at, or even below, the basal metabolic rate shown during sleep.

Because a large and increasing proportion of the British population is overweight or obese it is clear that a nationwide, **preventive strategy** is required if the trends in bodyweight are to be reversed. Novel drug treatments are a prime focus of research in several countries, in the hope that these will help a number of the clinically obese. The Dept of Health/MRC Nutrition Programme has

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How far along are they?  
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**Drug companies are keen to develop a lucrative market**

obesity treatment and prevention as a priority topic.

Essentially, a prevention strategy must produce a change in our culture towards increased physical activity, and a reduced energy density in the foods we eat. Food companies, and fast food chains, please note.

■ Eric Brunner is Senior Research Fellow at University College London Department of Epidemiology and Public Health

# More salt suspicions

**T**he excessive consumption of salt is responsible for some (8000) deaths from stroke in the UK, according to leading public health researchers. Yet the government has refused to criticise the level of salt in our diet. It urges us to cut fat and to limit sugar, but, as we have reported in this magazine, the government prohibited discussions about salt in the deliberations of the Nutrition Task Force, they declined to publish the sources of salt in the recent children's diet survey, and the Chief Medical Officer refused to endorse the advice of his expert committee on cardiovascular disease to urge companies to cut the salt in processed foods.

What industry pressures may have prevailed upon the government? A wide range of processed foods contribute salt to our diet, but the largest single category is bread — not simply because bread is fairly salty (about half a gram per slice) but because

we eat so much of it.

Who might be interested in bread? Could it be Associated British Foods — owners of international grain and flour milling interests and, in the UK, owners of Allied Bakeries, makers of Kingsmill, Vitbe, Sunblest, Mighty White and Allinson, and the largest single bread-making company in the UK with around 30% of all bread sales? ABF also own British Sugar, and, valued at £3.9bn, is the third largest UK food producer, beaten only by Unilever (£11.2bn) and Cadbury-Schweppes (£4.9bn).

But besides its financial clout, is there any other reason ABF could have the ear of government when it comes to influencing food policy? Yes. Its board of directors includes a Tory MP. Not just any Tory MP but a former government minister. And not just any former minister but John MacGregor, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in the late 1980's.

MacGregor is obviously a useful man to know, and ABF paid him £15,000 in 1995 and upped this to £20,000 in 1996. But for all his useful contacts, would having MacGregor on the board ensure you have the ear of the government, or is there more?

ABF's Chairman is Garry Weston, son of Canadian

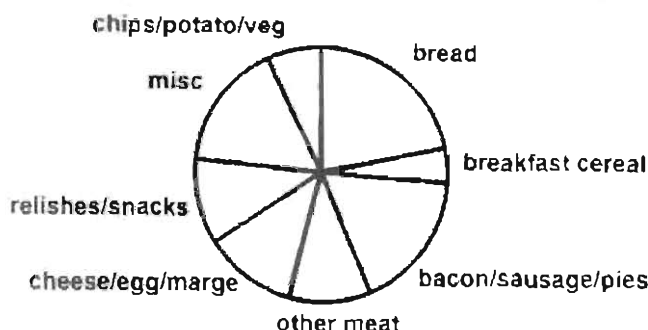


Garry Weston, maker of Jammie Dodgers at ABF, and donor of some £1.5m to the Tories.

entrepreneur Garfield Weston, and targeted by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the 1970s for his control over flour and bread prices. Does ABF contribute to Tory party funds perhaps? At first sight it appears that ABF makes no party donations, but ABF used to be held by a controlling organisation, George Weston Holdings which in the period 1980-1993 gave a total of £1.07m to the Tory party.

More recently the controlling interest in ABF (51%) was absorbed into Wittington Investments which in turn is controlled by the Garfield Weston Foundation. The Foundation's trustees consist of Garry Weston — along with five of his siblings and four of his children. Wittington Investments gave a further £0.35m to the Tories in 1994-95.

George Weston Holdings also gave a further £0.08m to the Tory-supporting Centre for Policy Studies. Weston family donations thus exceeded £1.5m during the last ten years. Such generosity could make a lot of friends and, we fear, a lot of bad health policy, too.



