

## July 2004

### **Europe set to embrace Omega-3**

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

#### **Analysis**

Consumer demand in Europe for omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) looks set to continue growing, according to new research.

Market research firm Frost & Sullivan found that, of all the functional food ingredients currently available, the future looks brightest for Omega-3 PUFAs after the European market grew by 11 per cent in 2003. The European fortified foods market is now worth an estimated €161 million for Omega-3 PUFAs, accounting for 28 per cent of the global market volume.

Frost & Sullivan points out that the vast storehouse of well-documented research available, the long, safe history of therapeutic use of sources such as marine oils, flax oil and algae oils, and the importance to well-being and general health, all serve to make the European Omega-3 PUFAs market lucrative.

"Increased media coverage and product availability have helped differentiate Omega-3 and Omega-6 PUFAs from saturated fats, promoting Omega-3 PUFAs as 'good fats', which are an essential part of the diet," said Kathy Brownlie, industry analyst at Frost & Sullivan.

"Most industry experts agree that more Omega-3 PUFAs need to be incorporated into our diets."

However, the report notes that an unclear legislation requirement in the European Union remains a challenge for the PUFA market. The absence of a specific recommended daily intake (RDI) is further restricting marketing efforts, weakening the impact of packaging and promotional messages.

(no further information)

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### **Young's acquires Macrae**

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

#### **Analysis**

UK processing giant Young's Bluecrest has announced that it has purchased Scottish specialist seafood firm Macrae Food Group.

Fraserburgh-based Macrae manufactures ready-to-eat seafood products and generates annual turnover of around £80 million. The acquisition puts Grimsby company Young's in the

UK's top five privately owned food-manufacturing companies and will see the firm's turnover approach £500 million.

Macrae, which employs 1300 people, will continue to operate within its existing structure, with businesses including Macrae, Strathaird Salmon and The Salmon Poachers Limited. Mike Parker, deputy chief executive of Young's, will take over as chairman of the Macrae Group.

In a statement, Mr Parker said: "All in all, the complementary skills of our two businesses made this acquisition a natural next move, enabling us to develop further our product ranges and UK customer relationships."

Cameron Brown, chief executive of the Macrae Food Group, added: "This is a great development for the UK seafood market. Whilst the Macrae businesses will continue to operate autonomously, there are many additional benefits to be had from being part of the Young's group, with its superb specialist expertise in marketing seafood and sourcing raw material from around the world."

Further information: [www.foodsofscotland.co.uk](http://www.foodsofscotland.co.uk)  
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### **UK commits to global plant sharing**

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

#### **Analysis**

The UK is one of more than 50 countries to sign up to a new international agreement to ensure the global protection of vital food crops.

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture aims to improve food security and promote sustainable farming by making sure that plant genetic resources are conserved, used sustainably, and their benefits are shared fairly.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced in Rome that the treaty had been ratified and now becomes law.

"This is the start of a new era," said FAO Director-General, Dr Jacques Diouf. "The treaty brings countries, farmers and plant breeders together and offers a multilateral approach for accessing genetic resources and sharing their benefits. Humankind needs to safeguard and further develop the precious crop gene pool that is essential for agriculture."

The world's crop gene pool provides the raw materials plant breeders need to develop new varieties to face future challenges such as climate change, unknown pests and plant diseases to ensure a richer diet.

UK food and farming minister Larry Whitty said: "Plant genetic resources for food and agriculture are vital raw material that farmers and plant breeders use to improve the quality and productivity of food crops. Farmers, plant breeders and researchers should make the most of the plant resources now available to help achieve the aims of the treaty."

Further information: [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)  
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### **Concerns raised over theme park food**

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

#### **Analysis**

The nation's top tourist attractions, including Camelot Theme Park, Chester Zoo and Blackpool Tower, have been attacked in a new report for serving too much junk food.

Research conducted by the Consumers' Association found that Britain's most popular visitors' spots are offering few healthy eating options.

The three worst offenders in the survey, published in Which? magazine, were: Camelot Theme Park, Chorley, Lancashire; Flamingo Land, Kirby Misperton, North Yorkshire; and New Pleasurewood Hills Theme Park, Lowestoft, Suffolk.

However, some tourist attractions, including the British Museum in London and Legoland Windsor in Berkshire, won praise from the researchers for serving healthier foods such as pasta, baked potatoes, vegetables, salads and fruit.

Which? has outlined a series of recommendations to tourist attractions and caterers, including providing a wider range of affordable and healthy options, and using a traffic light labelling scheme to sign-post healthy eating choices by showing how much salt, sugar and fat they contain.

Which? director of campaigns Nick Stace said: "The (tourist) industry needs to ensure that wherever you are it's just as easy to pick up a nutritious sandwich and some fruit as a hotdog and fries."

Further information: [www.which.net](http://www.which.net)  
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### **New funding for EU food research**

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

#### **Analysis**

Research into food quality and safety is to receive a cash boost this year as part of the EU's sixth framework programme on research.

The European Commission has revealed total funding of €192 million in 2004 for food research.

EU research commissioner Philippe Busquin told Environmental Health News: "Now, more than ever, research in agriculture and food safety is critical to ensure the quality of life and safety of all citizens in an enlarged Europe while sustaining the competitiveness of Europe's largest industrial sector."

Among the topics to be studied are traceability, obesity, food allergies, livestock disease and food contaminants.

It is hoped many of the plans will help to join food quality experts from specialist networks, with two groups looking in particular at food information and cancer risks related to nutrition.

Results of the research will go towards creating further EU policies and a third year of food funding for safety studies is set to be revealed in July.

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### **Watchdog advises on food safety**

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

#### **Analysis**

Consumer watchdog Which? has issued advice on food safety issues in response to recent consumer interest in food poisoning.

According to Which? around 5.5 million people in the UK suffer from food poisoning each year.

Among the advice issued are common questions and answers and details on the most common food bugs including listeria, E.coli and salmonella.

In addition basic rules on food safety when consuming and preparing food is included.

Topics include the best ways to keep preparation areas clean for food, poultry and steak cooking and foods to avoid when pregnant.

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### **HBA queries FSA fish advice**

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

#### **Analysis**

UK fish buyers have welcomed the FSA's guidelines on oily fish consumption, but have criticised the watchdog's use of obsolete data on the levels of dioxins in oily fish.

Ian McFadden, chairman of the UK Herring Buyers' Association, which represents the majority of nation's pelagic purchasers, said: "We were very pleased that the FSA recommendation went up from one portion to up to four portions per week. That is the most important point."

The Food Standards Agency recommended that Britons should consume more pelagic fish, such as herring and mackerel.

However, Mr McFadden questioned data from 1995/96 used as a basis for the advice on the maximum number of portions that consumers should eat each week, European Fish Trader reports.

He noted that since the 1995/96 data was published, dioxin levels in herring and mackerel had been falling steadily every year, but added that this was likely to be an oversight. The HBA chair said that the organisation had written to the FSA about its concerns and had "no wish to take the matter further."

