

## April 2004

### **Food labels to display allergy ingredients**

**Date:** Thu, 01 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A decision to include potential allergy inducing ingredients in food labelling rules has been granted approval by the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA).

A list of ingredients would be included in new EU rulings and the EFSA has argued that it should be updated and reviewed regularly in line with new food technology innovations.

Ingredients will now have to be included in lists on packaging even if they are found in compound ingredients, according to just-food.

In addition minimum levels of exposure have been called for to form concrete conclusions about the risk of allergy symptoms.

Among the problem areas are cereals containing gluten, eggs, peanuts, fish, celery, mustard and crustaceans.

The EFSA claimed the decision to include such labelling is acceptable considering the number of allergic reactions experienced by people consuming such food products.

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### **Ann Summers plans to market ice cream**

**Date:** Thu, 01 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Controversial lingerie store Ann Summers has confirmed detail of new plans to launch an ice cream range.

The UK high street retailer is preparing to launch a host of flavours including chocolate, banana, cherry and coffee.

According to the company it is releasing the food products to increase customers' libidos, as the new ice cream will contain a truffle extract ingredient known to affect human hormones.

With 112 stores across the UK, Ann Summers already sells other food products including novelty chocolates.

Among the new products on offer will be Chocolate Banana, Come Back For Coffee<sup>2</sup> and Forbidden Fruit.

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### **Tesco plans to purchase local strawberries**

**Date:** Thu, 01 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Leading UK supermarket chain Tesco is planning to buy the majority of its fresh strawberries from local producers in Kent, rather than varieties imported from abroad.

S&A Produce, from which Tesco intends to obtain its strawberries, is one of the largest indoor growers in the country and its plants are currently ready for picking, packaging, distribution and sale.

According to the BBC, Tesco has confirmed plans to buy an extra 10 million homegrown punnits of strawberries this year.

Tesco spokesman Tony Kerrigan has described the quality of local strawberries as "outstanding", and the company asserts that they taste better than imported produce.

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### **Government scheme aims for healthier school meals**

**Date:** Thu, 01 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new pilot scheme to be introduced by the Government is aiming to make school meals healthier.

More than 100 schools are expected to take part in the scheme, which is part of the Department of Education's Investing in Health campaign.

Under the scheme, which was announced today by Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education Gerry McGinn, pupils will have daily access to a meal packed with nutrition.

The project, which will involve additional training for staff to meet targets tailored for each individual school, follows the "Catering for Healthier Lifestyles" campaign, which first suggested the introduction of mandatory nutritional standards in schools.

Speaking at the announcement of the pilot scheme, Mr McGinn said: "This pilot scheme does not ban any particular foods and recognises that there are no healthy or unhealthy foods, only unhealthy diets.

"I want to see children enjoy their lunches and to ensure that there are more healthy options available."

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### **Nestle and Kellogg the worst offenders for kids cereal**

**Date:** Thu, 01 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Nestle and Kellogg sell the 'worst' cereals for children, due to their high levels of salt, sugar

and fat, according to the Consumers' Association of the UK.

“Manufacturers are lacing their cereals with such high levels of sugar and salt that it is no wonder that we have a public health crisis on our hands,” said campaign director Nick Stace, during a press conference at the group's office in London.

The association has tested 100 breakfast cereals from the five biggest brands; Nestle's partnership with General Mills Inc. to market cereals under the Nestle brand, Kellogg, PepsiCo Inc.'s Quaker Oats, Weetabix and Jordans.

The results revealed that, among cereals marketed at children, the 15 “worst offenders” for sodium, salt, fat and sugar were all either Nestle or Kellogg brands, and that five of the brands contained 40 percent sugar or more.

Prime Minister Tony Blair's government is currently attempting to encourage people to eat healthier foods following Chief Medical Officer Liam Donaldson's description of rising levels of obesity as a “health timebomb.”

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### **Uniq completes poultry business sale**

**Date:** Thu, 01 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Convenience food group Uniq has confirmed that it has now completed the sale of its UK poultry business to Sovereign Food Group, a subsidiary of Grampian Country Food Group.

The deal is believed to have been concluded for a consideration of £11.84 million in cash.

Uniq had previously announced in mid February that it planned to sell the business, based at Rotherham and Driffield.

Uniq noted that the sale proceeds will be used to reduce borrowings of the Uniq group.

The company also added that the profits attributable to the poultry business in the year ended March 31st 2003 were £1 million after allocation of divisional and central costs of £4 million, but that the business had since become loss making.

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### **Marks & Spencer confirms job cut plans**

**Date:** Fri, 02 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

High street food retail giant Marks & Spencer has confirmed details of plans to cut around 1,000 jobs.

The cut backs arrive following poor sales for the clothing side of the business.

It is hoped that the loss of 500 jobs initially will save around £25m. A further 500 jobs will

be lost over the coming years as a result of improved technology and outsourcing.

Roger Holmes, Chief Executive, Marks & Spencer, said: "This is an integral part of our plan to kick-start the next stage in the transformation of the business. It is also an important step in creating a more efficient organisation and serving our customers better.

He added that: "We recognise this will be a challenging time for our people and we will do our best to support them through this period."

The job cuts will be made in the head office and back office divisions of the retailer, with the remaining 58,000 store employers being unaffected.

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### **New EU alcohol rules under consideration**

**Date:** Fri, 02 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The European Commission has proposed a series of new changes which will enable EU citizens to shop for alcohol in other member states without the need to carry it themselves.

Under current legislation EU citizens are able to personally transport unlimited quantities of alcohol across national borders, provided that the alcohol in question is intended for personal consumption.

This state of affairs is blamed for having boosted the popularity of so-called "booze cruises", where citizens from high-tax countries such as the United Kingdom, travel to low-tax countries such as France in order to stock up on alcohol and avoid high alcohol duties.

Under new proposals, drinkers would be permitted to import alcohol via a third party.

"People in high tax countries will be able to order alcoholic products in low-tax countries and not have to pay any additional tax, besides the tax in the country of origin, so long as they organise the transport of the goods themselves, as opposed to the retailer organising the transport," said Commission spokesman Jonathon Todd.

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### **Greencore bows out of UK bread market**

**Date:** Fri, 02 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The world's largest manufacturer of ready-made sandwiches, Greencore, has today announced that it has disposed of its UK bread activities, Rathbones Bakeries, to Finedon Mill in a deal reported to be worth €30 million.

Greencore now plans to use the proceeds to reduce its debt and for further investment in its growing convenience food categories.

"The disposal of Rathbones completes the exit from the bread market in the UK, a positive

development for the group both commercially and financially," said chief executive David Dilger.

"This further sharpens the focus of resources on our convenience food categories which have strong growth prospects and leading market positions," he added.

Greencore is expected to pay €18.5 million on completion and a deferred consideration of €11.5 million.

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### **Illegal meat seizure confirmed at Heathrow**

**Date:** Fri, 02 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Over 100 kilos of meat and dairy products are confirmed to have been seized by a man at Heathrow Airport.

HM Customs and Excise were surprised to discover a passenger from New York to be holding 109 kilos of poultry and dairy products.

"Customs' determination to crack down on the smuggling of illegal meat and foodstuffs into the UK is clearly demonstrated by our continuing commitment to this area of work," said Bob Gaiger, a spokesman for Customs Heathrow.

Hidden in Allen Blumenberg's baggage was a collection of raw chicken, turkey meat and dairy products such as cheese.

The illegal importation of meat into the UK is a growing concern for customs officers.

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### **Child food labelling violations revealed by regional survey**

**Date:** Fri, 02 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new Trading Standards survey has uncovered evidence of more child food products that appear to be healthier than they actually are.

An examination of 203 food items across the East Midlands has revealed that one in four food labels on children's food are potentially misleading.

The main problem identified by the survey is with regard to the nutritional labelling on food products that market themselves with cartoon characters and novelty shapes.

In addition 'controlled' products that are meant to limit salt, sugar or fat levels were actually found to contain more than a regular ready meal and too many chemical colours and additives were included in foods.

Peter Heafield, County Trading Standards Officer for Lincolnshire said: "Of particular

concern is that manufacturers are beginning to use claims like 'controlled' sugar, fat or salt for these products, even though they fail to meet national guidelines for low or reduced levels of these ingredients. This misleads parents into thinking that these products are in some way healthier than others."

Lincolnshire Trading Standards said it would be reporting its findings to the FSA and expressed its dismay that recent government appeals for more healthy child products have been ignored. It claimed it would be taking legal action against the companies misleading parents about such products.

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### **Somerfield plotting UK expansion**

**Date:** Fri, 02 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Supermarket chain Somerfield has confirmed details of plans for a major UK expansion into the convenience store sector.

According to reports from Retail Week, the retailer intends to operate 600 convenience stores by 2008, focusing on the development of a franchise business and acquisitions as well as new store openings.

Emphasis has been placed on the conversion of a number of existing stores to Somerfield's Essentials format. Somewhere near 150 stores will be converted including 36 recently acquired Abernethy outlets.

"The revolution has begun and we believe that the format is industry-leading," said Steve Tremlett, Somerfield's head of convenience formats.

"The proposition is different to Tesco Express - that is more of a scaled-down supermarket. We are focusing more on food to go, food for now and food for later."

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### **Food Commission welcomes new BBC food licensing policy**

**Date:** Mon, 05 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Independent food watchdog the Food Commission has welcomed BBC Worldwide's new food licensing policy.

The company has announced that it will introduce nutrition standards when licensing Tweenies, Fimbles, Bill & Ben and Teletubbies characters to food manufacturers.

Largely funded by British taxpayers, the BBC licenses its children's TV cartoon characters around the world for products ranging from books and videos to food.

Last summer, the Food Commission and Parents Jury criticised the foods being promoted with BBC children's characters after a series of tests.

"For over two years we have urged the BBC to take children's health seriously when allowing their popular characters to be used to sell sweets, snacks, puddings and processed meals to children," said Food Commission director Tim Lobstein.

He added: "We hope to see other character licensing agencies follow the BBC's lead voluntarily, or they may find themselves forced to change by regulation."

In 2003, the BBC announced a halt to joint promotions with fast food companies.  
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### **Worms could help treat bowel disease**

**Date:** Mon, 05 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

US scientists have suggested a diet of worms could help relieve serious bowel diseases.

They claim that by consuming a rather distasteful looking drink, containing thousands of pig whipworm eggs, people will be able to relieve pain and bleeding in the stomach.

Live worms are known to help treat diseases like colitis and Crohn's disease, and scientists believe the new drink could also prove an effective treatment.

Given the nature of the treatment perhaps the greatest challenge facing the scientists behind this project is getting people to consume the formula in the first place!

For those who haven't been put off the idea, according to a magazine, the drink could be available for the European market as soon as in May.

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### **Fast food is the last food for EU**

**Date:** Mon, 05 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

In a major study of food trends, the European Commission has found that consumers in the UK, Denmark, and Norway are most sceptical about meat products, fast-food outlets and food processors.

The results of the review, 'Trust in Food in Europe, A Comparative Analysis', reveal Europeans' trust in food is highest for fruits and vegetables, and lowest for "junk food".

Commenting on the findings of the research, European Research Commissioner, Philippe Busquin stated: "Today, consumers expect healthy and safe food and increasingly demand to know where their food comes from."

He added: "That is why we are focusing on a new "fork to farm" approach in the EU's Research Programmes, focusing on consumers' interests and points of view on food."

The research is based on a total of 8870 interviews, including about 1000 respondents from the smaller European countries and about 2000 from the larger ones.

In addition to surveys, institutional studies were also carried out in the six countries and at EU level.

The initiative is part of a wider EU research programme, EU trust in food project (2002-2004), exploring consumer perception and behaviour, socio-economic and demographic factors, and the acceptability of typical food products.

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### **Coca-Cola made my hair fall out**

**Date:** Mon, 05 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Multinational drinks giant Coca-Cola has come under fire from a Japanese man who claims the drink made his hair fall out.

Japanese Masaharu Takasu has filed court proceedings against an Indonesian subsidiary of soft-drink giant Coca-Cola, a piece of mosquito coil contained in the drink led to his subsequent hair loss.

Mr Takasu is suing PT Coca-Cola Distribution Indonesia, PT Coca-Cola Bottling Indonesia, the government's Food and Drug Monitoring Agency and the vendor who sold him the Coke, his lawyer said.

The incident occurred on October 19 when Mr Takasu bought a small bottle of Coke in Bintaro.

After drinking nearly half of the contents, Mr Takasu soon felt a burning sensation in his throat and chest, became nauseous and developed a headache, his lawyer said.

Coca Cola agreed to pay expenses for the hospital treatment Mr Takasu had to undergo and offered him two dozen Cokes in compensation.

But Mr Takasu wants assurances that Coke is safe to drink and is demanding an undisclosed sum in compensation.

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### **Government told to follow BBC's example**

**Date:** Mon, 05 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A children's food campaigner has commended the BBC's new food licensing policy - which includes a pledge to halt the promotion of unhealthy snacks - and has urged the government to follow suit.

The BBC's strategy was revealed today by BBC Worldwide where it claimed it would no

longer promote 'treat' foods to children, stop any joint fast food promotional activities and call for simpler food product labelling.

Debra Shipley, a member of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and Labour MP for Stourbridge stated: "I welcome the BBC's decision to address the concerns of parents and health bodies about food marketing to children.