# The food and farming MPs

**Thirty six MPs say they are farmers or own farms, others sit on the boards of food companies, and Norman Lamont is consultant to Monsanto...**

In this tour of the Members' Register we list the food and agriculture interests declared by the MPs concerned. Our listing is based on the summary data published in the Daily Telegraph, 10.5.96, pages 21-24.

## Conservative MPs

Peter Ainsworth (Surrey E), director of JLI Group plc

Jonathan Aitken (Thanet S), farmland in New South Wales, Australia

Matthew Banks (Southport), farmland in Scotland

Robert Banks (Harrogate), farmland in Suffolk

Henry Bellingham (Norfolk NW), farmland in Norfolk

Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster), farmland in Buckinghamshire

Tim Boswell (Daventry), farmland in Northants/Oxfordshire

Graham Bright (Luton S), director Dietary Foods Ltd, director Cumberland Foods Ltd, director Mother Nature Ltd, adviser to Safeways, director International Sweeteners Association

Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton SW), farmland in Staffordshire

Peter Butler (Milton Keynes NE), farmland 'attached to family residence'

John Butterfill (Bournemouth W), lunch and tickets to tennis championships paid for by Whitbread

Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln), farmland at Bury St Edmunds

Paul Channon (Southend W), farmland in Essex, over £25,000 shareholding in Guinness plc

James Clappison (Hertsmere), farmland, director and shareholder of Clappison Ltd agricultural contractors Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Gloucester & Tewkesbury), farmland in Norfolk and Gloucestershire

Michael Colvin (Romsey & Waterside), consultant to the Northern Ireland

Federation of Licensed Retail Trade, farmland in Edinburgh and Hampshire Derek Conway (Shrewsbury & Atcham), farmland in Shropshire

James Couchman (Gillingham), adviser to Gin and Vodka Association, adviser to Pfizer

David Curry (Skipton & Rippon), guest of Allied Domecq at Royal Ascot

Quentin Davies (Stamford & Spaldin), sheep farming, member of committee of Country Landowners Association

Hugh Dykes (Harrow E), adviser to British Wine Producers, farmland in E Anglia

Harold Elletson (Blackpool N), farmland in Lancashire

Barry Field (Isle of Wight), over £25,000 shareholding in George Gale, brewers, Daniel Thwaites, brewers, Wadworth & Co, brewers

Marcus Fox (Shipley), director Yorkshire Food Group plc, director Pubmaster Ltd

Douglas French (Gloucester), tickets to tennis championships paid for by Whitbread

Roger Gale (Thanet N), consultant to Scottish & Newcastle Breweries, consultant to Rhone Poulenc

Christopher Gill (Ludlow), shareholding in F A Gill meat processors, farmland in Shropshire Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon), consultant to Forum Holdings Ltd

John Gorst (Hendon N), adviser to British Amusement Caterers' Trade Association

Archibald Hamilton (Epsom & Ewell), director Woodgate Farms Dairy, farmland in Surrey

David Harris (St Ives), farmland in Cornwall

David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells), farmland in Scotland, over £25,000 shareholding in Lowman Manufacturing Ltd agricultural machinery

Robert Hicks (Cornwall SE), adviser to Milk Marque

Ralph Howell (Norfolk N), farmlands in

Norfolk

Bernard Jenkin (Colchester N), wife owns shares over £25,000 in Lord Raleigh's Dairies Ltd and Lord Raleigh's Farms Inc

Michael Jopling (Westmorland & Lonsdale), farmland in West Yorkshire Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster), farmland in Norfolk

Tom King (Bridgewater), farmland in Chippenham, Wilts

Norman Lamont (Kingston-upon-Thames), director (chairman) East European Food Fund plc, consultant to Monsanto

Mark Lennox-Boyd (Morecambe & Lunesdale), over £25,000 shareholding in Guinness plc

Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire), smallholding in Hertfordshire

John MacGregor (Norfolk S), director Associated British Foods

Paul Marland (Gloucestershire W), Chairman of Marland's English Table Waters, adviser to Unigate Dairies, farmland in Gloucestershire