Helge Korsager, the managing director of the UK's largest fishmeal producer, United Fish Products Ltd, told Fishupdate.com that the FSA advice "has clear spin-offs for our industry", but also noted that the watchdog had used old data in its assessments, and that the situation had improved a lot since then.

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

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### **EU funds new value-added labelling initiative**

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

#### **Analysis**

The European Commission has announced that Brussels is preparing to spend millions of euros on a new labelling project for food products.

The commission revealed that aid worth a total of €4.9 million per year could be paid to promote a quality label and biolabel issued by Agrarmarkt Austria (AMA) and open to all food firms in the EU.

The quality label aims to highlight the importance of good food to European consumers and can be awarded to agricultural products of 'significantly higher quality' than regular products, while the biolabel is for organic produce, Food Navigator reports.

According to the Commission, the labels cover most groups of agricultural products including meat and meat products, eggs, milk and milk products, cereals, vegetables, fruits and several processed products.

Each label will state the origin of the food product, allowing producers and consumers in all of the 25 Member States to identify the place of production, and further details of the labelling scheme will be available on the Commission website.

The practice of adding value to food products is becoming increasingly popular following the food safety scares of recent years and damaged consumer confidence in the food chain.

(no further information)

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### **NHS pushes organic food drive**

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

**Analysis**

A new project to provide organic food as part of healthier NHS menus has been launched.

The launch of the new two-year organic food scheme was attended by the Prince of Wales. Pesticide-free strawberries were supplied and used for the first time this week at St George's Hospital in Tooting, south London.

The Hospital Food Project, run by London Food Link in partnership with the Soil Association, aims to increase the supply of organic food to four pilot sites in London, PA News reports.

The Prince visited St George's Hospital to meet farmers and organisers involved in the scheme, which is also working towards using local businesses to boost the communities' economies. The Hospital Food Project is funded by King's Fund, of which Charles is president, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.

Food produced organically contains fewer contaminants such as pesticides and antibiotics and prohibits genetically-modified organisms. Organic products also spend less time in storage, making them better for nutrition.

Lord Peter Melchett, policy director of the Soil Association, said: "If you want the people who work in hospital and who stay in hospital to stay healthy and get healthy, they need a healthy diet."

The NHS spends about £500 million on food each year, serving more than 300 million meals in around 1,200 hospitals.

Further information: [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)

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**Diet soft drink concerns**

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

**Analysis**

Diet soft drinks may encourage people to over-eat, according to a new study.

Researchers from Purdue University, Indiana, claim that artificial sweeteners confuse the brain's ability to regulate body weight and could cause further problems for people on a diet.

The study, which was carried out on rats, has been dismissed by the soft drinks industry. Britain spends £5 billion a year on low calorie soft drinks.

Professor Terry Davidson and associate professor Susan Swithers found that artificial sweeteners may disrupt the body's natural ability to "count" calories based on foods' sweetness, and also discovered that thick liquids are not as satisfying as more solid foods.

Prof Davidson, an expert in behavioural neuroscience, said: "The body's natural ability to regulate food intake and body weight may be weakened when this natural relationship is impaired by artificial sweeteners."

Professor Swithers said that the loss of the body's ability to gauge caloric intake contributes to increased food intake and weight gain, especially when people do not count calories on their own. Based on the research, the two professors recommend paying more attention to calories consumed and engaging in regular exercise to lose weight.

The study, "A Pavlovian Approach to the Problem of Obesity," appears in the July issue of International Journal of Obesity.

(no further information)

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### **Children's food market could be worth billions**

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

#### **Analysis**

A new report has suggested that the children's food market could be worth billions.

In a study by market analysts Mintel, the amount of money children have to spend on products including food is around £1.5 billion each year from pocket money and financial handouts.

Reportedly 7-10 year olds in Britain have around £417 million each year, whilst 11-14 years get £1.1 billion per year, according to Food Navigator.

However whether food companies will take advantage of this high amount of money is uncertain since recently critics have claimed that children are targeted far too much especially with so-called 'unhealthy' foods.

Recently the Food and Drink Federation defended the industry arguing that food companies tried to ensure they acted responsibly concerning children.

"UK food and drink manufacturers take a very responsible view of their relationships with children," the FDF commented.

"There are already strict Codes of Practice governing advertising and these state that ads should not encourage children to eat or drink frequently throughout the day, condone excessive consumption or suggest that confectionery or snacks should replace balanced meals."

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

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### **SA supports organic egg proposals**

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

**Analysis**

The Soil Association has supported plans to have stricter standards for organic egg production.

Under the new rules by Defra, bird density could be cut from nine per square metre to six.

Speaking on BBC Radio Four's 'Farming Today', the director of the association, Patrick Holden said: "We in the Soil Association have always taken the view that many of the egg production systems which are currently certified as organic do not meet consumers' expectations about what organic really should be in terms of the stocking densities and the flock sizes."

However many egg producers have argued that the new standards set to be implemented by Defra next year could threaten their organic status.

Mr Holden added: "I think that we should lead by better example rather than waiting for other countries to catch up. It is our job as the farming community to communicate to (consumers) why truly organic eggs ought to come from systems with lower flock sizes and lower flocking densities."

Reportedly Defra is still considering the changes.

Further information: [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)  
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**Industry groups meet over organic seeds**

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

**Analysis**

The seed industry and organic producers are due to meet for the first time to discuss the importance of organic seeds for international organic markets, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has announced.

The First World Conference on Organic Seed will take place in Rome this week on July 5th to 7th.

Around 300 participants from private companies, non-governmental and farmers' organisations, scientific institutions and government agencies, are expected to attend the conference, jointly organised by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), the International Seed Federation (ISF), and FAO.

Certified organic agriculture represents less than two per cent of agricultural land worldwide (about 44 million acres or 18 million hectares), half of which is pasture land, but the sector is constantly growing, according to the FAO. Global organic food retail sales amounted to around \$23 billion in 2003, with an annual growth rate of eight per cent in Europe and 12 per cent in the US.

However, organic producers are facing problems with conventional varieties and seeds often performing poorly when grown organically, resulting in low yields, while the seed industry offers only a very limited range of seed varieties suitable for organic production. Developing countries are still facing difficulties in exporting organic products to developed countries, the FAO added.

The conference will focus on the production of quality seeds, the safety of seeds, the harmonisation of seed regulations and certification systems and issues of economic efficiency and biodiversity.

Further information: [www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org)  
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### **New traditional Welsh ready meals**

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

#### **Analysis**

A Welsh company has produced a range of ready meals based on traditional dishes such as cawl and lobsgows.

The new dishes, produced by Cegin Famau Kitchen in North Wales include two types of cawl and one type of lobsgows.

Developed by Elfed Williams of Llanrhaeadr in Denbigh, with the help of the Food Technology Centre in Llangefni, the lobsgows dish will include two-weeks-mature Welsh Beef combined with potato, swede, parsnips and onions in a thick broth, while the cawl will use local lamb or British chicken as the main ingredient. Welsh firms have also been involved in developing and printing packaging for the ready meals.

Mr Williams started selling ready meals through local farmers' markets 12 months ago and approached the Food Technology Centre in Llan-gefni last December, The Western Mail reports. With the help of the Welsh Development Agency and an Objective One grant he has been able to develop the new range.