"Children are consuming far too much high salt, high sugar and high fat food and drink. This is partly due to the daily bombardment of images promoting these types of products on TV."

Ms Shipley argued with the current obesity situation it was "simply unacceptable for broadcasters to help market these kinds of products to children".

According to the MP, the government now needs to enforce new regulations to make TV stations and advertisers "stop promoting foods high in salt, sugar and fat".

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### **RSPCA wants breeding regulations to curb health problems**

**Date:** Mon, 05 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Animal breeding for food production could face new stringent regulations if proposals by the RSPCA come into effect.

Concerns have been raised by the society over the effect breeding has on animals such as dairy cows and broiler chickens with genetic weaknesses like heart problems.

Dr Julia Wrathall, head of farm animals at the RSPCA, told the BBC: "What we believe on the basis of well-documented scientific and practical evidence is that there are a number of health and welfare problems currently suffered, particularly by some species of farm animals, as a direct result of the narrow focus of breeding programmes on increased rate of efficiency and production."

Dr Wrathall referred to the growing number of health problems in animals that are increasingly encouraged to produce more and more.

For instance some dairy cows have to produce so much milk that they do so even when lacking energy and at a rate so high it could be potentially damaging to their health.

The RSPCA claimed the current situation could be the "biggest single threat to farm animal welfare in the future" and argued such rulings would not have a significant impact on EU companies.

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### **Obesity cancer threat "as bad as smoking"**

**Date:** Mon, 05 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

## **Analysis**

Cancer Research UK has described the soaring obesity rates in the UK as a "timebomb" following new research indicating that being overweight leads to as many cancers as smoking.

Findings from an NOP poll indicated that only three per cent of Brits are aware that obesity could increase cancer development.

Professor Jane Wardle, director of Cancer Research UK's Health Behaviour Unit, told This is London: "Obesity is probably as big a risk as smoking when it comes to cancer and obesity rates are climbing... It means we have a timebomb to come."

The main types of cancer associated with obesity are breast, womb, bowel, kidney and oesophagus.

Rather than being concerned over health risks people are more concerned over how they look and view excess weight as 'harmless extra padding'.

The warning follows recent government proposals to introduce a 'fat tax' on fizzy drinks and junk food.

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## **European Parliament delays labelling laws**

**Date:** Tue, 06 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Members of the European Parliament have delayed inflexible food labelling proposals until a new Parliament is in place.

The Environment Committee decided to delay the First Reading on Nutrition and Health Claims by 17 votes to seven.

If approved, the new legislation would have reduced the retailers' ability to offer customers healthier eating options.

The entire decision-making process will be delayed by up to one year as a result of the vote.

This follows a report from the Legal Affairs Committee criticising the anti-choice and bureaucratic nature of the proposed legislation.

Richard Ali, Director of Food Policy at the British Retail Consortium, said: "We can only hope that the extra time will be used to rethink, redraft and produce proposals which actually deliver something useful for customers instead of stifling choice and innovation."

"MEPs should be applauded for showing the common sense to realise that outlawing healthier option labelling would have removed the signposts our customers want to see on their food," added Mr Ali.

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### **Northerners worst eaters in Britain**

**Date:** Tue, 06 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Consumers in the North have been identified as the most unhealthy eaters in the UK, leading to a number of experts and politicians in the region calling for more investment in health schemes.

The main concerns identified were heart disease and diabetes which can both be caused by obesity and poor diet.

Professor Chris Drinkwater, of the University of Northumbria is now heading up a Government task force to improve public health, and told The Journal: "Children today compared to children 20 years ago take less exercise, eat more fast food and are increasingly likely to have weight problems.

"If we don't act now more people will suffer heart disease, more people will suffer diabetes and obesity."

Key ways to address the apparent widening health gap between North and South include more government funding into educating people to eat more healthily and the creation of improved sports and exercise facilities.

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### **Increased protein may improve bone health**

**Date:** Tue, 06 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Diets which promote high protein and low carbohydrate eating may make bones stronger, according to a new study published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism.

Whilst eating plans such as the Atkins diet have been heavily criticised in the past, it looks like they could have one benefit as the high levels of protein consumed decrease bone resorption.

It had previously been thought that increasing protein intake could lead to calcium losses but the study at Tufts University in the US has shown that bones can benefit from such eating habits.

Dr Dawson-Hughes, who led the research said: "In contrast to the widely held belief that increased protein intake results in calcium wasting, meat supplements, when exchanged isocalorically for carbohydrates, may have a favourable impact on the skeleton in healthy older men and women."

However she also warned that the study did not support the high protein, low carbohydrate approach to weight loss.

She added: "There are many nutrients that contribute to healthy bones and a balanced diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and protein is one of the best ways to ensure healthy bones throughout a lifetime."

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### **Teletubbies censored in fight against obesity**

**Date:** Tue, 06 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The BBC has yielded to pressure from nutritional organisations and banned two of its most popular childrens' characters from promoting unhealthy food, it has announced.

Under the new guidelines, drawn up by the Food Standards Agency, Tweenies and Teletubby chocolate bars, marshmallows and jellies will disappear completely and the levels of salt and sugar in foods such as fromage frais, pizza and pasta will be reduced.

The move by the corporation follows growing concerns over child obesity and a seven-month review by its commercial division. There has also been intense pressure from food campaigners opposed to the use of pre-school television characters to sell foods high in salt, sugar and fat.

BBC Worldwide, which licenses top brands such as the Teletubbies, Tweenies and Fimbles on nearly 100 products, will also stop licensing chocolate and confectionery items.

The Fimbles, Bill and Ben and Andy Pandy will also be covered by the new rules. However other characters, such as Bob the Builder, Thomas the Tank Engine and Postman Pat are not owned by the BBC.

"We are conscious of the small but high-profile part we play through our licensing of children's TV characters to food manufacturers," Rupert Gavin, the chief executive of BBC Worldwide, said.

"This has been an extensive review of our food products and the new criteria will be indicative of how seriously we take our responsibility towards children's nutrition."

The review also investigated the clarity of labelling on products featuring BBC characters, as well as use of additives, preservatives, flavourings, colourings and sweeteners.

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### **Task Force tackle food labelling regulations**

**Date:** Tue, 06 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Better Regulation Task Force has begun scrutinising proposed changes in food labelling put forward as part of a new review of EU ruling simplification.

Under the investigation the Task Force will look at how food labelling laws can be made unambiguous and consistent, with no overlaps between other food directives.

David Arculus, chairman of the Task Force said: "The study will concentrate on two very important areas for EU businesses and citizens, data protection and food labelling.

"Our consultations have shown that these are areas where stakeholders believe the European legislation could and should be simplified - and that this would make for better regulation for everyone."

Mr Arculus added: "We have already worked on the UK end of EU regulation, and have made recommendations on how it could be improved. Now we are going to look at the European end of the process."

Food labelling was identified as a key issue following a consultation exercise last year when it was one of the most frequently mentioned topics.

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### **British food consumers most trusting in Europe**

**Date:** Wed, 07 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

According to a survey carried out by the University of Oslo, British food consumers are confident that high levels of food standards are being maintained.

The survey showed that consumers in countries such as Italy and Portugal were much more sceptical about the level of quality being upheld.

The study found that the high level of British trust was probably to do with the fact that consumers felt that even if food standards fall someone in authority will take responsibility.

The high levels of trust in food found in Britain should be understood as a positive response to the measures taken in the wake of the BSE epidemic and other food scares.

Speaking on BBC Radio Four's 'Farming Today', Unni Kjarnes of the University of Oslo said: "It could be that people have seen that something has happened and someone has taken responsibility. The Food Standards Agency and the British retailers have taken a very clear stand and there has been some significant changes in that respect."

Overall the most trusting consumers were the British, followed by the Danes and the Norwegians.

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### **Misleading sell-by dates**

**Date:** Wed, 07 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Research on olives has found that products with a stated shelf-life of two-three years can be 'unacceptable' long before their sell-by date.

A study, published in the Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture, examined the increasing trend towards using polyethylene pouches which are vacuum-packed, filled with brine or packed in 'modified atmospheres'.

The results showed that only the vacuum pouches producing a shelf-life of nearly 2 years, while those packed in ordinary air only had a true shelf-life of 9 months.

Dr Panagou, who led the research, said: "The shelf-life of these products is not clearly defined, although the majority of Greek industries state a shelf-life of two to three years on the labels. However, this period is quite arbitrary and is not supported by relevant studies."

No harmful bacteria was found in any of the olives after six months storage at room temperature, but the quality of taste and appearance was found to be 'unacceptable' in the air-packed olives.

It is the manufacturer's responsibility to determine the shelf-life of a product and whilst a 'best before' date is a legal requirement, it is up to individual producers if they wish to add a 'sell-by' date.

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### **EC warns Germany over Parmigiano row**

**Date:** Wed, 07 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The European Commission has sent a final written warning to the German Government over failure to abide by the EU's legislation regarding the name "Parmigiano Reggiano".

European "Protected Designation of Origin" law protects food names related to geographical areas - like Champagne or Rocquefort - against piracy.

But eight years after the law was introduced, cheeses not made under the "Parmigiano Reggiano" specification continue to be sold in German territory under the name "Parmesan".

The EC argues that "Parmesan" is merely a French translation of the original Italian name, and as such represents a breach of the PDO.

"Parmigiano Reggiano" has been registered as a protected name since 1996 and is reserved to producers within a delimited geographical area in Italy who make the cheese in line with a binding specification.

The EU warned Berlin in October last year, but no attempt to comply was made by Germany.

Now Brussels has taken the next legal step, putting pressure on Berlin to bring its cheese producers into line within two months.

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## **Delay on EU regulations decision welcomed by FPB**

**Date:** Wed, 07 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

The postponement of a decision on the introduction of controversial EC regulations has been welcomed by the Forum of Private Business (FPB).

The decision on the regulations, which concern the prohibition of a range of health and nutrition claims connected with foodstuffs, will now be taken during the next legislative period.

Bob Salmon, FPB's food adviser, heralded the move as a significant first step to limiting the "negative impact of proposals that have been drawn up without adequate consultation".

The Knutsford-based FPB has been campaigning against the potentially ruinous effect of the proposed regulations on small businesses. Other organisations, companies and individuals across the UK and EU member states have raised concern about strict regulation of health and nutrition claims.

FPB predicted that as many as 2000 small businesses may have been forced to close as a direct result of the EU's plans.

Mr Salmon said: ""The postponement gives businesses in the UK and throughout the European Community the opportunity to seize the initiative and recommend regulation that will achieve its objectives without adversely affecting small businesses."

Ludger Fischer of UEAPME revealed that the official reason for the postponement was the number of amendments tabled to the original legislation.

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## **UK pub grub given thumbs up by TV chef**

**Date:** Wed, 07 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

A top TV chef has praised UK pubs for their gastronomic efforts, which he hails as the "backbone of the UK".

Phil Vickery, a regular on the 'Ready Steady Cook programme', has commended pub food for its considerable improvements in quality, affordability and accessibility, and claims pubs are now leading the trend in the food industry.

In addition he urged pub chefs to respond to current consumer demands for authentic regional foods as diners become more aware of ingredients.

Mr Vickery, who is a frequent advocate of British food, told The Publican: "It's really important to understand the nutritional aspects of what you're cooking.

"As chefs we have a responsibility to understand the salt levels, the fats, where the

ingredients were sourced and so on."

The chef was speaking at the second Greene King Chef Academy where chefs are brought together to learn new skills and mix with top names in the food industry.

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### **Sheep disease not a threat to UK lamb, say experts**

**Date:** Thu, 08 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has stressed that recent cases of 'scrapie', the sheep brain disease, are not a considerable threat to UK lamb,

The move follows an announcement that the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) was investigating a previously unknown case.

A spokesperson for the FSA said there was no need for consumers to worry about the safety of UK lamb.

The Surrey-based VLA said the unknown strain was discovered in a dead four-year-old animal subject to a post-mortem examination in England.

No new advice is to be issued to farmers as a result of the discovery and the National Scrapie Plan is unaffected, a spokesman for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has announced.

Professor Howard Dalton, Defra chief scientific adviser, said: "The UK, and especially the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, have played an important part in improving the diagnostic methods available for identifying TSEs in sheep.

"As we continue to assess more samples with these improved methods it is likely that we will continue to find samples, such as this, which fall outside our current knowledge of the disease."

The fatal brain disease, scrapie, belongs to a group of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), which include BSE in cattle and CJD in human beings. There were 408 cases of scrapie confirmed in sheep in Great Britain during 2003.

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The move follows an announcement that the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) was investigating a previously unknown case.

A spokesperson for the FSA said there was no need for consumers to worry about the safety of UK lamb.

The Surrey-based VLA said the unknown strain was discovered in a dead four-year-old animal subject to a post-mortem examination in England.

No new advice is to be issued to farmers as a result of the discovery and the National Scrapie Plan is unaffected, a spokesman for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has announced.

Professor Howard Dalton, Defra chief scientific adviser, said: "The UK, and especially the Veterinary Laboratories Agency, have played an important part in improving the diagnostic methods available for identifying TSEs in sheep.

"As we continue to assess more samples with these improved methods it is likely that we will continue to find samples, such as this, which fall outside our current knowledge of the disease."