Patrick Mayhew (Turbridge Wells), farmland in Kent

David Mitchell (Hampshire NW), Chairman and shareholder, El Vino Company (wines)

David Nicholson (Taunton), adviser to National Association of Cider Makers

Emma Nicholson (Torrige and W Devon), vice-president of The Small Farmers' Association

James Pawsey (Rugby & Kenilworth), director of Autobar Ltd

Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk), farmland in Suffolk, shareholder in Great Bradley Farms

Timothy Sainsbury (Hove), director of J Sainsbury plc, farmland in Hampshire, over £25,000 shareholding in J Sainsbury

Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills), director and shareholder of Partridges of Sloane Street Ltd, director and shareholder of Shepherd Foods (London) Ltd

Michael Shersby (Uxbridge), committee member of the Sugar

Bureau, lunch and polo event tickets from Bristol Meyers Squibb (baby milk), director of the World Sugar Research Organisation Ltd

Roger Sims (Chislehurst), adviser to the Scotch Whisky Association

John Sykes (Scarborough), director and large shareholder of Farmley Estates (farming)

Teddy Taylor (Southend E), director of Shepherd Foods Ltd and Partridges of Sloane Street Ltd

Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster), director of John Kendall Associates (PR company with agricultural interests)

Donald Thompson (Calder Valley), adviser to British Agrochemicals Association, adviser to Catering Equipment Distributors Association of GB

Peter Thurnham (Bolton NE), farmland in Cumbria

Michael Trend (Windsor & Maidenhead), consultant to International Distillers & Vintners Ltd

William Waldegrave (Bristol W), over £25,000 shares in Waldegrave Farms Ltd

## Labour MPs

Janet Anderson (Rossendale & Darwen), adviser to Safeways

Tony Banks (Newham NW), adviser to London Beekeeper's Association

Betty Boothroyd (W Bromwich W), Wimbledon tickets donated by Abbott Laboratories (baby milk)

John Home Robertson (E Lothian), farming business, farms in Berwickshire

## Other MPs

Roy Beggs (UUP, Antrim E), farmland in Co Antrim

Alex Carlile (LibDem, Montgomery), trustee of Wynnstay and Clwyd Farmers Share Trust plc

Cynog Dafis (PCymru, Ceredigion & Pembroke N), farmland in Dyfed

Paul Tyler (LibDem, Cornwall N), shareholder in The Unicorn Grocer

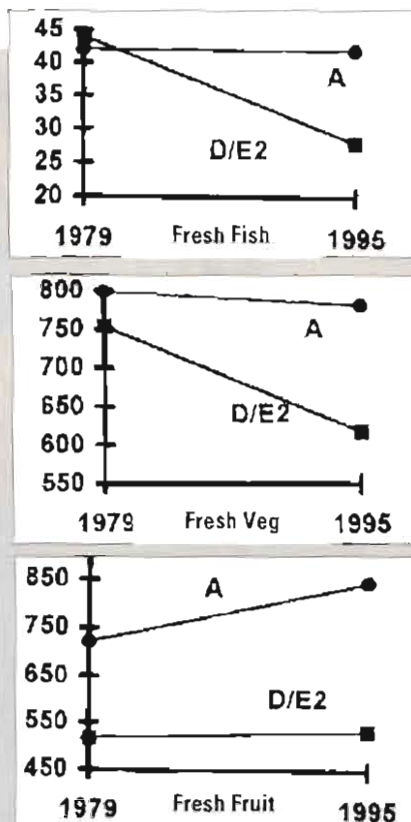


## Trends belie class gaps

**The latest National Food Survey report shows increasing dietary disparities between higher and lower income groups, particularly for foods related to health.**

Despite a press release which boasts how the average fat consumption has fallen below 40%, showing 'further progress' towards the Health of the Nation targets, the fall has been greater for better off families than for those with lowest incomes. Similarly, the increase in fruit consumption is far more marked for those who can afford it, and a decrease in fresh vegetable consumption is particularly marked for those with little cash to spare (see graph). And, despite exhortations to increase our fish consumption, people on a tight budget have shown a marked decline in the fresh fish they eat.