He said: "I believe that there is a growing demand for traditional Welsh food of quality as I have already found out selling my ready meals through the farmers' markets I attended."

Mr Williams is now looking to expand with suitable premises closer to home in Denbighshire or Conwy.

(no further information)  
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### **TFA calls for improved farmer-consumer links**

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

#### **Analysis**

The Tenant Farmers' Association (TFA) is reportedly planning to use next week's Royal Show to ask why plans to reconnect farmers with customers have failed.

Former MLC chairman and Northumberland farmer Sir Don Curry devised a plan to tackle disconnection between farmers and consumers in his 2002 report, but little action has been taken to address the issue. The TFA believes that vested interests, restrictive State aid rules and supermarket dominance are holding back progress, The Journal reports.

TFA chief executive George Dunn commented: "Supermarkets have been allowed to dominate to the detriment of the agricultural industry and it is now time for that to change. Farmers are pouring millions of pounds through levies into bodies like HGCA, MLC and MDC and now we have public funding for English Food and Farming Partnerships and the Food Chain Centre.

"How much of this money is being spent on direct marketing to the consumer? Not enough is the answer. It is time for the farming organisations and levy bodies to agree on a new strategy for food marketing in this country."

The TFA blames restrictive EU rules on State aids and the interpretation placed on them by the UK Government for hindering plans.

"The state aid rules are ridiculous, we are constantly being told to become more market focused as an industry and when we try to do so we hit a brick wall," Mr Dunn claimed.

Further information: [www.tenant-farmers.org.uk](http://www.tenant-farmers.org.uk)  
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### **Low-carb chocolate rollout gathers pace**

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

#### **Analysis**

Nestle is currently trialling low-carb versions of Rolos and Kit Kats across Scotland, while other manufacturers are also planning products that will cash in on the growing popularity of the Atkins diet and other low-carb eating plans.

More than half of all Britons have reportedly experimented with a low-carbohydrate diet, according to Reuters Business Insight (RBI). The RBI research found that 57 per cent of UK consumers admitted to trying a low-carb diet, though 32 per cent of those surveyed said the diet they tried had lasted less than a week.

The study found that, of 513 British, European and American food and drink manufacturers, 25 per cent were developing low-carb products as a priority and most said they would be launching low-carb products "in the near future".

Low-carb foods represent a very lucrative growing market for consumers, who can reportedly charge up to three times as much for reduced carb versions of foods such as chocolate, crisps and pasta. Nestle's low-carb Rolos will cost £1.89 and a two-finger Kit Kat will reportedly be priced at 89p.

Brand manager Claire Hebron said: "They are more expensive, because sugar substitute is three times more expensive than sugar. People will pay more for something that helps their lifestyle. In supermarkets we'll be placing the Rolos and Kit Kats away from other confectionery because people on low-carb diets avoid the confectionery aisle like the plague - they will be sold alongside health foods."

Experts estimate that the average single person's weekly shop costs £32.17, while those on the Atkins regime, buying specialist products and more meat and fish than normal, spend around £54.40. Most food manufacturers believe the low-carb trend is here to stay and supermarkets in the UK are starting to trial more and more reduced carbohydrate products.

(no further information)

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### **Britons support Govt food health drive**

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

#### **Analysis**

Three-quarters of all Britons are in support of government measures intended to discourage obesity, according to a new survey from the King's Fund.

Over 75 per cent of respondents to the survey maintain that they would welcome a ban on junk food advertising aimed at children, legislation to limit salt, sugar and fats in food and free access to sports facilities.

These figures go in tandem with other findings that two thirds of the population would welcome a ban on smoking in public places.

Additionally, the survey revealed that while 90 per cent of people felt it was up to the individual to take responsibility for his or her own health, 40 per cent recognised that there were many factors influencing health which were outside individual control.

"Contrary to what many claim, the public does want the government to be bolder and to take action," King's Fund chief executive Niall Dickson told Medical News Today.

"However, it also shows the size of the challenge the government faces in getting the balance right between informing and advising people about health, introducing social and economic measures that enable people to make healthy choices, and using bans and other forms of regulation."

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### **Malaysian fruit industry sights UK for expansion**

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

#### **Analysis**

Malaysian fruit producers are looking to the UK for new export opportunities, hoping to increase the supply of tropical fruits to British supermarket chains, in accordance with European standards.

In a bid to secure these new export deals the national Government is encouraging farmers to meet standards set out by the European Retail Produce good Agricultural Practices (EUREGAP).

EUREGAP requirements include detailed record keeping, traceability, pesticide use, soil history, environment protection and labour standards. They will become a legal requirement for all food producers operating in the EU as of January next year.

Commenting on the amalgamation of these standards with existing Malaysian rules Agriculture and Agro-Based industries Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin told the New Straits Times: "We have our own standards and farm accreditation schemes, and we want to harmonise these with EUREGAP requirements.

"That's why we are embarking on an aggressive marketing campaign. Europe is very important to us, as it's our second largest market (for food exports) after Asia," he added.

Minister Yassin is currently leading a marketing mission to the UK and has already met with a major supplier of salad vegetables to leading supermarket group Tesco.

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### **Low cost German milk puts Arla under pressure**

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

#### **Analysis**

Danish retailer Dansk Supermarked started selling cheap German milk last week.

The two Danish multiples owned by the Dansk Supermarked Group - Fotex and Bilka - are selling the milk under Dansk Supermarked's own brand "Engholm" and it is clearly marked "Produced in Germany".

The move could seriously affect the future of dairy giant Arla and is likely to have an impact on milk prices and production across Europe, according to Danish press reports. The launch of the imported milk follows Arla's decision earlier in the year to market discounted "Danmaelk", which now has a 12 per cent share of the Danish milk market.

Swedish-Danish dairy group Arla claims that German dairies are able to sell discounted milk in Denmark because their milk producers are being paid less for their milk than Danish producers.

Arla Foods chairman Knud Erik Jensen told the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten that the German milk imports would "impact negatively" on the price paid to farmers by Arla, while managing director Ake Modig predicted at a board meeting this week that Arla Foods' divisions results will fall approximately DKK 100 million below budget.

"Cheap German milk has arrived in supermarkets and although Arla Foods' response to the German milk, Danmaelk, has proved an effective answer by achieving a market share of 12 per cent, the fact remains that the milk price continues its downward trend in Danish stores," Mr Modig stated.

Arla is fighting back by promoting quality in the face of the new price competition in the Danish milk market, highlighting the benefits of its quality programme, Arlagarden, to consumers.

Further information: [www.arlafoods.com](http://www.arlafoods.com)  
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### **Concerns over future of UK beef**

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

#### **Analysis**

Farmers leaders have warned that British beef could disappear from UK tables within two years when EU subsidies to raise cattle at home are abandoned next year.

Changes to the European Common Agricultural Policy will bring an end to subsidies for crops and animals, replacing the current system with a single farm payment and British beef producers are expected to cut animal numbers in response.