The fatal brain disease, scrapie, belongs to a group of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), which include BSE in cattle and CJD in human beings. There were 408 cases of scrapie confirmed in sheep in Great Britain during 2003.  
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### **Father sheds 16 stone after following home made diet**

**Date:** Thu, 08 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

An office worker from Manchester has shed 16 and a half stone after creating a personal diet-plan on his computer.

Richard Landon, 37, weighed a whopping 28st 3lb before starting his own brand diet. But his weight plummeted to just 12st 10lb after an 18 month diet, and doctors say he may have extended his life by as much as 25 years.

Mr Landon, from Saddleworth, created a formula for losing weight on his computer and monitored his calorie intake on a spreadsheet.

He was inspired to slim down after he was unable to take his two children on theme park rides and has now been named runner-up slimmer of the year by Slimming magazine.

Mr Landon said: "I was constantly breathless and struggled to walk.

"X-rays showed I had an enlarged heart caused by morbid obesity and my wife Lesley worried I wouldn't live much longer.

"The theme park gave me time to reflect on the memories my children would have of me. I told my wife in a year's time I was going to take the children on the rides myself."

The planning analyst cut down on pizzas, pasties, chips, apple turnovers, crisps and chocolate and stuck rigidly to a 2,500 calories-a-day low-fat diet. He also started walking for 40 minutes a day and added swimming as he got fitter.

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### **Top-up payments for dairy farmers agreed**

**Date:** Thu, 08 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Ministers have decided that dairy farmers will receive a top-up payment to help relieve the effects of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms.

The recent reforms to the CAP meant that cuts had to be made in the price support offered to dairy farms.

Larry Whitty, Food and Farming Minister, believes that the government have met the preferences of many farmers who felt the additional payment should be offered on the same basis as the dairy premium.

Mr Whitty also said: "We considered carefully the alternatives suggested, taking into account the government's wider objectives for farming, the decisions already made on implementing CAP reform, issues of equity and fairness, and our aim to simplify CAP payments."

The new payment is within EU rules that allow for a dairy premium to be paid to milk producers as well as allowing governments to use certain criteria to make any additional payments.

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### **Obese people to pay more for life insurance**

**Date:** Thu, 08 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Those who are overweight should pay higher life insurance premiums, according to reinsurer Swiss Re.

Factors such as family health history and smoking currently influence life insurance pricing.

However, Swiss Re predicts that insurers will start to penalise people with poor eating habits due to the possibility of them becoming obese and encountering health problems in later life.

Ronald Klein, head of pricing at Swiss Re's Life and Health business group remarked: "Looking ahead, the life insurance industry must tackle issues associated with increases in obesity by ensuring that the related risks are accurately assessed and rated, and that consumers are charged an appropriate premium to reflect the risk they present."

Excess body weight has been linked to heart conditions, high blood pressure, diabetes and

some forms of cancer.  
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### **Figures reveal half of food and drink ads aimed at youth**

**Date:** Thu, 08 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

New figures have revealed as much as half of food and drink TV advertising is used to target children, the Scotsman reports.

Analysis of Nielsen Media Research figures show that food and drink companies broadcast a substantial amount of their adverts during childrens' programmes.

Companies mentioned in the findings includes fast food giants McDonald's, Nestle, Kellog's, Britvic and Tango.

Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell responded by telling the BBC, which revealed the findings, that she would "ask Ofcom to look - in the context of their reassessment of the code - at the regulatory responsibilities that shape advertising on children's television".

Companies mentioned in the results all defended their behaviour, despite one brand - 'Haribo' - having advertised 56 per cent of its commercials during the childrens' TV slots.

The findings are likely to add further concern amid the current obesity problem among Britain's younger generation.

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### **All Budgens stores to be franchises**

**Date:** Thu, 08 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Irish retailer Musgrave is hoping to convert all its Budgens stores in the UK to a franchise-only ownership structure by 2007.

Musgrave plans to sell the 172 stores in its portfolio that are not already owned under franchise to independent retailers in a case-by-case basis and all stores will retain the Budgens name after sold.

Eoin McGettigan, executive chairman of Budgens UK, told the Daily Telegraph: "We believe the stores will perform even better for our customers and be more responsive to the communities they serve if owned and operated by independent franchise holders."

The Irish firm acquired Budgens in July 2002 for £231 million in order to gain knowledge of the British market.

The company is currently a leading contender in the auction for wholesale distributor Londis. Londis rejected a £40 million bid from Musgrave in December because it was revealed that four directors would have taken 51 per cent of the earnings.

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### **Professor urges government to highlight dairy-cancer link**

**Date:** Tue, 13 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A cancer charity this week made the dramatic step of urging the Government to put cancer health warnings on dairy products.

According to the Bristol Cancer Help Centre (BCHC) and scientist Professor Jane Plant, new findings show that chemicals and hormones in cows' milk contain IGF-1, an insulin growth factor which boosts the risk of cancer development, the Independent reports.

Professor Plant, who was diagnosed with breast cancer, claims that she and her husband realised the link when they were considering breast cancer figures for the UK and China. Just one in 10,000 suffer from breast cancer in China where less dairy produce is consumed, whilst in the UK the figure is one in 10.

However other organisations have argued that more nutritious additions should be considered along with foods to boost peoples' bodies as they go through tough treatments such as chemotherapy.

The BCHC recommends a soya-based diet, less meat, more fruit, grains and vegetables.

A book by Mrs. Plant, which discusses her findings, is due for publication next month.

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### **MP's to criticize GM approval at conference**

**Date:** Tue, 13 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A food safety conference will today air the views of the Green/EFA Group on the approval of GM sweetcorn.

Politicians are to speak at the conference at Dublin Castle today, arguing that MPs have been pressurised by the US American biotech lobby and are putting peoples' health at risk.

One politician, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, has condemned the European commissioner for health and consumer protection for failing to look out for the interests of Europe's citizens, claiming he has "blatantly ignored wide-spread public opinion and a body of scientific evidence and has at every opportunity endorsed GM food".

Patricia McKenna added: "Bertie Ahern could go down in history as the President of the Council that lifted the moratorium on new GM licenses in Europe.

"There are serious risks involved in introducing GMOs into the ecosystem and food chain.

"Since the scientific community has no clear data on the risks we should be cautious about

new GM licenses."

The Green/EFA party argue that the authorisation of GM maize has been based on bad science and there are still a number of safety concerns surrounding it.

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### **Further evidence B vitamin can stop depression**

**Date:** Tue, 13 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

More evidence has emerged to support experts' belief that the B vitamin folate can yield health benefits - including the prevention of depression.

Researchers funded by the US Agricultural Research Service found foods containing the vitamin B folate helped to quell depression at different stages, according to Food Navigator.

Folate is found in a range of foods including kidney beans, beef liver and green leafy vegetables, while in its man-made form of folic acid it can be found in breakfast cereals, flour and pasta.

Research involved 3,000 people aged 15 to 19 years of age being questioned and those with lower levels of folate were found to suffer greater levels of depression.

Previous findings have also shown that high blood levels and birth defects can be prevented by folate and folic acid.

However recent work by the FSA in the UK has found that folic acid can often hide B12 deficiency in older people.

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### **Folate fights the blues**

**Date:** Tue, 13 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Research funded by the Agricultural Research Service in the US suggests a connection between various stages of depression and low blood levels of the B vitamin folate.

Folate is a family of related substances naturally present in many foods, such as beef liver, green leafy vegetables and several types of beans.

The study revealed that people with major or mild forms of depression had lower levels of folate in their blood than those who had never been depressed.

Epidemiologists from Tufts University in Boston studied data based on a questionnaire answered by 3,000 individuals in Illinois aged 15 to 39 years.

The researchers observed that low folate rates are notoriously common in psychiatric patients and may hinder the success of antidepressant therapy.

The research found that men with the highest intake of folic acid, the folate's synthetic form, were almost 30 per cent less likely to develop an ischaemic stroke than men with the lowest folic acid consumption.

There are around 650,000 stroke deaths each year in Europe.

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### **EU continues to go organic**

**Date:** Tue, 13 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

According to a recent report, the EU has seen a boom in the organic food market with sales more than doubling since 1998.

The Germans are the top organic consumers, spending some £2.1 billion per year, with the British following close behind.

In the UK last year more than £1.12 billion was spent on organic food, the equivalent of £19 per person. Five years ago the sector was worth just £384 million.

However the study found that a third of shoppers were reluctant to buy organic because of the price. Organic food is around 25 per cent more expensive than intensively produced

food, and the price of organic meat is often even higher.

Michelle Strutton, a senior consumer analyst, said: "Either the price of organic foods needs to come down or people need to understand why it is worth paying more for organic foods. If this is not done, the price is going to become more of a barrier to market growth."

The research was carried out by Mintel and highlights the continuing demand for more 'natural' products.

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### **Chef tackles hospital food**

**Date:** Tue, 13 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Masterchef Lloyd Grossman has helped test out hospital food at a recent NHS tasting event.

As part of the Better Hospital Food programme Mr Grossman and the health minister Lord Warner sampled 24 meals which are currently served to hospital patients.

The range of meals included traditional dishes such as Lancashire hotpot and roast beef as well as slightly more ambitious foods like salmon and dill bake.

The chef's reactions were mixed, commenting that whilst some dishes were outstanding some meals "were not up to scratch" and that good hospital food is vital.

Mr Grossman told Ananova: "The hospital meal is hugely important because for a lot of patients the meal should be something they look forward to. Being in hospital, people get very bored, anxious and scared and the comfort zone should come at meal times."

The NHS spends £500 million each year on food and the aim of the Better Hospital Food Programme is to work together with the manufacturers to improve standards.

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### **Experts confirm chocolate health benefits**

**Date:** Wed, 14 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

New research suggests that dark chocolate may be better for you than previously thought, potentially prolonging life and warding off the effects of osteoporosis, among other positive effects.

Dr Wendy Doyle, a nutritional expert for the British Dietetic Association, maintains that high cocoa content in dark chocolate can have definite health benefits, and recommends that consumers opt for dark chocolate over its milkier alternative:

"I think chocolate can be eaten as part of a well balanced diet," she said according to icScotland. "Choose a chocolate that is high in cocoa because they have more of the health promoting agents than milk chocolate."

Despite this, Brigid McKeivith, Nutrition Scientist, at the British Nutrition Foundation suggests that even milk chocolate can be good for you if eaten in moderate quantities:

"Chocolate contains polyphenols which are antioxidants like the ones you find in fruit and vegetables and are good for the heart," she said adding: "Milk chocolate also boasts some calcium which is good for the bones and teeth whilst dark chocolate is high in iron."

A study carried out by Dundee University found dark chocolate to cut the risk of developing blood clots by 75 per cent. Dr Gwen Kennedy, research fellow in vascular diseases at the university, also said that eating a bar of dark chocolate on plane journeys could reduce the risk of developing deep vein thrombosis.

The UK is among the largest consumers of chocolate in the world, eating some 10kg worth per person each year.

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### **Europe moves towards ban on jelly confectionary**

**Date:** Wed, 14 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has introduced a temporary ban on all jelly mini-cups containing food additives which are derived from seaweed and other potentially harmful gums.

The jelly sweets are mostly produced in Asian countries and imported all over the EU, to be sold in Asian communities. However the sweets have been linked to a number of deaths caused by choking, especially in children.

David Byrne, health commissioner said: "Safety labelling on these products is not enough to protect children's health. Removing these products from shop shelves will provide the extra protection needed in all EU countries."

Last year the European Parliament cleared a permanent ban on the use of the food additive konjac in jelly confectionary.

Jelly mini cups have already been banned in France and it is likely that the Food Standard Agency will introduce the ban in the UK within days.

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### **EU sugar subsidies leave bitter taste**

**Date:** Wed, 14 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Oxfam announced today that British Sugar and Tate and Lyle are making millions from a skewed sugar regime that denies developing countries the chance to trade their way out of poverty.

According to a new report released by the charity today, "Dumping on the World", Tate and Lyle is eligible for a state subsidy of 158 million euros to help it unload excess sugar on world markets.

In addition, British Sugar is said to consistently enjoy a profit margin of over 20 per cent thanks to price fixing by the government and support from a system of taxes and quotas.

"The system rewards big companies and rich farmers with EU taxpayers' and consumers' money and exacerbates poverty in the developing world," head of Oxfam's "Make Trade Fair" campaign, Phil Bloomer commented.

"The madness is that we produce far more sugar than we can consume in Europe and at very high cost. Then we dump the rest on developing countries, adding insult to the injury of our closed market," he added.

Oxfam alleges that the EU is the world's biggest sugar subsidiser and dumps around five million tonnes of sugar on the world market every year.

The economic ramifications for developing countries are consequently huge. Brazil and Thailand are said by Oxfam to lose an estimated \$494 million and \$151 million respectively each year as a direct result of this policy.

Oxfam hope to use their research to influence change within the EU, and to ensure that the "rhetoric on reform" is met "with meaningful action to change the regime in a way that benefits developing country producers."

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### **Warning issued over possible drug residue in eggs**

**Date:** Wed, 14 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Concerns have been raised over the safety of eggs following an investigation by the Soil Association.

The organic food and farming charity has claimed that one in eight eggs could contain traces of a veterinary drug that could harm humans.

Richard Young, policy adviser to the Soil Association and co-author of the report, told Guardian Unlimited: "We believe that eggs contaminated at the high levels found in some samples last year pose real risks to some vulnerable consumers ... until this drug is banned, those most at risk should...consider buying organic eggs since these have to be the safest option."