■ National Food Survey 1995, MAFF, The Stationery Office, 1996, ISBN 0-11-243014-7, £26



**Increasing disparity between higher income households (A) and lower income households (D and E2), in purchases of healthier foods (grams per person per week). Source: Food Commission Analysis**

**Improving benefit levels**, enshrining school meals standards and encouraging local authority support for community food projects

are among the recommendations in Suzi Leather's excellent overview of food poverty in the UK. Available for £10 from the Caroline Walker Trust, 6 Aldridge Road Villas, London W11 1BP.

**The McLibel Two**, Helen Steel and Dave Morris have two reasons to celebrate:

- their two-and-a-half years of appearing in the High Court are at an end, and the judge has said he may be 'some time' in reaching his written verdict;
- they were winners of the coveted Caroline Walker Trust Award for their consumer advocacy.

**Evaluating community projects** in nutrition or healthy eating can appear daunting, but help is at hand. A Rapid Appraisal method of collecting information about problems and creating a plan of action with low resource costs, has been developed as a first step for interventions in various neighbourhoods in Liverpool.

For more details, contact Shirley Judd, Nutrition and Dietetics Co-ordinator, North Mersey Community (NHS) Trust, Abercromby Health Centre, Grove Street, Liverpool L7 7HG.



## School Food Seminars

Two one-day conferences in London (5th February) and Newcastle (12th February) for caterers, dietitians, school staff and governors, parents and all concerned with school food at national and local level.

Details from Samantha Church 0171-383 7638

**A quarter of family spending** goes on food among lower-income households, according to the latest family expenditure survey. Better off families spend as little as 15% of their income on food. The figures include food eaten out, and non-alcoholic drinks.

	£ per week per person spent on food	% of total weekly spending
Over £580 per week family income	£27.19	15.1%
Under £120 per week family income	£16.14	25.2%

Source: *Family Spending 1995-6*, Office for National Statistics, The Stationery Office, ISBN 0-11-620779-5, £35.95.

## CAP policies have made the poor poorer

The common assumption that the workings of the CAP, Europe's common agricultural policy, effectively transfer wealth from the urban rich to the rural poor has been challenged by the EC's own regional policy directorate.

Peasant farmers and smallholders in Southern Europe have not benefited as much as has been assumed, and CAP has raised food costs, disproportionately affecting poorer households, while the main beneficiaries have been the large-scale farmers and landowners operating in the member states in northern Europe.

Analysis of the economic performance of EU member states prior to the single currency, European Commission Regional Policy Directorate, Nov 5 1996.

**One day conference CAP for beginners** is to be held on 17th March. Details from SAFE on 0171 823 5660.

**Community Cafes** A one-day conference on catering for the community 25th February. The Town Hall Oxford, organised by the British Heart Foundation and the National Food Alliance, hosted by Oxford City Council.

£25, includes lunch. Contact Meg Jackson, 01727-831585

**A review of low income** and shopping issues from the London School of Economics includes data showing the importance of car ownership in determining shopping habits.

	% saying factor was important	
	social class A+B	social class E
easy parking	94%	66%
low prices	78%	94%
closeness to home	70%	92%
extended opening hours	54%	49%
credit facilities	21%	14%

Beaumont et al, 1995, cited in *The price of food: missing out on mass consumption*, D Plachaud and J Webb, Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines, London School of Economics, 1996, ISBN 0-7530-0901-3, £10.

**Meals on wheels** Harrow, Leeds, Staffordshire and West Sussex all spend less than 30 pence per meal provided for older residents, according to the latest *Key Indicators of Local Authority Social Services* (Government Statistical Service, The Stationery Office, 1996). Islington, Kensington and Dudley all spent over £5.

# Sustainable food production - and a holiday, too!

**A newly-formed co-operative farming venture has bought a property in southern France to try out various models of sustainable farming and reduced-energy living. Tim Lobstein dropped by.**

**T**he farm, Paulianne, is a few miles south of the town of Die (pronounced Dee) on the banks of the river Drome — look on the map midway between the Rhone valley city of Valence, and the Alpine ski resort of Gap. The region enjoys a climate that is warm but mountainous, semi-Mediterranean with no mosquitoes.