Tim Bennett, president of the National Farmers' Union, said at the opening of the Royal Show at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, that the new rules would force traditional beef producers out of the market because of low market prices and returns caused by an influx of cheap imported beef from countries such as Brazil, EDP24.co.uk reports.

"We have a prime quality product. British beef is widely regarded as the safest," he explained. "But farmers are now having to decide whether to breed beef animals for next year and the year after. There could be a real shortage of home-grown beef in a couple of years. The worry is that imported beef will be cheaper."

The NFU leader dismissed speculation about a stampede out of the British beef industry, pointing out that demand for British beef was increasing, but he warned that producers feared low prices in the future because of Europe's farm reforms.

North of England farmer Robert Robinson, chairman of the National Beef Association, added: "The attitude of the retailers is crucial. If they are serious about offering their customers high value UK beef in the long term they have to acknowledge the difficulties faced by the domestic industry and establish a system that can deliver supply security."

The Country Land and Business Association (CLBA) warned that the new EU support rules could leave much of the country's pasture land, currently grazed by cattle and sheep, reverting to scrub.

Further information: [www.nfu.org.uk](http://www.nfu.org.uk)  
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## **Food industry deals on the up**

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

### **Analysis**

The food and drink manufacturing industry in Derbyshire is making moves of major significance to the local economy, according to a finance expert.

Andrew Durbin, a partner with Smith Cooper Corporate Finance, a division of accountancy firm Smith Cooper, highlighted recent deals in the county, such as the buyout of the £30 million business of convenience meals firm Pann Krisp, the buyout of fruit and vegetables wholesaler Palins, and the sale of a group of fast food franchises back to the franchiser.

Mr Durbin told thisisderbyshire.co.uk: "I believe that we may see more deals coming to fruition as businesses respond to these pressures and adapt their service offering to take advantage of these new trends. This should spell good news for the local economy."

The food and drink industry is the largest single manufacturing sector in the UK with a turnover of £67.6 billion. Over recent years competition in the industry has intensified, leading to a consolidation through mergers and acquisitions.

At the same time the sector has come under increasing consumer pressure due to a variety of issues including the demand for convenience, variety and choice, a growing interest in health and nutrition, clear and informative product labelling and keen pricing.

Experts believe the fast food sector may have peaked, but the emphasis on healthy eating and choice has opened the market up to small and medium sized businesses, particularly those producing specialist products.

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## **MPs raise new BSE concerns**

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

### **Analysis**

The system used by the government to keep track of livestock is relying upon "Dad's Army" technology, according to an influential group of MPs.

The Commons public accounts committee has warned that one in seven cows are "lost" under the current scheme, which is designed to help reduce the risk of another BSE outbreak.

"The whole point of the system, which incidentally farmers find hugely burdensome - it's all in triplicate, it's all sort of ancient 1940's Dad's Army type of technology, all through the post - is to try and ensure that if you have an outbreak," Edward Leigh, who chairs the committee, told the Today programme.

"They've got to move into the modern age," he added. "For a start they should do an industry-friendly scheme. Secondly, they should move forward into the electronic age; we found that when this was done electronically there were far fewer mistakes."

The scheme is intended to enable the government to track animals that have been moved from a particular farm in the event of a BSE outbreak.

The report from the public accounts committee is likely to come as a blow to the government, as it concluded that the current arrangements did not guarantee that another outbreak could be contained.

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### **Screw-cap wine growing in popularity**

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

#### **Analysis**

UK consumers are demonstrating a new affinity for wine fastened with a screw-cap, as opposed to the traditional cork, with the number of screw-top bottles sold having risen significantly.

Wine retailers are reporting trends that suggest consumers are no longer associating screw-caps with inferior wine, often opting for them out of convenience.

In 2002, only one in 500 wines sold by Tesco were of the screw-cap type, a figure that has risen to one in six this year and is expected to rise to one in two by the end of 2005.

At Somerfield somewhere in the region of 15 per cent of all wines sold are screw-capped, representing an increase of 11 per cent of one year.

"Screw-caps caused one of the biggest debates to hit the wine world, but now more and more people are turning to them," a Tesco spokeswoman told the Herald. "Initially, there was a lot of resistance from older traditionalists who enjoyed the action of pulling a cork, as well as from people who thought screw-caps had been associated with cheap wine in the past.

"But now many customers who were originally opposed to screw-caps can see that they guarantee freshness and ensure that the wine is not corked," she added.

A number of popular wine producers have switched production from corks to caps in recent years, including Jacobs Creek, Hardys, Gallo and Penfolds.

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### **More food packagers opting for plastics**

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

#### **Analysis**

New figures indicate that plastics are set to rise in profile in the UK food packaging market, expected to represent some 39 per cent of the overall market share.

A report from Market Business Development states that the food and drink packaging market in the UK declined by six per cent between 1999 and 2003 due to price competition, environmental concerns, legislation and economic uncertainty.

The industry is now thought to be worth some almost £1.8 billion, suggesting that plastics could be worth near £700 million by the end of the decade.

Between 2004 and 2008 plastics' market share is expected to increase by three per cent, with paper and board continuing to be the strongest sector.

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### **Producers look to reducing energy**

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

#### **Analysis**

A number of global food companies have now put in place measures aimed at reducing energy consumption.

In response to consumer concerns and increasing corporate environmental responsibility, firms including Unilever, Kraft and Campina have made steps towards reducing environmental pollution.

Campina, one of Europe's largest dairy companies, has produced a statement detailing measures taken to improve the group's environmental performance. The group's Corporate Social Responsibility Report 2003 outlines investments made in recycling water, an energy consumption reduction of two per cent and a €6 million allocation for environmental projects.

Kraft Foods has selected Rockwell Automation's Power & Energy Management Solutions (PEMS) team to develop and execute a sustained energy reduction initiative across all its manufacturing facilities in North America.

Meanwhile, Unilever has fitted its distribution centre in Coventry with state-of-the-art insulation and energy re-use facilities and has produced savings in refrigeration costs of around 40 per cent. The company also claims that the building has been designed to blend into the landscape.

UK government pressure has helped to instigate corporate environmental responsibility, including the 2001 Climate Change Levy and its energy reduction targets.

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### **UK-India agricultural relationship grows**

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

#### **Analysis**

At least three business delegations from the UK are due to visit India in the near future in order to discuss the development of agricultural partnerships.

Director of the International Agriculture and Technology Centre (IATC), Philippa David, said at this year's Royal Show, Stoneleigh Park, that India was one of the world's most "sophisticated and growing" markets, as well as being one of the largest.

Mr David said India should become a stronger focus for UK producers, while, at the same time, India could also gain wider access to the European markets by using the UK's expertise in spheres such as food safety, hygiene and traceability, research and development and organic production.

The IATC head said she was certain that at least ten of the major food and drink companies in the UK would like to invest in India, hinduonnet.com reports.

The IATC is a joint initiative between UK Trade and Investment, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Royal Agricultural Society of England and Advantage West Midlands.

(no further information)

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### **Kiwi fruit a 'significant allergen'**

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

#### **Analysis**

Kiwi fruit is a significant food allergen, capable of causing severe reactions, particularly in children with other allergic reactions, new research claims.