According to the association the government should be warning people such as those with heart conditions, on diets with high egg intake such as the Atkins plan and with babies, to limit their consumption.

The FSA - the government agency responsible for food standards in the UK, has argued

there were no immediate health worries associated with the findings and is at present deciding whether to take further action against egg producers.

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### **Primark clothing proves a success for Associated British Foods**

**Date:** Wed, 14 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Associated British Foods (ABF) has announced a first half profit gain of 8.9 per cent.

The company, which is responsible for brands such as Twinings tea and Ryvita, said that its discount-clothing chain Primark had performed particularly well.

The clothing retailer's margins have improved, meaning that profit rose by 19 per cent over the last year. The gains have come from higher sales and an increased range of goods offered to customers.

It is likely that ABF will continue to open new Primark stores over the coming months, adding to the current 116 shops already operating in the UK and Ireland.

ABF acquired the discount chain Primark in order to continue the move away from its traditional base of sugar based produce which accounts for more than a third of its turnover.

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### **Allergies cost NHS £1bn**

**Date:** Wed, 14 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Allergies are now costing the NHS £1 billion a year and there is a serious shortage of skills available to cope with the problem.

Two new reports compiled by researchers at Edinburgh and Aberdeen universities and St George's Medical School in London revealed that one in five people in Britain now suffer from allergies.

Britain has one of the world's highest rates of diseases, with food allergies becoming a major problem.

Diseases such as asthma and eczema, which can be triggered by allergies, are now more common in the UK than anywhere else in Europe.

However, there is a shortage of allergy specialists, according to the studies, published in this month's edition of "Clinical and Experimental Allergy".

The levels of asthma, eczema and hay fever in Britain rose substantially during the second half of the last century.

Researchers are now calling for more specialists to tackle the crisis.

Professor Aziz Sheik, of Edinburgh University, who co-authored both studies, said: "Lack of training of GPs in meeting this role, difficulties in accessing allergy testing and the shortage of allergy specialists are all seen to be possible barriers to high-quality care and may explain why increasing numbers of patients are seeking care outside the NHS."

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### **Iceland stores' renovation to speed up**

**Date:** Thu, 15 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Big Food Group is speeding up the refurbishing of Iceland outlets to stand up against the intense competition in the retail sector.

So far, the company has renovated 142 Iceland stores but plans to double the pace to six stores a week.

Another 600 outlets await the overhaul to offer various levels of convenience-style foodstuffs.

Big Food announced the move after declaring that the performance of stores not yet renewed had dropped due to the food market becoming more price-sensitive after Morrisons' £3 billion takeover of Safeway.

Iceland chain's sales this year until April 2nd decreased by 0.2 per cent, even though the business recently recovered to finish the last financial year 0.7 per cent higher.

"Faced with an increasingly competitive and fast-consolidating UK food retailing market, we are confident that we have put in place the right development strategies," said Big Food chief executive Bill Grimsey.

He added: "With the acceleration of the Iceland refit programme next year and the maintenance of a tight control over margins and costs, we can compete in tomorrow's world."

Further information: <http://www.thebigfoodgroup.co.uk/>

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### **Poultry poison revolution**

**Date:** Thu, 15 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Scientists from the UK Institute of Food Research have discovered that certain probiotics - beneficial bacteria - can destroy harmful bacteria living in the gut of poultry.

Researchers monitored thousands of non-pathogenic bacteria from adult chicken guts to find types that might have probiotic qualities.

They discovered that *Lactobacillus johnsonii* removed the harmful bacterium *Clostridium perfringens*.

The finding could help remove the threat of bacterial food poisoning from poultry.

Targeted probiotics may be a viable alternative to the use of antibiotics in animal feed, which brings uncertain results.

Europe's poultry industry is under the spotlight after the UK's Soil Association claimed that one in eight eggs might contain residues of a veterinary drug that could be potentially harmful to humans.

The pressure group said that 12 per cent of egg samples tested by the British government's veterinary medicines directorate last year had residues, up from one per cent in 1999.

Consumers may be eating up to three million eggs a day containing residues.

Further information: <http://www.ifr.bbsrc.ac.uk/>  
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### **RFID looms large for food manufacturers**

**Date:** Thu, 15 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new study revealed that Radio-Frequency Identification is high on the agenda for European retailers, food manufacturers and logistic service providers.

Most of the European companies interviewed in the survey carried out by IT consultancy LogicaCMG, gave RFID top priority in terms of planned IT investment.

Half of the 50 companies interviewed in Europe have or are planning to set up RFID pilot projects throughout 2004.

The vast majority plan to start implementing the technology within the next three years.

RFID technology is based on a relatively simple concept and consists of two elements that communicate through radio transmission - a tag and a reader.

The readers are placed in various locations throughout the supply chain, allowing objects to be electronically identified and followed throughout the distribution chain.

"The research shows that we are on the threshold of a breakthrough of RFID technology in the European market," said LogicaCMG's director of sales and marketing, Paul Stam de Jonge.

A number of major retailers, such as Tesco in the UK and Metro in Germany are already using large-scale RFID programmes.

Further information: <http://www.logicacmg.com/>  
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### **Seedless lemons hit UK shelves**

**Date:** Thu, 15 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK supermarket chain Sainsbury's will start selling seedless lemons this week.

Producers claim this will be the first time in the world such variety reaches the shelves.

Called Seedless Eureka, the new kind of lemon was found accidentally by a grower in South Africa.

According to supplier Outspan, the farmer discovered a tree full of lemons with no pips among the others and cut some down.

After spending seven years developing the crop, the grower is now capable of exporting a limited amount of the lemons.

The Seedless Eureka lemons will be available at Sainsbury's for the next six weeks priced £1.79 for four.

"Most people can accept a pip or two in an orange, but no one likes a lemon seed in their desert, their gin and tonic, or on their fish," said Outspan's procurement director Martin Dunnett.

He added: "With fruit, it is hard to create new products as we can't just change the formula or put a new label on the tin. But with this lemon we've done it.

Further information: <http://www.j-sainsbury.co.uk>  
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### **3M releases new version of packaging tool**

**Date:** Thu, 15 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Global technology group 3M has launched a new version of its 3M Integrated Packaging Tool.

The software allows food manufacturers to combine electronic records and help them adhere to new legal requirements in Europe and America.

According to the firm, a packaging information management system should provide time-stamped audit trails, record retrieval, system security and electronic signatures.

Forthcoming EU legislation on traceability has increased the pressure on producers to be able to trace products right through the chain.

3M claims that the new version of its Packaging Tool is a significant upgrade to the company's web-based application, enabling it to meet current legislative requirements.

New additions to the software include field level controls, event-driven workflow, web-based drag and drop, additional standard reports, an enhanced user interface and the complete integration of 3M's patent-pending Smart Device Manager component.

"The big issues now are GM foods, obesity, food scares, and over the next few years we will see tighter control over processing and packaging," Matthew Holland, MES product manager for Siemens UK commented.

Further information: <http://www.3m.com/>  
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### **Packaging firm raises profile**

**Date:** Fri, 16 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Package producer Tetra Pak plans to launch a new marketing campaign to promote the benefit of milk stored in cartons.

Over the next three years the company expects to spend in the region of £12 million on similar consumer promotions.

The company produces 2.5 billion milk, juice and soup cartons every year and holds 80 per cent of the UK carton market.

Although Tetra Pak sells its products directly to retailers, wholesale and food service providers, it wants to raise consumer awareness about cartons through advertising campaigns.

"What we are trying to do is give consumers a view of the whole process right the way through the chain, from the shopping basket back to the tree in the forest, so that they can make an informed decision when they buy in the shop," commercial director Malcolm Waugh told the Daily Telegraph.

The firm's strategy means investing in following strict environmental standards, including reforestation and recycling.

Tetra Pak, whose British division is based in Wrexham and employs 320 staff, has declared recent sales figures have been stagnant after 10 years of growth.

Further information: [www.tetrapak.com](http://www.tetrapak.com)

### **Increasing food production costs could signal price rises**

**Date:** Fri, 16 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food prices are on the rise because of the increased competition between UK supermarket chains and rises in raw material prices.

These are affecting the profit margins of food processors, who in turn pass on the higher costs to costumers.

Raw materials comprise a major portion of food companies' operating costs, followed by packaging expenses.

Egg and milk prices have seen an increase of more than 10 per cent in six months due to higher animal feed costs, which resulted from a 50 per cent growth in wheat prices in 2003 and the highest corn prices in seven years.

Edible oils such as palm and soy are also at long-term highs caused by a vigorous demand from China and India.

Estimates by food analysts show that raw material expenditures have leaped by three per cent in a year.

Although it may not seem to be a major growth, it has been superior to the long-term price rise average of less than two per cent.

The UK-listed food sector underperformed the broader market, growing seven per cent versus a rise of 30 per cent for the FTSE all-share index in the same period.

Further information: [www.unilever.co.uk](http://www.unilever.co.uk)

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### **Tesco announces sweeping price cuts**

**Date:** Fri, 16 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Tesco has further fuelled the supermarket price war by announcing a £70 million package of cuts across its product ranges.

The UK's largest supermarket group unveiled price cuts on 450 products, starting from Monday. Prices will drop an average 11 per cent on each item, Tesco claims.

The latest cuts include a 43 per cent reduction in the price of salmon steaks, taking them down from £2.99 to £1.69, 11 per cent off Chicken Tikka Balti ready meals, dropping the price from £2.69 to £2.39, and Tesco whitening toothpaste, down from £1.99 to 86p.

The move follows a similar £70 million of price cuts implemented by the group in January, largely on healthcare and baby goods.

"A price war didn't begin in 2004 for Tesco, it's been a long running campaign for us and we're now well into our second billion in cuts," Tesco's marketing director, Tim Mason, revealed. "We set the pace, which is why other supermarkets are playing catch-up."

Competition in the UK's vast supermarkets sector has increased since the Morrisons' takeover of Safeway earlier this year. Morrisons marked the acquisition with wide-ranging reductions at Safeway stores. Last week, Asda, Britain's second-largest food retailer, unveiled a £65 million package of price cuts.

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### **Pizza innovation on way to UK**

**Date:** Fri, 16 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new innovatively designed pizza has been revealed this week set to make its mark in the UK.

The Konopizza has been created by inventor Rossano Boscolo and was unveiled at an exhibition in Milan.

The new cone-shaped design has seen the mozzarella and tomato specially developed so they do not release water as well as a special crunchy dough to ensure that consumers can eat their pizza without any mess.

Isabo Rinaldi, spokeswoman for the inventor's company, Boscolo Etoile told Guardian Unlimited: "A contract is being signed with a big British company to take the Konopizza to the UK. All that Mr Boscolo did was to take aspects of two quintessentially Italian food products, the pizza and the ice cream, and combine them."

Several different flavours of the cone-shaped pizza are available including Margherita and Capricciosa, at a cost of £1.20.

The UK outlet will feature a specially designed oven which cooks the pizzas in three minutes.

Further information: [www.konopizza.it](http://www.konopizza.it)

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### **Mini Coke targets female consumers**

**Date:** Fri, 16 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new version of the world's most popular soft drink is set to become a common feature of

the average handbag.

Coca Cola has announced the release of new handbag sized 'mini break' Diet Coke products in the UK, which will be primarily aimed at women.

A Coca-Cola Great Britain spokeswoman told the Scotsman: "It's going to fit in with today's hectic lifestyle, and is a quick refreshment for people to take out mid morning or mid afternoon.

"It's for people on the go and will fit into ladies' handbags. This is primarily aimed at women and will be promoted in the women's press."

The new range also includes Diet Coke with lemon and caffeine free coke, and will be available exclusively in Boots stores.

Further information: [www.coca-cola.co.uk](http://www.coca-cola.co.uk)  
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### **EU sugar regime under fire**

**Date:** Fri, 16 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

International agency Oxfam and British food manufacturers have criticised the EU sugar regime of subsidies and protectionism.

Current European legislation, in place since 1968, is based on flexible quotas and price intervention and has been boosting the profits of major sugar processors in the UK.

Associated British Foods - the parent company of British Sugar - saw a 10 per cent rise in profits to £224 million on the back of a five per cent rise in group sales to £2.3 billion.

British Sugar is the leading beet sugar processor in the UK and benefits from a key slice of the EU sugar quotas.

A recent Oxfam report reveals that EU taxpayers give €819 million (£547 million) in subsidies each year to six European sugar processing companies, including Tate and Lyle.

UK food manufacturers that together consume 70 per cent of all the sugar sold in Britain also want this situation to change.

"In the UK, prices for sugar average between five and 10 per cent higher than mainland Europe," a spokesperson for the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate, Confectionery Alliance told FoodNavigator.com.

The European Commission has a proposal to reform Europe's sugar sector by 2006.  
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### **Terry's to close English operation**

**Date:** Mon, 19 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Chocolate maker Terry's today announced plans to close its UK plant in York.

More than 300 jobs will be lost when the move is completed in the second half of 2005.

Kraft Foods International, Terry's parent company, is to transfer production from its English plant and warehouse to sites in Central and Western Europe.

The York factory produces chocolates for both the domestic and European markets, including Terry's Chocolate Orange and Terry's All Gold.

Production is expected to be moved to Kraft's facilities in Sweden, Belgium, Poland and Slovakia.

"It's a very difficult time," plant director John Pollock told the BBC. "The relationship between the company and the city of York stretches back many, many years."