By summer 1997 there should be sufficient facilities for a small number of visitors to stay in the farm buildings or camp in the meadows. Eventually an educational centre will be built to accommodate visitors, conferences and study groups.

The venture was founded by Food Commission trustee Robin Jenkins, who, along with some twenty other families and individuals, has raised the capital to purchase the 210 acres of fields and woodland. The farm buildings are to be developed as residential units for those working on the farm and for occasional letting to visitors. Half a dozen additional residential units are being planned as sustainably-built 'eco-maisons' in the surrounding fields.

While designs are now being prepared for planning approval, the farm is growing vegetables in garden plots, along with clover and alfalfa in the main fields. Wild boar, deer and a group of European wild beaver consider the farm to be theirs. The region is famous for lavender production, apricots and mulberries, and a local 'champagne' called Clairette de Die.

The farm can be reached in about eight hours by train from Waterloo, subject to timetables and tunnel closures, or about ten hours driving from Calais. Once planning consent is obtained, there should be good scope for visitors with building skills to earn their keep on the farm. The area is



renowned for its hill walking and France's largest park — the Parc National de Vercours — starts some ten kilometres north of the farm, with mountains rising over 7000 feet.

There is ample opportunity to join in the work of the farm, which is predominantly English-speaking, either as an occasional visitor or as a full share-holding member. There are still two farm buildings looking for owners, and several eco-maison sites that could be developed.



■ For further details, send a 20p-stamped, self-addressed envelope to Sabrina Aaronovitch c/o The Food Commission.

## Food Ethics



Ben Mepham (ed),  
Routledge, 11  
New Fetter Lane,  
London EC4P 4EE,  
ISBN 0-415-  
12452-2, 1996,  
£12.99

As food scares and food policy debates reach pre-election fever pitch, a book devoted to ethical

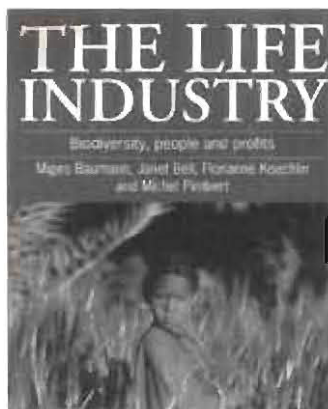
considerations makes timely reading. Who are food companies answerable to? Can de-regulation, or a lack of regulation, be relied on to ensure adequate food supplies? How is scientific uncertainty to be dealt with by regulatory bodies?

It is a Christmas stocking of a book, with treats and fancy wrapping mixed together. Various authors make their contributions: Erik Millstone argues that 'Many of the shortcomings in food safety policy can be attributed to a failure to acknowledge the limitations of scientific knowledge' which is at its worst 'when policy-making institutions operate in a relatively secretive manner and in the absence of procedures for systematic democratic accountability'.

Michael Crawford and Keb Ghebremeskel argue for a historical view of our physiological needs, showing our diet to be restricted and impoverished compared with that enjoyed by our ancestors.

Nigel Dower shows the philosophical underpinning of the social duty to care about world hunger, John Marsh challenges the ethics of both aid and trade, Jeremy Cherfas calls for full-cost accounting at local level to reveal the true impact of modern industrialised agriculture, while Andrew Johnson explores the ethics of exploiting animals for food.

Editor Ben Mepham applies medical ethics to the food industry, Leslie Gofton looks at postmodernism, Green ethics and cultural exclusion, and Robert Hamilton judges companies by their approach to consumer education.



## The Life Industry: Biodiversity, people and profits

M Baumann et al, IT Publications,  
103-5 Southampton Row, London  
WC1B 4HH, ISBN 1 85339 341,  
1996, £11.95.

A fine collation of current thinking on how the industrial North is raiding the genetically rich South for the raw materials for new drugs, crops, pesticides, oils and cosmetics. Authors include leading NGO workers, journalists, policy makers and industrialists.

## Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside

Simon Fairlie, Jon Carpenter  
Publishing, The Spendlove Centre,  
Charlbury, Oxfordshire, OX7 3PQ,  
ISBN 1-897766-254, 1996, £10.

Simon Fairlie's book is an appeal both to planners to reconsider their views on sustainable rural development, and to the planned on how best to put their desires to live — in benders, Segal houses or permaculture smallholding — to the planning authorities.

## Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for England

1996 edition, Department of Health,  
The Stationery Office, ISBN 0-11-  
322013-8, 1996, £15.

Largely a series of tables on use of the health services, but this report includes an evaluation of progress towards meeting the Health of the Nation targets set in 1990. Targets for obesity, smoking among young people and alcohol consumption among women are not likely to be met, and there is doubt that the target for premature deaths from stroke will be met. The targets for heart disease death rates, lung cancer and deaths from accidents (all of which had been falling for over a decade before the targets were set) are likely to be met.

## Information and Advertising Policy. A Study of Fat and Cholesterol Consumption in the USA 1977-90

US Federal Trade Commission,  
Washington DC 20580, 1996.

This report studies the impact of commercial health claims on dietary consumption of fats, and finds that companies can influence consumption patterns, and do not appear to undermine consumer learning or prevent efforts to improve diets. An earlier study from the same office, *Health Claims in Advertising and Labelling. A Study of the Cereal Market*, 1989 also concluded in favour of company health claims.

## Small Ads

Place your small ad here for just £10 per 30 words. Send to Food Magazine Smallads, or use our credit card hotline: 0171-628 7774.

**Mountain Holidays** in tranquil white-washed village in Southern Spain. Clean air — guided walks — excellent food — B&B or house rent. Local potteries, log fires, flamenco, wine tasting, photography courses.  
Tel/fax 00-34-58 766150

**Nutritional Influences on Illness**  
600 pages of nutritional medicine research summaries, £21.95, plus other books.  
Sae for list, to SPNT Books, PO Box 47, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8ZX

Keep on writing but keep your letters short! You can fax us on 0171 628 0817

## BSE and cheese

I am a little concerned about how safe it is to eat cheeses such as Mozzarella and Cheddar, for instance, as I am aware that they contain rennet which is made from calves' stomachs.  
Ms Stone, London W7

*MAFF tells us that cheese is safe because tests on laboratory animals have failed to show any infectivity in cheese (or milk) compared with a high infectivity from brain material. MAFF also believes that calves' brains are safe, and they are still permitted for use in human food!*

## Missing sugar

This Yorkie bar says *Ingredients: milk chocolate, peanuts*. It also says *Milk chocolate contains cocoa solids 22%, milk solids 20%, vegetable fat, emulsifiers and flavouring*. Don't products like these contain sugar?  
Concerned, Notting Hill Gate



*Yes, of course they do — chocolate is typically 55% sugar. Nestle is using the word 'contains' to mean 'includes amongst other things'. In fact the only thing they left out of the list, we suspect, is the sugar. We think words like 'contains' and 'includes' are weasle words deliberately used to mislead consumers.*

## Roundup

Three years ago I believe I was made ill after a local farmer sprayed his field with the herbicide Roundup. What residues of the chemical are likely to remain on food like the new soy beans if they, too, are now being sprayed?  
P Campbell, Gillingham

*Monsanto will tell you that Roundup is safer than Vitamin A — but we have our doubts.*

## Sunflower flavour

A reader asks if Tesco can call its spread 'Sunflower' with a picture of a sunflower, even though the sunflower oil in the product is sixth on the list of ingredients (after buttermilk, dried whey, water, maltodextrin and Simplesse, and followed by vegetable fibre, gelatine,

and nine additives), especially as the sunflower oil consists of less than 5% of the product.

The Food Labelling Regs aren't too clear on this, but the answer is probably yes, provided Tesco can demonstrate that the flavour of the product 'is derived wholly or mainly from the food named or depicted' on the label. If the product is sunflower-flavoured then they can. So, please, dear reader, tell us what it tasted like.