A study by scientists from the University of Southampton highlights the rise in allergic reactions to the tropical fruit and suggests that the increase in allergic symptoms is a result of rising food allergy levels and an increase in consumption of kiwi fruit.

The study of almost 300 people, funded by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), is the first large, detailed study into the clinical characteristics of kiwi fruit allergy in adults and children.

Kiwi fruit was first introduced into the UK diet in the late 1960s, and consumption has increased steadily since then, with over 31,000 tonnes of the fruit imported into the UK alone in 2002.

Dr Jane Lucas, a paediatrician and clinical research fellow at the University of Southampton commented: "Our findings clearly show that allergy to kiwi fruit is an important problem, with most severe reactions occurring in young children. It also highlights important features of the allergy which further our clinical progress in this field. There is now a need for additional studies to explain the apparent increasing prevalence of this allergy and to explain the differences between reactions in children and adults."

Opportunities for the development of synthetic kiwi flavours are likely to expand as a result of the study, as manufacturers seek safer alternatives.

The research appears in the July issue of Clinical and Experimental Allergy.

Further information: [www.soton.ac.uk](http://www.soton.ac.uk)  
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### **Birdseye removing additives from product range**

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

#### **Analysis**

Frozen food giant Bird's Eye has announced that it is removing additives from all its products in the UK.

Bird's Eye has overhauled its range of 130 products to ensure they are completely free from artificial colourings, flavourings and preservatives and the company claims to have dropped about 100 artificial ingredients, including modified starches and thickeners.

The firm, part of the Anglo-Dutch consumer goods conglomerate Unilever, is also reducing salt levels in ready meals by 16 per cent and the saturated fat content of the oil used to prepare products by five times.

The decision, expected to create a storm in the UK ready meals sector, has cost the manufacturer £4 million. Bird's Eye, the largest brand in the UK frozen food market, is reportedly prepared to spend £25 million to publicise the move, including a new campaign with the slogan: "We don't play with your food".

Jerry Wright, Bird's Eye's marketing director, said: "We are signalling some fundamental changes in our approach to every single product in our range. We are responding to the desires of consumers. There is a feeling that they would rather be buying products that contain things that they recognise.

"Our principle has been that you shouldn't find anything on the list of ingredients on the side of our packets that you would not find in your cupboards at home."

In recent months several leading food manufacturers have responded to growing consumer concerns about the contents of packaged foods.

Further information: [www.birdseye.com](http://www.birdseye.com)  
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### **Basmati contamination comes under scrutiny**

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

#### **Analysis**

New reports from the Food Standards Agency suggest that an increasing amount of basmati rice sold in the UK is contaminated with inferior long-grain rice.

Out of 300 samples of rice sold in supermarkets and other food retail outlets, one in five packets had more than 20 per cent of non-basmati rice. In one in 10 cases, the adulteration was as high as 60 per cent.

Basmati rice, which has grown in popularity in the UK during the past 10 years, has a unique aroma and characteristic elongated shape. But the term 'Basmati' is not currently under legal protection.

Earlier this year the FSA launched a guidance recommending that the term 'Basmati' should only be used to refer to 11 Indian and five Pakistani rice varieties that display typical Basmati properties.

Commenting on the problem of contamination a spokesperson for the Agency told Food Navigator: "Basmati rice is a premium product and therefore attracts higher prices than other long-grain rices.

"Telling the difference between them is difficult, and there is a profit to be made from mixing in a cheaper variety. The industry code of practice is out of date and there is a need for new standards," he added.

It is hoped that new screening methods for basmati rice, recently developed by UK scientists, will aid in tackling the problem of contamination.

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

### **FSA advises on selenium**

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

#### **Analysis**

A study funded by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has confirmed that selenium, a trace element found naturally in some foods, can help the immune system defend the body against viruses.

In light of these reports the FSA advises that eating a varied and balanced diet can maintain the necessary intake of selenium.

Foods that the Agency highlights as being a good source of selenium include brazil nuts, fish, meat and eggs, according to Medical News Today.

The FSA has also advised that individuals do not take excess amounts of selenium in supplements, warning that doing so can result in selenosis, a condition that in its mildest form can lead to loss of hair, skin and nails.

Concerns have arisen that Britons have been eating decreasing amounts of selenium over the past two decades. Current levels are high enough to avoid deficiency diseases, but the FSA is nonetheless commissioning further research into the matter.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Great Yorkshire show ready to go**

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

#### **Analysis**

The Great Yorkshire Show is just a few days away and final preparations are underway at the show's 240-acre site near Harrogate.

The Yorkshire Agricultural Society has announced that ticket sales for this year's three-day event are up 60 per cent on last year, with 6,300 orders.

Organisers of the 146th Great Yorkshire Show, which starts on July 13th, are confident that the event's reputation as a superb day out will attract thousands of visitors.

Honorary show director Christopher Hall said: "We have the second highest entry figure in the show's history for our competitive classes, we will have more cattle, sheep, pigs and goats than ever before and we have a packed programme of entertainment in our two arenas.

"We have new features combined with the traditional to ensure there is something for everyone."

This year's show also features a new competition aimed at promoting the region's culinary talents.

The Great Yorkshire Cookery Competition, judged by Richard Allen, head chef of Fourth Floor Restaurant, Harvey Nichols, Leeds, Elaine Lemm, food and drink editor for Yorkshire Life, and TV presenter Gaynor Barnes, will provide the opportunity for professional and amateur chefs to demonstrate their skills using regional produce.

Further information: [www.greatyorkshireshow.org](http://www.greatyorkshireshow.org)  
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### **FSA issues warning over salt levels**

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

#### **Analysis**

The UK's food watchdog has declared that salt levels in pizzas, baked beans and canned pasta are still too high.

The Food Standards Agency said two surveys had shown that levels of salt in processed food vary significantly between brands. One children's pizza was found to contain almost three times as much salt as a rival brand, while some standard tins of baked beans had two-thirds the salt of other comparable tins.

The FSA notes that some manufacturers have reduced salt levels since the surveys were carried out, but the agency insisted that salt levels still needed to fall across the full range of

processed food for people to reduce their salt consumption to the recommended maximum level.

Sir John Krebs, Chair of the Agency, said: "Foods such as baked beans, spaghetti and pizza are products that families rely on - 75 per cent of our daily salt intake comes from salt hidden in products such as these, and not from salt that we add ourselves.

"The fact that the salt in one can of baked beans, or a pizza, can vary so dramatically indicates that manufacturers can reduce the amount of salt they add to these products. The Food Standards Agency wants to see more substantial reductions in salt in food products."

The FSA has set a target of 2010 for food companies to reduce salt levels to a recommended maximum level of six grams a day. On average, adults are currently consuming about 9.5g of salt a day.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Heinz considers production move**

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

#### **Analysis**

Food giant Heinz has announced that its production facility in Pudliszki, in the west of Poland, is undergoing production trials for products currently manufactured in western Europe.

The Heinz of Poland Pudliszki production facilities consist of two production sites, one processing tomatoes and vegetables, the other manufacturing ready meals.