Terry's connections with its home city were evident in the Terry's of York name printed on its products until 2000.

Since 2002, the company's chocolates have been sold under the simplified name Terry's, without reference to the city.

Further information: [www.kraft.com](http://www.kraft.com)

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### **Food groups raise concerns over product labelling**

**Date:** Mon, 19 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Misleading and uninformative labels have been target of criticism by major food groups in the UK.

Tags identifying tomatoes as "specially grown for taste" and milk cartons bearing captions such as "Allergy information: contains milk" are seen as useless for buyers.

The Food Standards Agency defends the consumers' right to be able to choose and compare products on grounds of health, taste and cost.

"Food labelling in this country has come a long way, but there is still work to be done to make sure that consumers are not misled and have all the information they need," head of policy for the food standards, diet and nutrition at the FSA in Scotland Pamela Reid told The Scotsman.

The Consumers Association (CA) went to the offensive, declaring that current food laws allow producers to deceive consumers.

It appealed to the Government to introduce clearer labelling to combat the rise in obesity and diet-related illnesses.

The way foods are marketed to children must also change, according to the CA.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **FSA funds infant diet research**

**Date:** Mon, 19 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Britain's Food Standards Agency will invest £340,000 in a new study to investigate the role played by diet in infants' early years.

Researchers at the University of Southampton have begun a four-year project to discover how children's development is influenced by what they eat in the first year of life.

The study will use data from the Southampton Women's Survey and is led by Dr Sian Robinson of the university's Medical Research Council Environmental Epidemiology Unit.

Information about 12,500 women's diet and lifestyle has been collected in the SWS since 1998, and by the end of 2003 almost 2,000 of them had had babies.

"We can now analyse what babies are eating in a very large population of children and look at how this affects growth and development," declared Dr Robinson.

Scientists believe the results of this research can help establish national dietary standards.

The study's discoveries could also create new opportunities for food and beverage producers aiming at babies.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **UK supermarkets criticised over organic imports**

**Date:** Mon, 19 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Soil Association has criticised the UK's top supermarkets for importing "substantial amounts" of organic produce.

A host of fresh meat and vegetables is being bought from abroad in a move that the

association claims is failing Britain's farmers.

The findings come from a new survey that showed only 19 per cent of organic onions at Asda come from the UK, whilst the Co-op, Sainsbury's and Safeway had 20 per cent, 23 per cent and 26 per cent accordingly.

Policy director at the Soil Association, Lord Melchett argued: "It is unacceptable for staple foods like cauliflowers and carrots to be imported when they are in season in the UK, and in plentiful supply.

"Buying British organic food supports British farmers, guarantees the highest standards of animal welfare and helps British wildlife thrive. It also cuts down unnecessary food miles, reducing emissions."

Figures were based on around 1,000 reports from supporters of the Soil Association who visited stores to check produce labels.

However the findings were criticised by the British Retail Consortium which argued it was "selective, unrepresentative and does a disservice to British organic farmers".

Further information: [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)  
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### **New technology to boost quality control for dairy and bakery companies**

**Date:** Mon, 19 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Dairy and bakery firms could benefit from huge savings thanks to electronic nose systems that detect off-odours and contaminants.

Although available for a number of years the e.nose technology has not been fully implemented by the food industry until now, according to Food Navigator.

Now a new EU-funded project has found added benefits of the technology after using e.nose which works with polymer sensor or metal oxide sensor arrays.

One of the products investigated in the study was Danish blue cheese, where the technology identified the key ripening stage of the food product "with the same precision as the sensorial analysis and GC-MS analysis".

UK researchers from Cranfield University used a number of different e-nose systems and are currently in the final phases of trialling the technology for cost benefits for the dairy and bakery sectors.

Findings showed that the systems were extremely effective in detecting contaminated products up to 48 hours before any signs of spoilage showed on products such as bread.

The computerised tabletop sensor units have also been used in studying cheese flavour, wine and coffee quality and 'fishy' seafood.

Further information: [www.iit.edu](http://www.iit.edu)  
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### **Healthy new face for Birds Eye**

**Date:** Mon, 19 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Captain Birds Eye, the commercial face of Britain's largest frozen food brand, will go through renovation to be more health conscious.

The makeover is part of a £20 million advertising campaign to increase sales and associate the brand with nutritious food.

A new logo will replace the 66-year-old one which currently identifies the brand to make Birds Eye more appealing for customers.

There will also be changes in the packaging to emphasise that the products will have less salt and fat and no artificial colourings or preservatives.

Consumer products giant Unilever, Birds Eye's parent company, had earlier announced that the division could be sold if its performance failed to improve.

"In the past, the Captain's message has been about getting across the idea of fun," Birds Eye's marketing director Jerry Wright told The Sunday Times.

"Now it will be much more about Birds Eye's high nutritional standards," he added.

Birds Eye's annual sales currently reach £500 million.

Further information: [www.birdseye.com](http://www.birdseye.com)  
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### **Experts research causes of over-eating**

**Date:** Tue, 20 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Researchers revealed this week that the desire for food activates brain circuits related to drug addiction.

Scientists at the US Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory said the longing for food was connected to metabolic activity in the brain region that controls pleasure in the study participants.

The mere display of food increases metabolic activity throughout the brain, which could help explain the global obesity epidemic.

Brookhaven scientists discovered in previous studies obese individuals, like drug addicts, had fewer receptors for dopamine, a neurotransmitter involved in pleasure and reward, than normal control subjects.

The findings of the new research corroborate the importance of advertising and the belief that food needs to look good to sell.

London-based Food Advertising Unit, however, said that overall budgets to advertising from food firms in Britain have been falling since 1984.

"These results could explain the deleterious effects of constant exposure to food stimuli, such as advertising, sweet machines, food channels, and food displays in shops," said lead researcher Gene-Jack Wang.

Further information: [www.bnl.gov](http://www.bnl.gov)  
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### **Uniq and Muller enter joint venture**

**Date:** Tue, 20 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Yoghurt producer Muller UK is taking over the marketing, sales and distribution of Cadbury chilled desserts from Uniq.

The four-year agreement states Muller will take on a new license from British confectionery group Cadbury.

According to Uniq, the transaction confirms the previously announced decision not to renew the company's dessert license from Cadbury.

Uniq's factory in Paignton, Devon will continue produce Cadbury desserts, but its distribution centre in Gloucester will no longer handle them.

The new arrangement will reduce the company's turnover by approximately £5 million per annum as responsibility for sales and distribution ceases.

Chief executive Bill Ronald told ShareCast: "I am delighted to have secured the long term solution for our excellent desserts facility with a partner who is extremely well placed to further grow this category."

No job losses are expected to result from the deal.

Further information: [www.muller.co.uk](http://www.muller.co.uk)

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### **UK low carb market on the grow**

**Date:** Tue, 20 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

An estimated five million consumers in Britain are currently on some type of low-carbohydrate diet.

Concerns over possible detrimental health effects of refined carbohydrates and the backing of celebrities such as Jennifer Aniston have fuelled these diets' popularity.

Marks & Spencer said last week that not providing enough variety of low carbohydrate foods was one of the reasons for this year's poor trading figures so far.

On the other hand, US low-carb food maker Carbolite sold in six weeks 10 million units of a new cereal bar released in January.

The growing market has inspired former chief executive of Orbital Software Kevin Dorren to set up Go Lower Foods with Hannah Sutter, a former partner at Orbital's law firm, McGrigors.

A breakfast snack bar will be the company's first product to go on sale in UK health food stores from May 1st.

"We are concentrating on the UK market, which we feel is underserved," Dorren told the Scotsman on Sunday. "We are the only UK low-carb brand at the moment, although I am sure there will be a few more in the future."

Further information: [www.twst.com](http://www.twst.com)

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### **Tesco announces strong profits**

**Date:** Tue, 20 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food retailer Tesco has revealed pre-tax profits of £1.6 billion today and has announced it will be creating 20,000 jobs as a result.

Sales in the company's core UK market increased by over 14 per cent in what Tesco said was one of the strongest years in the UK it had recently experienced.

Terry Leahy, Chief Executive claimed: "Today's figures demonstrate what a great British success Tesco is at home and abroad. The last year has been an exciting time for retail and a great year for Tesco. Our retail services are helping us to grow profits strongly by giving our customers choice and value."

Figures for the 53-week period to February 28 were at the top end of City expectations.

Analysts are now claiming the supermarket, which has 1,981 across the UK, will reach the £2 billion annual profit mark within two years time.

Over the next 12 months 10,000 staff are planned for hire in the UK as part of store rollout plans.

Further informaton: [www.tesco.co.uk](http://www.tesco.co.uk)  
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### **Food producers offered help over new labeling rules**

**Date:** Tue, 20 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food producers are being offered help from a new online service on new EU meat labeling rules.

The new QuidCalc system helps manufacturers work out a Quantitative Ingredient Declaration (QUID) percentage, a requirement now needed for most food items.

Food ingredients supplier Gordon Rhodes & Son has developed the idea, which is particularly aimed at the bakery, meat and ready meals section.

Jill Bartlett, QuidCalc's technical director told Food Navigator: "There was confusion and in some cases serious concern...we recognised it would be of much wider use to the industry and everything went from there.

"It seemed logical to put it on to a totally secure Internet site, one where confidentiality ensures the recipes of all users remain their own. We believe we have devised a system which will ease worries over the new regulations."

Benefits of the service include easier calculation, ability to deal with a number of sub-recipes, a quick operation speed and the ability to check results against new descriptions in the Meat Products Regulations.

If companies do not adhere to new rules they can face prosecution.  
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### **Dairy industry to receive support following CAP reforms**

**Date:** Tue, 20 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK ministers have decided how dairy farmers will be compensated for the effects of the Common Agricultural Policy reforms.

Authorities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have agreed to give milk

producers a top-up payment in addition to the dairy premium in 2004.

Cuts in price support from this year on were included in 2003's agreement on CAP reform, which contained several specific measures for the dairy sector.

According to UK Food and Farming Minister Larry Whitty, most milk producers favoured an extra payment on the same mould of the dairy premium.

"We considered carefully the alternatives suggested, taking into account the Government's wider objectives for farming, the decisions already made on implementing CAP reform, issues of equity and fairness, and our aim to simplify CAP payments," Lord Whitty told The Western Mail.

European Union rules permit member states to pay dairy farmers a milk premium starting in 2004 and to make further payments to producers based on independent criteria.

Further information: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
(C) DeHavilland Information Services plc, 1998-2003.

### **Tomatoes could help tackle female tumours, claims new research**

**Date:** Wed, 21 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

An antioxidant found in tomatoes could help prevent tumours in women, according to new research.

Tomatoes have already been found to reduce the risk of prostate cancer in men and now researchers in Turkey and the US have conducted work that found they can stall benign tumours in the uterus.

Lycopene was found to reduce tumour size and occurrence in a number of tests carried out on quails, according to Food Navigator.

The birds are considered a key model for studying tumours since they occur in a similar way to those in humans.

In addition supplements of Lycopene also showed beneficial effects on vitamin C, E and A.  
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### **Food producers encouraged to look ahead**

**Date:** Wed, 21 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Few companies today invest in keeping ahead of the competition by making long-term technology research, said a former Coca-Cola executive.

Former director of Future Technologies at Coca-Cola Larry Mucha defended the

Technology Harvesting business model.

This paradigm gives companies the chance to adopt new technology before its rivals, being thus better prepared to accept future trends.

Businesses can also come across technology useful in the short term while searching for the long-term edge.

Radio Frequency Identification and new types of packaging are examples of Technology Harvesting results.

RFID has been tested by Coca-Cola since 1996 and is already in use in major retailer chains, while environmental concerns indicate that recyclable and biodegradable forms of packaging will play an ever larger role in years to come.

"Most food companies are short-term focused, and interested primarily in technology that can be implemented in the next 12 months," Mucha told FoodProductionDaily.com.

"But they should be looking at least five years into the future," he added.

Further information: [www.aimglobal.org](http://www.aimglobal.org)  
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### **Cumbrian farmers invited to use new dairy facility**

**Date:** Wed, 21 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Local farmers are being invited to become part of a new £37 million proposed dairy processing facility in Cumbria.

Dutch investors Partners in Cheese claims the new site would create 45 jobs and would give farmers better milk prices than they currently receive from larger firms.

Ronald Akkerman, spokesman for the dairy industry-based consortium, told The Journal: "We have been looking for investment opportunities in the dairy industry. And we are offering local farmers a 50 per cent share in the business, using the continental co-operative model.

"Currently they are either selling to a broker, or supplying to Dairy Crest. We are offering an alternative. We see this as a long-term opportunity and we have offered assistance from a bank who specialise in setting up co-operatives."

Reportedly Cumbria produces approximately 900 million litres of milk each year, only a third of which is processed in the area. The new site will have a top capacity of 1.6 litres per day and hopes within three to four years, 400-450 million litres will be processed each year.

Mr Akkerman claims farmers will be offered a price for their milk that will reflect the selling

price of the product it is used for rather than receiving a fixed fee.

The new centre in Workington will make whey products, Cheddar cheese and other dairy ingredients.

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### **FSA issues warning over peanut sweets**

**Date:** Wed, 21 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Food Standards Agency has issued a Category D Food Hazard Warning over high aflatoxin levels found in a sample of peanut candy balls.