Simplesse, incidentally, is a whey-based fat-substitute designed to help give the texture and taste of fat without the calories. Like Nutrasweet, genetic soya and milk-boosting BST, it has been produced for our enjoyment by the folk at Monsanto.



## McCain's gambling chips

The National Lottery, not content with being the biggest private enterprise to have massive BBC coverage every week, is now extending its commercial interests to include a promotional deal with McCain's, the world's largest potato product manufacturers.

McCain's will spend £5m promoting the lottery on their packs of frozen chips, including free lottery ticket vouchers and promises of charitable donations every time the



lottery draws a No 1 ball, McCain's sold £120m-worth of chips in the UK in 1996.

## FAO tries MAFF ploys

Just as our own dear Min of Ag has long attempted to be the office responsible for healthy eating, nutrition issues and advice to consumers — despite resistance from the Department of Health — so too does the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) see a role for itself as health advisor to the world.

The FAO has, like MAFF, strong links with food corporations, and their ability to give impartial advice to consumers has been questioned. But that never stopped MAFF and nor, it seems, will it stop FAO. Their glossy magazine, *Food, Nutrition and Agriculture*, features their other inroads into health issues: *Milk and Milk Products in Human Nutrition*, *Nutrition Education for the Public*, and most recently of all their boldest venture in advice-giving, *Get the Best from Your Food*.

This latter document is based on FAO's belief that previous messages were too negative and 'based on unproved premises... Even though today's "bad food" may become tomorrow's "acceptable" or "good food", in the meantime damage is done to farmer's incomes, to the food market, and ultimately the

reputation of nutritionists as being unscientific and indecisive.'

Not just poor English, but blatant food industry nonsense. *Get the Best from Your Food* goes on to repeat the usual industry chestnuts: 'All foods can be enjoyed as part of a nutritious diet', 'Food is neither good nor bad of itself... Enjoy a variety of foods'.

The glossy brochure also avoids criticising sugar: it states that carbohydrate is necessary as a source of energy, and that foods 'rich in carbohydrate include rice, maize... as well as many fruits and vegetables, and sugars', which makes sugar sound good. Dental health problems are referred to thus: 'bacteria in the mouth live on carbohydrate foods... a way to reduce the risk of decay is to avoid nibbling carbohydrate foods' which grossly conflates the sugar-carbohydrate issue.



FAO — speaking for industry on nutrition matters?

## Riches to the rich

Chief executives in food and drink companies awarded themselves an average 11.8% pay rise during 1996, compared with an average 7.7% for chief executives in general.

- Andrew Thomas is Chairman of Somerfields earning £100,000 a year for working one day per week.
- Paul Walsh of Grand Metropolitan is collecting £600,000 a year, plus expected bonuses of £2.4m
- Archie Norman, ASDA chief executive, collected £3.69m in pay and options last year, but is now stepping down to stand as a Tory MP

- Alistaire Grant, Safeways chairman, earned £639,000 last year, plus some £163,000 in incentives, plus a possible £1m in shares.
- Lord Blyth, chair of Boots, enjoyed a 31% pay rise, giving him £1.18m
- David Sainsbury took a drop in pay because of poor company performance, giving him £359,000

Meanwhile we are pleased to note that the GMB trade union is offering students who take jobs at McDonald's (where pay rates are under £4 per hour) special union membership for just 10p.

- Contact GMB's Steve Pyle on 0181-947 3131.

## Toothless grin

The Food Advisory Committee must be the most complacent in history. Try this: '...the Committee notes that infant formula manufacturers had initiated work to define better the levels of phytoestrogens in their products...' Yes. And? Nothing. Except that the manufacturers will '...investigate the possibility of reducing these levels...' No

sanctions. No call for further information. No report back required.

It's about as far as they could get from the world of the 1970s, when committees would pass resolutions such as that from Wincanton and District Trades Council demanding that the United States unilaterally disarm itself of all nuclear weapons 'or face the consequences'

## Sunday opening

The Salvation Army has arranged to use part of a Tesco store on Sundays for running Sunday Schools, starting with trials in the Kent area.