Heinz is now expected to move some of its western European production over to Poland where production costs are significantly cheaper.

"I can confirm that the production trials are under way at the moment in the Pudliszki plant for the transfer of production from our operations in western Europe," Heinz Poland spokesperson Dorota Poninska told CeeFoodIndustry.com. "However, I must stress that no definite decision has been made to transfer any further production to our Polish facilities from our other plants in western Europe."

The Pudliszki facilities currently employ around 500 people and some small scale transfer of Heinz production from western Europe has already occurred. However, since the enlargement of the EU to include ten new member states, including Poland, it will be far easier for companies to transfer production.

Last year Heinz Poland had a total sales turnover of €58.8 million, a very small proportion on the corporations multi billion overall turnover. In 2003 Heinz saw sales volumes slip 1.4 per cent in Europe as a whole and, with pricing becoming an increasingly important issue in Europe, the firm is looking closely at reducing costs.

Further information: [www.heinz.com](http://www.heinz.com)  
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### **Language Farm launches new liquor ice creams**

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

#### **Analysis**

Dairy products firm Langage farm has unveiled a new range of premium ice creams using branded alcohol from drinks giant Allied Domecq.

The UK-based company's new ice cream selection includes Tia Maria Liqueur Spirit with Amaretti Biscuits, Lamb's Navy Rum and Raisin, and Malibu with Pineapple and Coconut.

The new range of luxury ice cream flavours, made using Channel Island whole milk, is targeted at adults, just-food.com reports.

Tim Donovan, national sales manager at Langage Farm, explained: "Our new range of liqueur ice creams uses famous alcohol brands to create a point of difference."

"The universal appeal of the high profile alcohol brands provides a reassurance of quality and taste acceptability and ensures instant consumer awareness. The new range will add value and interest to the ice cream category and is likely to be extended in the future."

(no further information)

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### **Food allergy testing to employ blood tests**

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

#### **Analysis**

It is being proposed that a blood test that measures food specific allergy antibodies can be used to ascertain exactly when to introduce a particular food to a person with suspected allergies.

A report from researchers at the John Hopkins Centre outlines guidelines for using these antibody levels to determine which children should be offered one allergy test, known as an oral food challenge, in which a child eats small amounts of a food to establish an allergy.

It has been recommended that the test be carried out on children thought to have a 50 per cent chance of 'passing'.

"These findings make it clear that doing a blood test to measure IgE levels can accurately predict how a patient will fare during a food challenge," paediatric allergist Robert Wood told Medical News today. "We recommend its routine use in clinical practice to screen children with suspected allergies before a food challenge is performed."

"By using our data as a guideline, physicians can better determine the appropriate time to try to reintroduce foods into an allergic child's diet," he added.

Research has found that food allergies affect up to eight per cent of children and two per cent of adolescents and adults, with the foods likely to cause allergies in children being cow's milk, eggs, wheat and peanuts.

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### **Midlands tap water ranks among the best**

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

#### **Analysis**

New tests reveal that drinking water in the Midlands is among the cleanest and safest in the country, with quality currently at the best it has ever been.

It is estimated over nine million people in the region regularly consume tap water, and reports from the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) indicate that 99.93 per cent of tests in the area met with current standards.

According to the Birmingham post the number of failed samples from the region in 2003 was just 219 out of almost 318,000.

"Overall I'm delighted with this year's report for the West Midlands as it shows that what comes out of your tap is cleaner and safer than it has ever been," commented Peter Halton, the DWI's Inspector for the West Midlands.

"It's easy to take clean water for granted, but the only way consumers' rising expectations can be met is by ongoing vigilance on our part and by sustained investment by the industry," he added.

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### **Scottish salmon promotion unveiled**

**Date:** Fri, 09 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new month-long campaign aimed at setting the record straight about Scottish salmon has been launched.

The newspaper campaign outlines working practices and standards that are required for salmon farmers to be Scottish Quality Salmon (SQS) members. Part-funded by The Crown Estate, the striking black and white advertisements claim that Scottish Quality Salmon "naturally they're the best".

The adverts highlight the rigorous and regular independent inspections SQS farms are subject to and are supported with much more extensive information on the SQS website and in a new consumer leaflet available through retailers and fishmongers, fishupdate.com reports.

"We believe that Scottish Quality Salmon is the best quality you can get," Scottish Quality Salmon chief executive, Brian Simpson, said. "This is regularly supported by blind tastings at Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh and by consumer taste panels run by an internationally accredited organisation in Paris."

"We are pleased to be supporting this initiative", added Ian Pritchard, marine estate manager (Scotland) for The Crown Estate. "It emphasises the high standards maintained on Scottish salmon farms and underlines the fact that we have an industry of which Scotland and the rest of the UK can be proud."

The £200,000 SQS campaign will act as a curtain raiser for a £3 million campaign funded by the industry and the Scottish Executive, which will promote the health benefits of eating Scottish farmed salmon.

(no further information)

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### **Nestle launches cross segment product**

**Date:** Fri, 09 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The number of cross segment product launches has surged in recent years, with products such as Smirnoff Ice and Mars' flavoured milk drink proving immensely popular.

Nestle UK has announced the launch of another new crossover product, based on its Ski brand of yoghurts.

The new Ski-based product will be a cereal bar, due to be launched in July. The new bar has two varieties - red berries and yoghurt and citrus burst and yoghurt - and will be promoted as an all-day snack rather than a breakfast alternative.

Datamonitor analyst Daniel Bone applauded the move, telling bakeryandsnacks.com: "Extending Ski into cereal bars is the second significant attempt Nestle has made in recent months to strengthen the brand. Only last month, its new yoghurt drink, Ski Stopgap, was made available, marketed as a breakfast alternative and on-the-go snack with a mix of low fat yoghurt, cereal and fruit."

Nestle previously attempted to launch a breakfast cereal linked to its Rowntrees confectionary range, which proved unpopular.

Manufacturers seeking to leverage the strength of their brand can gain invaluable exposure by reinventing it in a new product category. However, the further the original brand is 'extended' from its traditional market, the bigger the gamble for the brand's owner.

(no further information)

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### **Food origin labelling**

**Date:** Fri, 09 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) has reportedly failed to reach a decision on revising the Codex standard on country of origin labelling.

At a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, the Commission instructed the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) to forward a letter to member states asking for their views on whether current Codex regulations adequately addressed the concerns raised by some governments.

The CCFL requested guidance on the issue at its last meeting, after member states failed to agree on whether to begin work on revising the "General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods". The comments from member states will be considered at the next CCFL meeting in May 2005.

The UK believes a revision of the "General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods" is necessary, as it is currently not enough to prevent misleading labelling.

The US, many developing countries and food industry groups continue to oppose the revision of the origin labelling standard, as they fear that ingredient origin labelling would be impracticable, complicated, confusing and entail huge cost to food producers and industries.

Delegates at the meeting did, however, reach an agreement on expanding Codex rules to most dairy products, beyond the present narrow scope that focuses on powdered milk. General food hygiene regulations were also expanded and there was a consensus reached on an international code of practice on 'good animal feeding'.