Aflatoxins are a type of toxin found naturally in some foods from tropical and sub-tropical countries, and have been linked with liver cancer.

Concentrations higher than the statutory limit of four milligrams per kilogram were discovered after routine sampling of Saab's sweets by the London Borough of Redbridge.

European Union regulations established limits for aflatoxins in foods to ensure that people take in as little of them as possible.

The product was imported from India by Leicester-based Kerala International and distributed by Modisons, based in Harrow, in certain London boroughs and Leicester.

Both companies have been working with local authorities to remove the affected candy balls from sale.

The peanut candy balls are particularly popular with Asian communities.

Category D warnings from the FSA are for information only, not requiring any immediate action.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)

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### **Nestle optimistic after strong start**

**Date:** Wed, 21 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Leading food group Nestle is optimistic about this year's results after posting a 3.5 per cent boost in first quarter sales.

The makers of Nescafe coffee and Kit-Kats said today that a good start to 2004 should help them achieve their targets for the year.

Overall sales reached 20.4 billion Swiss francs (£8.7 billion) between January and March,

rising from 19.7 billion Swiss francs (£8.4 billion) in 2003's first quarter.

Volume, referred to by Nestle as real internal growth, increased by 3.4 per cent while underlying sales were within the group's target range at 5.1 per cent.

Nestle is part of the Rolos-to-Perrier group and employs about 254,000 people, 6,500 at 24 factories in the UK.

The world's largest food group said its petcare, coffee, milk products, nutrition and ice cream divisions led the sales boost together with US-based Alcon eyecare business.

"The good start in 2004 should allow us to attain our objectives for the year both in terms of growth as well as profitability," said chief executive Peter Brabeck.

Further information: [www.nestle.co.uk](http://www.nestle.co.uk)  
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### **SMA recall following metal discovery**

**Date:** Thu, 22 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Food Standards Agency issued a warning that small metal fragments have been found in samples of SMA Wysoy milk formula powder.

Manufacturer SMA Nutrition has launched a product recall in the UK and Ireland to remove affected tins from sale immediately.

The FSA has issued a Food Hazard Warning asking that food law enforcers in the UK ensure the product is withdrawn from sale in supermarkets and pharmacies.

Only a batch of SMA Wysoy 860 gram tins with 'best before' date of 28/08/2006 stamped on the base has been affected.

The pieces of metal came from a damaged sieve at the plant and are up to 8mm long and 2mm wide.

Feeding from affected tins should stop at once, and parents can return them for a refund by calling the SMA helpline on freephone 0800 212 002.

Wysoy milk is available in Britain and the Republic of Ireland and is sold mostly on prescription for babies with lactose intolerance.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.go.uk](http://www.foodstandards.go.uk)  
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### **Food retailers commit to new availability initiative**

**Date:** Thu, 22 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food availability will be one of the areas up for assessment under a new UK supermarket initiative.

The new survey will be conducted by grocery trade group IGD and has been launched by ERC UK, part of the Efficient Consumer Response network which brings together retailers, suppliers, wholesalers and packaging companies who work together to develop and establish best practice for the supermarket industry.

Results will be based on consumers' views of product availability rather than the usual retailer or supplier approach and is said to be "the most comprehensive study of availability published in the UK".

Joanne Denney-Finch, the IGD's chief executive told Food and Drink Europe: "At the moment retailers and suppliers conduct their own availability surveys to check how well they are serving their customers. This new service adds real value. For the first time companies will be able to compare themselves to an industry benchmark for availability."

A range of 200 products in 12 categories will be covered including dairy, frozen, grocery, meat and fish, bakery, produce and processed meat.

It is hoped the findings will boost on-shelf availability, highlight which products have a 100 per cent availability rating and determine an average performance level.

In total 350 stores will take part in the project such as Sainsbury's, Asda, Tesco, The Co-op and Safeway.

Further information: [www.igd.com](http://www.igd.com)

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### **Cola firms to enter low carb market**

**Date:** Thu, 22 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Soft drinks giant Coca-Cola will launch a new mid-carb beverage with half the sugar, calories and carbohydrates of traditional colas.

The new soda, called Coca-Cola C2, will first debut in Japan before moving to the rest of the world in June.

PepsiCo's own low-carb soda, Pepsi Edge, is expected to hit store shelves by the end of the summer.

C2's packaging features the Coke trademark in black on a red background to provide a distinctive look from the flagship brand.

"Consumers are the true architects of this idea," said Coca-Cola chief executive Doug Daft.

He added: "Coca-Cola C2 was created to specifically address their desire for a lower-calorie cola with that great Coca-Cola taste."

The company has been working on C2 for more than a year in hopes of revitalizing slow soft drinks sales in North America.

An integrated marketing campaign will support the summer roll-outs, including television, radio, out-of-home and Internet advertising.

Coca-Cola C2 will be available in retail and foodservice outlets in bottles and cans, fountain, and as a frozen carbonated drink.

Further information: [www.coke.com](http://www.coke.com)  
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### **Doubts raised over McDonald's health drive**

**Date:** Thu, 22 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Fast-food chain McDonald's is to include pedometers in adult versions of its Happy Meals in Britain later this year in an attempt to improve its health image.

The devices, which measure the distance walked through counting the steps a wearer has taken, are part of a campaign to encourage customers to exercise more often.

Health campaigners have received the news with scepticism, arguing it would take more than five and a half hours for someone to burn off a typical McDonald's meal.

"Our concern is that food companies are diverting all the attention on to physical exercise when they should be doing more to tackle the energy contents of their products," said Kath Dalmeny from the Food Commission watchdog.

The new Go Active! boxed meal, containing salad, bottled water and pedometer, was launched last week in the US and is expected to hit UK stores by the end of the year.

McDonald's has already revamped its menus over the past year to give consumers healthier choices, such as salads and fruit.

Further information: [www.mcdonalds.com](http://www.mcdonalds.com)  
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### **Food retailers commit to chemical safety**

**Date:** Thu, 22 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

**Analysis**

Retailer chains Somerfield and Woolworths have signed up to Friends of the Earth's safer chemicals pledge to remove dangerous chemicals from their own brand products.

Fifteen high street retailers currently sign the pledge, raising the overall number of individual stores to more than 8,000.

Research has proved that several chemicals present in everyday household products accumulate in body fat and can affect the human hormone system.

Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's, the Co-op, Ikea, Debenhams and Argos are among the stores that have already joined the Friends of the Earth campaign.

Major supermarkets Tesco, Asda and Safeway have not yet signed the document to phase out risky chemicals.

Somerfield owns about 1,250 stores in the UK, while the Woolworths chain comprises of more than 800 outlets.

"Woolworths is committed to helping protect the environment and takes its corporate social responsibility very seriously," said head of corporate affairs Nicole Lander.

Further information: [www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)  
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**Coca-Cola reports profit increase**

**Date:** Thu, 22 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

**Analysis**

The soft drink manufacturer, Coca-Cola, has reported higher than expected profits for the first quarter of the year with an increase of £638 million.

The company's results were helped by a 4 per cent rise in its European markets and a 14 per cent increase in China. It also seems to have beaten off fierce competition from other drink manufacturers such as PepsiCo.

In the past year Coca-Cola has attempted to expand its product range to include lemon and vanilla versions of its Diet Coke brand as well as introducing a new bottled water drink called Dansani.

Whilst Dansani has proved a best seller in the US and continental Europe, it was withdrawn from the UK market because of related health issues.

Coca-Cola is planning to launch a low sugar, carb and calorie version of Coke called C2.  
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## **Eating habits feed personal profile**

**Date:** Fri, 23 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Opening the door to your fridge could reveal more than you bargained for if new research is to be believed.

A study by food freshness monitoring company, Timestrip, suggests that the contents of a fridge can help construct a personal profile, helping detail private and working lifestyles.

The research suggests there exist five broad categories within which most of us will fall. These include so called; 'nutrition nerds', 'food faddies', 'martyr mums', 'fast food fanatics', and 'restaurant regulars'.

At one end are 'nutrition nerds', those who stock their fridges with fruit, vegetables and organic meat, are said to be single and work in professions such as law or accountancy.

Perhaps predictably, the nearest 'fast food fanatics' will go to fruit is tomatoe sauce. Such a fridge is said to hint at someone who works hard and plays hard, but is not into long-term planning.

Speaking to the Guardian newspaper, report author Reuben Isbitsky, said: "While we were developing Timestrip we spent a lot of time looking inside people's fridges and started to notice a pattern between their lifestyles and the food they bought."

Further information: [www.timestrip.com](http://www.timestrip.com)

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## **UK's organic meat industry on the up**

**Date:** Fri, 23 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

The homegrown organic meat industry in the UK is booming according to a new report.

The report into European organic meat trends, by [researchandmarkets.com](http://researchandmarkets.com), reveals that the Italian and British organic meat markets reported the highest growth in the whole of Europe since 1998.

The report identifies that such growth has been aided by the fact that domestic consumers in the UK are consistently choosing to spurn imported products in favour of home grown meat - with the consequent demand stimulating additional supply channels.

The news will be welcomed by the UK's organic meat industry, which had been brought to its knees in recent years as a result of disasters such as the BSE and foot and mouth crises.

The report also reveals how organic meat suppliers in countries such as Denmark and Austria - who have in the past benefited from the UK's restricted production, are now

suffering as more countries become self-sufficient in organic meat production, thus obviating the need for imports in these areas.

On a more positive trend, the report reveals that European sales of organic meat products market were increasing at over 20 per cent per annum since 1998, with market growth expected to be 9.5 per cent this year.

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### **Food experts issue sweetener warning**

**Date:** Fri, 23 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food health experts in the UK have announced a warning regarding the use of an industrial "super-sweetener" in junk food snacks and fizzy drinks.

According to the Evening Standard the syrup is eight times sweeter than refined sugar, with a longer shelf life and high resistance to bacterial contamination.

Having already been used extensively in the US, concerns have been raised that the syrup could exacerbate obesity, among other health concerns.

"Products such as high-fructose corn syrup are very good for companies' figures but very bad for consumers," commented Dr David Haslam, chairman of Britain's National Obesity Forum.

Dr Beckie Lang, an obesity researcher at the University of Teesside, added: " Fructose does not suppress appetite in the same way other sugars do.

" If you drink a can of soft drink sweetened by fructose, your body does not register the calories. Instead it says 'It's time for my next meal, I must eat again!'"

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### **School body and FSA team up to target schoolchildren's food**

**Date:** Fri, 23 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A joint venture between the FSA and The National Governors' Council (NGC) has been launched to boost nutrition awareness in schools.

The move follows an information pack and questionnaire sent out by the NGC last year after FSA figures revealed the considerable amount of children's lunchboxes containing high salt, fat and sugar level products.

Overall the questionnaire revealed there was not much opposition to guidelines promoting fruit as snacks and restricting fizzy drinks, governors were uncertain as to the role they should play in food consumption and that food policies were harder to apply in secondary schools than primary.

In addition consistently occurring concerns were catering companies, school meal quality and PFIs.

Prompted by the findings the NGC and FSA will now work together to design an outline of governor responsibilities in terms of food monitoring in schools and strategy development.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Nutrient industry steps up battle against EU regulation**

**Date:** Fri, 23 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Representatives of the UK's nutrition industry have hit out at the lack of government assistance in challenging tough new EU regulations set to monitor the sector.

Trade organisation, the Health Food Manufacturers Association (HFMA), along with the National Association of Health Stores (NAHS), are taking legal action in Strasbourg and lobbying parliament to challenge the proposed regulations which they believe could seriously damage the industry.

The directive, which comes into force in August 2005, provides for a range of revised maximum permitted levels and new safety requirements.

Speaking to NutraIngredients.com, HFMA executive director David Adams said that he felt "not much pressure" was being asserted by the government in Brussels, and that he believed there remained "flexibility to improve prospects for the industry"

He added: "They've certainly said they [the government] will argue the case for maximum permitted levels but there has been a lack of progress on promised meetings with European authorities."

"We want to make sure we have an influence before the directive is shaped."

Adams revealed that the campaign against the directive is set to be the most costly ever backed by the HFMA, being likely to reach a 'six-figure sum' if it continues.

The UK supplement industry, worth £335 million (€482m) in 2002, says if the regulations are introduced in their present form, the UK could see over 10% of current products being taken out of production as a result of economic and prohibitive considerations.

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### **UK awaits first multi-feed biodiesel plant**

**Date:** Fri, 23 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Greenergy has this week revealed plans to develop a £10 million multi-feed biodiesel plant -

the very first in the UK.

The project, which will be carried out in partnership with European biodiesel giant Novol, will result in the largest bio fuel plant in Europe, producing an estimated 100,000 tonnes of biodiesel a year.

Whilst contract negotiations have yet to be finalised it appears certain the deal will go ahead in the next couple of months.

Speaking to environmental exchange 'edie', Andrew Owens, Chairman of Greenergy, said he was "very confident" agreement would be reached, adding: "The financial case has been made but there are still a few contractual issues to be resolved. I would hope we have the whole thing signed, sealed and delivered by the end of the summer."

Transport minister David Jamieson welcomed the initiative, highlighting the important role such alternative fuels played in fulfilling the government's environmental objectives.

"Biofuels have a key role to play in helping to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases from road transport," he said.

"I am pleased that companies like Greenergy are helping to build up a thriving biofuels industry in the UK."