Further information: [www.ictsd.org](http://www.ictsd.org)  
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### **Toxin detection research underway**

**Date:** Fri, 09 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Scientists at Nanyang Polytechnic have started groundbreaking new research on toxin detection.

As part of a tie-up with UK-based bioscience company Crown Vision Systems, researchers are looking into developing a test that detects poisonous toxins in food in a matter of hours.

Current tests, which use a method that separates the components in a liquid, can take as long as three months.

Dr Joel Lee, Director (Life Sciences) at the Nanyang Polytechnic, said: "Toxins produced in peanuts can cause liver cancer and we are worried about pesticides in vegetables, things like pollutants in water.

"If we have a very sensitive biosensor that can detect all sorts of chemical hazards, it will be a very useful tool to detect the presence of such chemicals before it actually affects any of us."

The new test will use firefly genes and genetically modified glowing micro-organisms, invisible to the naked eye, which will attach themselves to dangerous toxins.

The laboratory at Nanyang Polytechnic hopes to bring the "mini cop" to life in two years' time.

Research is taking place at Nanyang Polytechnic's and Crown Vision Systems newly-opened incubator laboratory and the two-year research project is funded by a \$1 million investment from BAE Systems.

(no further information)

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### **High salt food products identified**

**Date:** Fri, 09 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Food Standards Agency has released the names of a number of popular food products it claims contains excessive amounts of salt.

According to the Agency some had more than half the maximum recommended daily amount for adults in a single serving, a cause for worry seeing that high salt levels have been linked to high blood pressure, which can increase the risk of heart disease.

The FSA reports that half a standard-sized stonebaked pepperoni pizza from Tesco contains 4.1g of salt, and a Crisp Fine Base Speciale Pizza from Dr Oetker had 4.4g of salt for the same size portion.

Own-brand baked beans from Morrisons, Budgens and Somerfield all contained 3.2g of salt in half a tin (210g), while Asda Spaghetti and Spaghetti Loops and Co-op Spaghetti contained 3.7g of salt. Safeway's Kids Spaghetti Letters contain 1.5g of salt

A Sainsbury's Blue Parrot Cheese and Tomato Pizza and a Kids Crew Cheese and Tomato Pizza from Iceland fared worst overall, containing 1.4g of salt: over a quarter of the recommended daily amount for seven to 10-year-olds.

Supermarket representatives asserted their committal to reducing salt levels.

"Sainsbury's has led the way in challenging the levels of salt in its products and in November 2003 was the first UK supermarket to announce challenging salt reduction targets," a Sainsbury spokesperson told the Times.

Morrisons said: "We are actively looking at ways to reduce the levels of salt in our products and have done so in certain areas."

Somerfield stated that it "is committed to reducing the salt in its own products".

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Conference to tackle obesity**

**Date:** Fri, 09 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Healthcare professionals, academics and politicians assemble for a conference in London today to discuss childhood obesity.

Whether through physical inactivity or poor diet the problem of obesity among children is intensifying.

The government is keen to get a handle on the issue, which has been linked to a number of conditions such as diabetes.

Among the speakers at the Obesity in Children conference will be Liberal Democrat health spokesman, Paul Burstow.

Mr Burstow is expected to tell delegates that a united approach is needed to overcome obesity and ensure that young people live healthy and active lives.

"The health consequences of childhood obesity cannot be overstated," he will say. "There is no quick fix to tackling obesity.

"It's glib and unhelpful to say eat less and exercise more. It is essential to tackle the forces behind poor diet and sedentary behaviour."

Figures from the Health Development Agency revealed that one in three 15-year-olds are overweight, while one in six are obese.

Further information: [www.hda-online.org.uk](http://www.hda-online.org.uk)  
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### **SA supports GM planting concerns**

**Date:** Mon, 12 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Soil Association has welcomed support for the views of organic consumers from a group of UK MPs.

A new report from the an Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee states that consumers want reassurances that organic crops in the UK will not be contaminated by genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Peter Melchett, policy director of the Soil Association, said, "Contamination is simply not acceptable. In the national GM debate last year, 95 per cent of people participating said they were concerned about the contamination of non-GM crops - the highest rating for any issue."

Mr Melchett pointed out that an estimated 80 per cent of the public eat some organic food, and research has shown that avoiding GMOs is one of the reasons people give for buying organic food, Medical News Today reports.

The government has been planning a GM crop regime that will allow up to 0.9 per cent GM contamination of organic and other non-GM food crops and will issue a consultation in the next few weeks.

The Soil Association claims that there are clear legal reasons for using a zero threshold as the basis of any GM planting regime.

"We also welcome the supporting recommendation that compensation to organic and other non-GM farmers should cover all economic losses resulting from contamination," Mr Melchett added.

Further information: [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)  
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### **Europe welcomes biotech beer**

**Date:** Mon, 12 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A consortium of the world's largest biotechnology companies, led by Monsanto Co, has helped fund the production of a new genetically modified beer.

A small Swedish brewer has developed a light biotech lager, using hops and barley and a small amount of genetically engineered corn.

The consortium hopes that Kenth beer will help persuade European consumers of the benefits of genetically modified products. The European Union is slowly moving towards opening up the continent to biotech firms.

Brewmaster Kenth Persson hopes to profit from the notoriety his biotech brew is generating. The beer went on sale earlier this year in Denmark and Sweden. The brewer claims that 4,000 bottles are now on their way to German drinkers and he is currently in talks with stores in the United Kingdom.

European consumers insist that food containing GMOs is clearly labelled, in contrast to the United States where no such GM labelling restrictions apply. In April, the EU lifted a six-year moratorium on new biotech food, after it approved the sale of a modified strain of sweet corn, grown mainly in the United States.

The Monsanto-created corn in Kent was approved for use in 1998, before the moratorium, and is grown in Germany. The consortium has not purchased equity in the small Swedish brewer and will not share in sales of the beer.

There has been strong opposition to the lager from environmental groups. Dan Belusa, a Greenpeace spokesperson, commented: "Basically no GM foods are sold in Europe because consumers and retailers make a conscience choice to say 'no' to them."

Further information: [www.monsanto.co.uk](http://www.monsanto.co.uk)  
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### **Pressure on dairy farmers to take action on prices**

**Date:** Mon, 12 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Around one-quarter of dairy farmers in the UK will quit the industry in the next two years, a new survey claims.

Research conducted by the Milk Development Council concluded that few dairy farmers can currently make a profit and leave something over for reinvestment.

Milk prices in Britain are little better than 18p per litre and many farmers are struggling to stay afloat, The Herald reports. There are now just over 1500 active dairy farmers in Scotland, half the number 20 years ago, in what used to be one of the most profitable sectors of the farming industry.

Despite a recent study in America which claimed that milk may help to prevent certain cancers, UK producer returns were at the bottom of the EU league for the sixth year in a row, at 14.5 per cent below continental producers.

A major price war is gaining momentum among the UK's largest supermarkets and producers are suffering as a result of shareholders' and consumers' calls for wider margins and lower prices. The power of the country's supermarkets means that producers are increasingly at the mercy of aggressive price cutting measures.