Should agreement between the two companies be reached by this summer as predicted, the plant should be fully operational by early 2006.

Further information: [www.greenergy.com](http://www.greenergy.com)  
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### **Dairy companies benefit from functional food trends**

**Date:** Fri, 23 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Big names in the dairy industry are continuing to reap the benefits of the latest consumer demand for functional foods.

Both Danone and Nestle reported strong growth results this week in their healthy and probiotic products.

Products that performed particularly well were milk, nutrition products, ice cream, Actimel drinking yoghurt and milk powder with added omega-3 fatty acids and calcium.

Nestle spokesman Francois-Xavier Perroud told Food Navigator: "This sector witnessed good growth due to two factors: the company's policy in innovation and the changing economical environment."

Dairy is said to have offered the most innovation in terms of functional food throughout the last few years and continued growth is predicted for the future.

Further information: [www.danonegroup.com](http://www.danonegroup.com) [www.nestle.com](http://www.nestle.com)  
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### **European consumers trust fruit and vegetables over junk food**

**Date:** Mon, 26 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A three-year survey revealed that European consumers rely more on fruit and vegetable than on junk food and meat.

The EU-backed 'Trust in Food' project investigated the views of nearly 9,000 consumers in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

British customers put the most faith in what they eat, despite recent situations such as the mad cow disease epidemic.

Nearly a third of the people surveyed said that the taste, quality, nutritional value and safety of food have declined over time.

Italian and Portuguese respondents had the highest level of pessimism, with almost 80 per cent considering food prices, taste and quality worse over the past 20 years.

The EU's Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) has rebuilding consumer confidence in the food they eat as one of its top priorities and has set aside €685 million (£455 million) for researching food quality and safety.

"Food production must meet consumers' expectations as well as environmental, health and competitiveness objectives," said Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin.

Further information: [www.trustinfood.org](http://www.trustinfood.org)  
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### **International seed law under debate**

**Date:** Mon, 26 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The implications of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources on Food and Agriculture have sparked a debate before it comes into effect on June 29th.

Known as the International Seed Treaty and initiated by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the agreement gives legal force to the conservation and sustainable use of 64 food crops.

Many specialists have welcomed the treaty as progress in ensuring farmers' rights, food security and biodiversity.

Others, such as Dr Aseesh Tayal of Greenpeace, believe efforts to end biopiracy should be strengthened.

However, an ambiguity in Article 12.3.d is causing controversy as experts believe it permits the patenting of seeds and restrictions to farmers' access.

Patrick Mulvany, of Intermediate Technology Development Group, believes the governing body of the treaty should clarify the article's interpretation but not remove it.

"The UK government has pre-empted negotiations by the governing body and has accepted the report of its Commission on Intellectual Property Rights, which asserts that this Article means that genes extracted from the genetic resources covered by the Treaty and used in new varieties could be subject to IPR claims," he told The Financial Express.

Further information: [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)  
(C) DeHavilland Information Services plc, 1998-2003.

### **Food manufacturers protest new obesity claims**

**Date:** Mon, 26 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The food industry has raised objections over new studies suggesting corn syrup and other refined foods could be responsible for the obesity epidemic and the rise in the rates of type 2 diabetes.

Scientists who investigated food consumption models over the past 35 years found out that high fructose corn syrup's intake has risen 1,000 per cent between 1970 and 1990.

The study, published in a recent issue of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, suggests that the boost in HFCS and other processed carbs' consumption could have provoked the sharp increase in obesity.

A second research released in the same journal by specialists at the Harvard School of Public Health links the intake of refined carbohydrates to type 2 diabetes.

Although people have eaten the same amount of carbs a day on average for the past 100 years, researchers claim they now come from processed grains and sugars instead of whole grains and vegetables.

The industry reacted immediately, deeming the studies as incorrect and misleading to the public.

"Diabetes rates are rising in many countries around the world that use little or no high fructose corn syrup in foods and beverages," said Audrae Erickson, president of the US Corn Refiners Association.

Further information: [www.ajcn.org](http://www.ajcn.org)  
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### **Health drink offers benefits for children**

**Date:** Mon, 26 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new health drink has been created which claims to boost children's awareness and wellbeing.

SupaJus - The Think Drink, by Scottish firm The Natural Fruit and Beverage Company contains omega-3 DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid).

According to research the nutrient is a key ingredient for the functioning and structure of humans throughout life and is particularly effective in preventing learning and behavioural problems in children.

Ray Noble, at NP Biotech decided to try and add the ingredient to an orange juice drink. He explained to The Herald: "A lot of research has been done on DHA, and it has been shown that the minimum daily intake should be at least 200 milligrams a day. However, most people only get around 50 milligrams.

"What we want, though, is for people to look upon SupaJus as something they like drinking and as a fun and enjoyable experience. A balanced diet, together with one of these drinks every day, should make a difference."

DHA can also be consumed through oily fish and eggs, but a large consumption is needed and capsules are quite expensive.

Reportedly the new drink product is the first in Europe to contain Omega-3 DHA and will at first be provided through schools, health centres and sports clubs.

Further information: [www.scottishfoodanddrink.com](http://www.scottishfoodanddrink.com)  
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### **EU scientists collaborate on food safety**

**Date:** Mon, 26 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new European project will see scientists investigate ways to maintain food safety without cutting nutritional quality.

FOODPRO will be funded with €693,00 from the EU and will try to adopt an alternative ohmic heating method, which heats food material inside with an electric current to improve taste and nutrition.

The investigation was prompted by findings that current heating methods used to ensure

food is safe result in nutritional elements being overheated and lost.

Co-ordinator Michael Harrison told Food Navigator: "Taking part in projects like this provides real contacts with organisations who would actually buy the end product.

"Their involvement allows partners to realise the time it takes to carry out research in the development process. Other participants have already expressed a desire to buy the final product."

Benefits of the new method include ensuring food still remains safe, decreasing the need for chemical additives and boosting products' market value through increased consumer demand.

The UK is one of the countries participating in the scheme, which is thought to cost around €1.12 million.

Further information: [www.foodpro.net](http://www.foodpro.net)  
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### **Packaging developments to colour food sales**

**Date:** Mon, 26 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Avery Dennison Roll Materials Europe is releasing a new multi-layered film that enables colour packaging without the need for additional dyeing.

According to the company, the Fasson Iridescent PET film will give designers a creative way of making products such as wines and spirits stand out on the shelves.

The film is built to cause intense diffraction of light, separating it in a wide range of colours which change with the angle of observation.

Compatible with both solvent and water-based inks, the material can also be printed with flexo and gravure.

Excellent temperature resistance could make the new film invaluable for the food industry as packaging plays a growing role in attracting consumers in the ever more competitive market.

"The importance of shelf impact cannot be underestimated in determining a product's success in today's crowded retail shelf environment," filmic reels product manager for Avery Dennison Stefan Peters told Food Production Daily.

Further information: [www.europe.fasson](http://www.europe.fasson)  
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## **Beef industry concerns grow following CAP reforms**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Troubles caused by the Common Agricultural Policy reform to the British beef industry could have serious economical and environmental consequences.

Current levels of production will be impossible to sustain unless everyone in the industry cuts costs and becomes more efficient after the new policy is introduced next January, warned the National Beef Association.

This would increase demand for South American beef, which in turn would result in further devastation of the Brazilian rainforests with grave climatic implications.

Last year, the rush to sell beef to Europe put an end to 10,000 square miles of Brazil's woodlands.

The burden of reducing costs will have to be shared by farmers, slaughterers and retailers, NBA Wales chairman Aled Edwards told the Western Mail.

"We would like to think that slaughterers themselves are warning their retail customers that unless they too are prepared to pay more for high provenance, high integrity home-killed beef they risk disappointing their consumers who will not be at all pleased if they are presented with inadequate South American substitutes," said Mr Edwards.

Further information: [www.nationalbeefassociation.co.uk](http://www.nationalbeefassociation.co.uk)  
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## **Scottish salmon controversy continues**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

In January, a report into toxic contamination of farmed salmon published in the journal Science hit the Scottish aquaculture industry deeply.

It said only one portion of farmed salmon from Scotland should be eaten every four months to avoid a greater risk of cancer and that wild salmon was healthier.

One week later, the study was exposed as a fraud funded by a group with interests against the industry where no wild Atlantic salmon was tested to compare toxins.

The incident has been followed with the hardest period for Scottish salmon farmers since the late 1970s, which sparked another reaction from producers.

A group of 18 salmon farmers in Scotland requested yesterday that the government introduces protectionist measures against imports of the farmed fish from Chile, Norway and the Faroe Islands.

The document states that the average production cost of British salmon is of £2.18 per kilo and that profit margins have been replaced by losses since 2001.

Producers blame their troubles on the small number of potential sites for aquaculture in Scotland, since both Chile and Norway have longer coastlines and deeper waters.

Increasing the size and efficiency of the business is seen by salmon farmers as the only possible solution for the crisis.

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### **Glasgow schools get meal makeover**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Glasgow introduced yesterday a revamped menu for school meals with healthier options replacing burgers, chips and pies.

Up to 70 items make up the new Fuel Zone service, which is being served across the city's 197 primary schools and 17 special needs schools to 43,000 children.

The two-week rotating menu will include old favourites such as steak pie made from lamb, instead of beef.

Other exotic options include chicken curry, sweet and sour chicken noodles, honeydew melon and chicken fajitas.

Pupils will be able to choose each day between a main meal, vegetarian main meal, snack meal, baked potato, sandwich, roll or salad, available in halal and non-halal formats.

The Glasgow City Council believes the new service will help change the city's appalling health record, with obesity among children a major issue.

"We are very proud that Glasgow is leading the school meals revolution and look forward to introducing further exciting initiatives in the future," said Steven Purcell, education services committee convener and chairman of the council's health and diet working group.

Further information: [www.glasgow.gov.uk](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk)

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### **New allergy-free flavouring alternative developed by UK firm**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK company Tastetech has announced the launch of new 'nut-free' nut flavourings as part of upcoming food allergen labelling rules.

The new flavourings would move into the new allergen free alternative market which has

now been created as a result and could be used in dishes such as curries, baked foods and humous.

Roger Sinton, managing director of TasteTech told Bakery and Snacks: "Our new nut-free flavourings are authentic and can be added to a range of products to flavour and enhance. This is especially important for those allergic to nuts."

The range works by being delivered via controlled release microencapsulation where nut flavourings are covered in an invisible taste free cover of vegetable oil and are released during eating, cooking or processing.

Under new rules food companies will need to list all sub ingredients and put an end to the old 25 per cent rule labelling on all ingredients, although some have argued it is wrong the 'may contain' idea is still not regulated.

Susanna Palkonen of the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations claimed this means "the consumer has no idea of knowing there is a risk to eating the food product or not".

Among the most common allergy foods are cereals with gluten, eggs, fish, peanuts and dairy products. Around four per cent of adults and eight per cent of children in the EU suffer from food allergies.

Further information: [www.tastetech.co.uk](http://www.tastetech.co.uk)  
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### **Researchers uncover new tomato health benefits**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK scientists have identified a gene inside tomatoes that could help lead to better health in old age for humans.

The HQT gene produces a CGA antioxidant that helps protect against degenerative, age-related diseases according to the scientists.

Dr Tony Michael, project leader at the Institute of Food Research told Food Navigator: "CGA is the main polyphenol in this category in tomatoes.

"Now we have identified the gene for the enzyme that produces it, we can look for genes that produce similar compounds in other plants, with benefits for agriculture and for human nutrition."

Tomatoes were infected with a bacteria to help discover how much added protection the CGA gave and findings showed that the spread and effect of disease was a lot less in those with higher CGA levels.

Other findings have suggested the food could reduce cancer risk and help protect against heart disease.

Further information: [www.ifr.bbsrc.ac.uk](http://www.ifr.bbsrc.ac.uk)  
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### **New EU member states to benefit UK farming**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

British farmers could benefit from the enlarged European Union for at least a decade, said the National Farmers' Union.

A NFU report published today revealed that the ten countries joining the EU on May 1st will increase the UK's exporting potential for high-value products such as cheese.

The document also downplays the fears that Britain will be flooded by cheaper imports, arguing that the benefits will outweigh any possible disadvantage.

Countries like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, which have large farming industries, will receive for the first time subsidies under the EU agricultural policy.

Together with higher and more stable prices for their products, this will enable them to compete more evenly within the European market.

Since these changes will occur at a slow pace, however, it will take at least ten years before farmers from the Eastern European nations reach that level, added the NFU.

"Enlargement will bring further export opportunities," NFU president Tim Bennett told the Financial Times.

Further information: [www.nfu.org.uk](http://www.nfu.org.uk)  
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### **Tesco tests 'trim trolley'**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new shopping trolley unveiled yesterday could combine consumers' shopping and fitness needs.

The trolley doubles up as a workout machine, offering several attachments to help shoppers keep fit.

Sensors on the trolley's pushing bar reveal the user's heart rate, and the display also informs the estimated number of calories burned, the time and the speed of the trolley.

Those who want a more difficult challenge can increase resistance on a large wheel between the two rear wheels.

A prototype of the trolley, produced by German manufacturer Wanzl, is to be introduced at Tesco's Kensington store next week.

Specialists believe shoppers burn around 160 calories during an average 40-minute visit to the supermarket.

Shopping with the new trolley with the resistance level set at seven, the typical person could spend 280 calories, the equivalent of a 20-minute leisure swim.

"It is a response to customers' growing concerns about health and fitness," said Tesco spokeswoman Laura Voyle.

Tesco is still analysing the security measures it will introduce to safeguard the new prototype, which costs £500 to produce compared to £70 for a common wire trolley.

Further information: [www.tesco.co.uk](http://www.tesco.co.uk)  
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### **EU prepares to approve GM maize**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The European Commission may grant approval for the genetically modified Bt-11 maize to be sold for human consumption in the next two months.

European agricultural ministers failed to reach an agreement on lifting the six-year ban on GM crops earlier this week

The decision will now be taken by the European Commission, which in January said it favoured ending the prohibition on genetically manipulated crops.

This could pave the way for Swiss-based agrochemicals group Syngenta to put its Bt-11 maize on supermarket shelves soon.

"It is difficult to predict exactly, but I would imagine this will be before the Commission in late May or early June," said EU Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne.

The new proposal is the first of around 34 approval requests since the EU endorsed strict labelling and traceability rules for GM products.

Environmentalists still oppose the use of GM crops despite the new regulations, worried about the damage they could cause to the environment and human health.

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### **Food industry training academy nears launch**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The future British Food and Drink Sector Skills Council, Improve, is set to launch a multi-skills training academy in the area.

Called Food and Drink Multiskilling Academy (FADMA), the project will be one of Improve's immediate priorities once the council is accredited in July 2004.

In a statement, Improve declared the increasing complexity of manufacturing operations requires employers and employees alike to demonstrate more flexibility in order to offer quality services.

FADMA will deliver new and improved qualifications for workers in the food and drink industry, benefiting the business as a whole.

"Innovations in training delivery from on line learning, workplace development and residential courses will be included," said Improve chairman Paul Wilkinson.

He added: "The Academy will target employees at all levels."

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### **New agreement to boost Milk Link contamination testing**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

One of the fastest growing UK dairy companies and a contamination detection firm have joined forces to test dairy products.

Under the new deal Celsis International will use its new CellScan Innovate rapid screening system to test UHT dairy products by Milk Link.

According to Business Weekly three systems have been implemented as part of the deal and items to be studied include life long milk, cream, soya items and custard.

Technology has been installed across the UK in Milk Link sites at Devon, Essex, and Scotland and will allow tests to be processed within 48 hours.

Benefits of the new system mean that Milk link can improve quality, efficiency and speed in testing.

Milk Link is the largest UHT processor in the UK and is owned by nearly 2,400 British dairy farmers.

Further information: [www.milklink.co.uk](http://www.milklink.co.uk)

### **Food companies urged to link food safety to energy saving**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food manufacturers are being encouraged to combine food safety strategies with energy saving measures in a new project.

The Agricultural and Food Technology Alliance has been set up by energy solutions provider Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), according to Food Production Daily.

Food companies will be provided with information on how to manage their energy consumption more effectively and guidance will be used to help energy companies become incorporated into the food sector.

Latest figures show that agricultural production uses 18 to 22 per cent of many areas' electrical load, whilst food processing industries make up an additional 10 per cent.

In addition current regulations have been making a serious economic impact on the food manufacturing division and EPRI claims if a range of energy related products such as electrotechnologies were implemented then a host of problems could be solved.

A host of food safety measures could be conducted with energy efficient methods including protecting stored agricultural products, non-thermal pasteurisation and ohmic heating to ensure safe handling, storage, and distribution of food and agricultural products.

Further information: [www.epri.com](http://www.epri.com)

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### **FSA considers recycled packaging proposals**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The British Food Standards Agency has published a consultation paper to discuss the European Commission's recycled packaging proposals.

Currently, there is no common policy in the EU for regulating the use of recycled plastic materials as food wrapping.

Under the EC's scheme, companies will be able to apply for an authorisation to use a particular procedure to recycle food contact plastics for additional use in wrapping.

The FSA supports the new system as long as it allows businesses to provide effective protection for customers, but it first intends to hear the industries queries about the proposed changes.

"[This proposal] will provide beneficial protection for the public while giving businesses a common set of rules to comply with across the EU," said the FSA in a statement.

"Consumers will also know that wherever they are in the EU, any recycled food contact plastics have been manufactured to a consistent standard."

All food contact plastics in the UK have to meet the requirements of a Commission Directive dealing with materials intended to be brought into contact with food.

Replies to the FSA's consultation must be filed in by June 3rd, 2004.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Tesco awards contract for in store promotion**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

One hundred Tesco stores will get in-store advertising and information on customer-facing screens implemented by broadband satellite solutions provider Hughes Network Systems Europe.

Instrumental Media Group will provide the content while HSNE will be responsible for the installation, operation, and maintenance of the service.

Content may vary between commercials of Tesco suppliers' products, the retailer group's own content or SkyNews.

The data will be distributed via satellite to the stores, each with an average of 20 large plasma screens and 20 thin film transistor screens, a type of LCD flat-panel display.

Seven different channels are available in the stores, each of them able to play content targeted to specific store areas on one or more screens.

"With this solution, we are providing more information to our customers directly at the point of sales," said Bill Pennell, Tesco's Media and Revenue Generation Manager.

He added: "For our suppliers, this creates a genuine opportunity to better communicate with their and our end customers."

Further information: [www.tesco.co.uk](http://www.tesco.co.uk)  
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### **Food preservation research takes to the stars**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

## **Analysis**

Astronauts in the International Space Station are conducting a new experiment related to high pressure preservation techniques on Mediterranean foodstuffs this month.

Several different Mediterranean foods supplied by the Italian firm COOP were treated to a high pressure processing technique that kills bacteria and provides long-term storage at room temperature.

Findings from the spacefarers' consumption will provide information on preservation techniques and also on potential foods for practitioners of sports such as mountaineering.

Cosmonauts will evaluate the food products for taste, texture and colour in the first food experiment in space.

The Mediet experiment took off into orbit with the Dutch Delta mission earlier this month and consists of five food items from Italy: dried tomatoes, mature cheese, white bread, peaches and chocolate.

"The first step is to investigate the possibility of preserving foods for more than three months, also a criteria for the space station," Franck Salzgeber from the European Space Agency told FoodNavigator.com.

Further information: [www.esa.int](http://www.esa.int)  
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## **Health drive boosts McDonalds' sales**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Fast food giant McDonalds has revealed customer numbers and profits have risen considerably since the launch of its "Salads Plus" brand.

Figures for the chain show that quarterly net income has increased by 56 per cent, a figure it attributes to improved service and healthier food options.

New chief executive Charlie Bell commented: "We served 2.3 million more customers during the first quarter compared with the same period in the prior year; the equivalent of adding roughly 1,500 restaurants, yet we added only 100 restaurants over the past 12 months.

"Europe's sales trends have improved significantly compared with March, following the successful launch of the Salads Plus menu in several key markets."

Mr Bell claimed the results were "a clear indication that our Plan to Win is working".

Further information: [www.mcdonalds.com](http://www.mcdonalds.com)  
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### **Dairy farmers face new rules**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

New rules for the dairy industry are to be put into practice to tackle the spread of an infectious bug.

Dairy farmers will be provided with new strict rules to screen herds for Johne's disease a cattle illness.

It is believed that the bug could be spreading to humans from cows through milk and increasing cases of Crohn's disease, an intestinal illness that causes fatigue, abdominal pain and weight loss.

The Department of Health claims the rules are only precautionary and that action will also help to cut the culling of livestock and improve milk yields.

As well as screening, farmers will need to prevent infection in contaminated pastures and watercourses and protect young calves that may contract the bug from their mothers.

The threat of the bug is made worse since it can survive pasteurisation and does not show for 10 years in cattle after infection. The new rules will be introduced in June.

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### **Food sales drive pub profits**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Two new reports on the pub market revealed that increasing food sales are helping the industry grow.

Pub meals sales last year accounted for 21 per cent of the businesses' total turnover according to the Public Houses Market Report 2004, going up steadily since 1999.

Compiled by data company Research and Markets, the survey analysed the changes that took place in the industry between 1999 and 2003.

UK pubs' profits also rose by nine per cent over the last five years due to a bigger emphasis on food, said the UK Public Houses Development Report researched by Market & Business Development.

The MDB report stated that turnover in Britain's pubs was boosted to £28.6 billion in 2003, almost ten per cent greater than 1999's figures.

Food sales alone accounted for £6.1 billion in 2003, up from £5.2 billion five years earlier.

"The main factor behind the growth in public house revenue has been a trend towards a

greater emphasis on catering with the provision of food providing growth in average spend per visit," said the report.

Further information: [www.mbdltd.co.uk](http://www.mbdltd.co.uk)  
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### **Toddlers turn organic at innovative nursery**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The first organic nursery in the UK is proving a success after being open just 11 weeks.

First Learning in Shepperton has banned chicken nuggets, fish fingers and chips and offers toddlers an organic range of roast chicken, shepherds pie and snacks of raw carrot.

Kimberley Foster, director of the nursery hopes that the organic approach will set a trend across the nation.

She told This is Local London: "I've eaten organic food, where possible, for years, and we know that there's scientific research to prove the links between what children eat and their behaviour.

"The food we prepare has no flavourings, additives or preservatives. Hopefully, it will start catching on across the country."

The Soil Association has now provided the day care company with official documentation to approve it as organic.

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### **Mango identified as top fruit for sport**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new report from McDonalds has suggested that mangoes are a more beneficial fruit for sports players than the traditional orange.

According to the Half-Time Orange Report a range of 11 alternative fruits would prove more beneficial than oranges in terms of energy including grapes, bananas, pineapples and papaya.

Leading nutritionist Anita Bean told the Telegraph: "The half-time orange, like the flat coke and half a banana, is probably one of the most infamous examples of home-grown sports science. There are many fruits which provide more energy per portion to replenish depleted levels during the 90 minutes."

As part of McDonalds new health conscious image the fast food firm is distributing 10,000 mangoes to football coaches around the country.

Reportedly football players would need to eat more than three oranges at half-time to get the highest amount of energy they would need for the second half.

It is thought the reason oranges have remained so popular is due to their practicability and lower cost.

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### **FSA Wales develops nutrition network**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food Standards Agency Wales is implementing a nutrition network to promote the sharing of experiences and information between health professionals, teachers, voluntary organisations and other key players.

The idea of a network was first raised by stakeholders when the Welsh nutrition strategy, Food and Well Being, was under development.

A new independent body named The Wales Centre for Health is advising FSA Wales on the project.

WCH was established to offer a national focal point to multi-disciplinary advice, professional progress and discussion.

It has produced a preliminary report featuring the opinions on health, local government and voluntary sectors across Wales.

The report's recommendations will be presented and debated at two conferences to be held on May 11th in Llandudno and on May 26th in Cardiff.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk/wales](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk/wales)

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### **Pregnant women warned over caffeine levels**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new Food Standards Agency survey showed that a cup of tea or coffee can contain a wide range of caffeine levels.

Out of the samples tested by the FSA, a mug of tea could contain between one and 90 milligrams of caffeine, instant coffee from 21 to 120 mg and brewed coffee, between 15 and 254 mg.

Four hundred coffees and teas had their caffeine content analysed after being gathered from cafes, workplaces and homes throughout the UK.

The survey supports the Agency's previous advice to pregnant women signalling how many cups of tea or coffee they can safely drink based on average samples.

However, it also demonstrates that the amount of caffeine may vary greatly according to the way the beverage is prepared.

People can usually judge the relative quantity of caffeine in their drinks according to how strong they think it is.

Pregnant women should not intake more than 300 mg of caffeine a day because high levels of the substance may cause miscarriages of babies to have low birth weight.

Cola beverages, chocolate, some energy drinks, flu and cold remedies also contain caffeine.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Egg price rise hits mayonnaise sales**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Mayonnaise producers are still suffering from the sharp price increases of eggs and oil, the primary ingredients of the condiment, over the last year.

Rape seed oil prices have risen by more than 25 per cent in the past two years, while the egg yolk costs leap was pushed by the global impact of the outbreak of avian flu in Asia.

Yolk products are mainly used in mayonnaise, sauces and ice cream, and are generally mixed with sugar or salt to increase its shelf life.

Total production in the UK is around 8,800 tonnes per annum and is worth £16.3 million, according to the British Egg Information Service.

The price rises have increased the popularity of alternative ingredients for mayonnaise.

More than a million tonnes of sauces and dressings are sold in Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Spain each year, totaling €3 billion (£2.02 billion) in sales.

Further information: [www.britegg.co.uk](http://www.britegg.co.uk)  
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### **Food research centre opens in Surrey**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Apr 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Flavours house FONA UK has become the first company to move into a new laboratory at the Leatherhead Enterprise Centre.

The centre is part of a joint venture between research institute Leatherhead Food International and the South East England Development Agency called Enterprise Hub.

It aims to create a group of high-technology businesses focusing on the food and bio-science sectors.

SEEDA has already established several enterprise hubs dedicated to specific industry segments across the south-east of England.

Part of a US-based global flavouring company, FONA UK opened its European headquarters and research facilities at the purpose-built labs on April 15th aiming to bring new flavours to the European food and drink markets.

"Our fast-growing Enterprise Hubs network offers the ideal platform for international companies to launch themselves into the European market, and for small home-grown businesses that are seeking to develop and grow within the south east," SEEDA's business and international director Jeff Alexander told icSurrey.

Further information: [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)  
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