UK dairy farmers are being urged to strengthen their selling power and consolidate efforts. At present, experts claim, there are too many co-operatives vying with each other for business and being forced to cut producer prices.

(no further information)  
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### **Dairy farmers urged to cooperate over pricing**

**Date:** Mon, 12 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Growing concerns over pricing in the UK dairy industry is prompting farmers to take greater steps towards securing higher profits.

A recent survey from the Milk Development Council concluded that 25 per cent of dairy farmers would put their cows down the road by 2006, with the overall number of dairy farmers in the UK continuing to fall.

Though the UK may have the highest average herd size in the EU, producer returns were at the bottom of the European league at 14.5 per cent below continental producers, for the sixth consecutive year, according to the Herald.

With current prices in the region of 18 pence per litre farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to make significant profits.

As well as this a burgeoning price war between supermarket chains threatens to leave farmers at further disadvantage. In light of this dairy farmers are being encouraged to cooperate and work towards becoming price-makers.

Recently Robert Wiseman, a firm that has attempted to be farmer-friendly, lost out on a major supply contract with Asda.

Further information: [www.mdc.org.uk](http://www.mdc.org.uk)  
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### **NFU looks ahead to policy reform**

**Date:** Mon, 12 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The National Farmers Union is anticipating a number of changes to the UK's rural policy in the coming weeks, particularly regarding the meat and livestock sector and CAP

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is due to disclose the details of its review of rural policy and furthermore recommendations on how this policy can be updated, and today, chancellor Gordon Brown is set to reveal his Comprehensive Spending Review for the next three years.

Though it has been rumoured that in agriculture there may be reductions in meat imports and disease control, it is expected that more money will be spent on rural transport and more affordable rural housing.

In addition to these announcements farmers are also anticipating an announcement on whether or not they will receive their money back when Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is reformed.

NFU policy director Martin Howarth maintains optimism that the imminent changes will be of benefit to UK farming. Speaking on BBC Radio Four he said: "We're optimistic that the Government will take the right decisions on these issues and if they do we think that farming's future is bright.

"Of course we're worried because there's always the possibility of things going wrong," he added.

Further information: [www.nfu.org.uk](http://www.nfu.org.uk)  
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### **FoE recommends GM research restrictions**

**Date:** Mon, 12 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Friends of the Earth is recommending that research into genetically modifying food crops to produce vaccines should be restricted, concerned that extensive research could lead to cross contamination.

It is believed that GM plants could generate cheap vaccines for a number of diseases including AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Julian Ma, the leading researcher in the study, maintains that the new methods of making vaccines are needed, particularly in the developing world.

"We can afford to go to the doctor and pay for our vaccines through the NHS, but we're really focussing on developing world illnesses," he told the BBC.

"In those cases they cannot afford the modern medicines."

In response to this FoE representative Clare Oxborrow stressed the need to regulate the new research so as to ensure crop safety.

"What we'd be very keen to see is first of all this kind of research not undertaken at all in food crops, that have the potential for contamination. Secondly for them to be confined."  
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### **Low carb trend slowing**

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

#### **Analysis**

The popularity of low-carb diets is waning and many specialist food stores and suppliers in the US have seen sales plummet this year.

The Wall Street Journal reports that food makers are now revising their plans for new products amid disappointing sales.

In an interview with the paper, low-carbohydrate bread producer Christine Conserva pitched said she had been turned away by a specialty-food market last month, which was going out of business, and had seen sales of her Accu-Carb breads drop by about half this year, following three years of strong orders.

A significant increase in available products and books on low-carb diet plans has led to a surplus and food manufacturers are now discovering that they cannot charge as much as they had planned for low-carb produce.

Past food trends have demonstrated that only a fraction of new diet driven products gain a permanent spot on supermarket shelves. For example, low-fat varieties of some dairy products have become grocery staples, but many fat-free products have not lasted because they did not taste good.

Sales of low-carb foods are still climbing and manufacturers are continuing to roll-out new products. In fact, during the first six months of this year, food companies launched 1,863 low-carb products, according to packaged goods tracker Productscan Online, nearly three times the number introduced in 2003.

However, the sales growth of low-carb foods has slowed. Market research firm ACNielsen estimates that sales of "carb conscious" products rose 95 per cent in the 13 weeks ended March 13th, while sales were up by just 42 per cent during the period ending June 12th.

A survey by market research firm a survey by NPD Group Inc found that the percentage of Americans who claim to be following a low-carb diet, such as the Atkins or South Beach diets, peaked in early February at nine percent, falling to between six and seven per cent in early June.

(no further information)

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### **Welsh food firm extends local supply links**

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

#### **Analysis**

A North Wales distribution firm has added six new food producers to their growing list of local suppliers this summer.

Northop-based Celyn Produce Ltd, which grew out of the thriving Celyn Farmers' Market, launched the new food distribution initiative on St David's Day this year.

The company's new ranges include free-range eggs from Cilcain, sausages and bacon from Vaughan's Family Butchers of Penyffordd, Knoltons farmhouse cheese, Pupur Poeth ready meals, delicatessen products and dairy produce from Coed Du farm, Rhydymwyn.

The firm has already signed up customers in the Mold, Hawarden, Buckley, Connahs Quay and Flintshire areas of Wales, according to The Western Mail.

Celyn Produce supplies an extensive range of products, including locally produced vegetables, meat, cheese, smoked fish, honey, fruit and juices.

(no further information)

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### **Children opting for junk food**

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

#### **Analysis**

Children are ignoring warnings about growing obesity levels and are opting for unhealthy food in the school canteen.

A report by inspectors from Ofsted and the Food Standards Agency claims that primary schools are failing to give children consistent messages about healthy eating and meals provided in schools do not match healthy diet teaching.

The study found that children's awareness of diet and nutrition is poor and what they are taught has little impact on what they eat. Ofsted and the FSA are calling on state schools in Britain to offer healthy options at mealtimes and teach children about nutrition.

"This lack of accurate and up-to-date subject knowledge is a key factor in impeding effective food and nutrition education," the report warns. "In the survey, staff frequently stated that the popular press was their source of nutrition information."

A Department for Education and Skills/FSA survey of 5,695 11 to 16-year-olds at 79 secondary schools also found that 91 per cent of schools included fruit and vegetables on their menus most days of the week. However, just six per cent of high school pupils surveyed chose a salad or vegetable option at mealtime.

An estimated one in five men and a quarter of women in the UK are obese and the country has seen a sharp rise in incidents of obesity-related diseases.

The DfES, the Department of Health, the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the FSA will launch a fresh attempt to get the healthy eating message across to pupils this autumn.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Pupils help launch new cheeses**

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

#### **Analysis**

A group of schoolchildren from Wales, England, Scotland and Brittany have joined forces to help launch a new range of quality Welsh cheeses.

The Cadog brand, launched in February this year, is named after a 6th century Celtic saint and missionary. The new cheese range is produced in Llandyrnog using traditional methods and includes medium and mature cheese as well as distinctive tasting vintage cheese.

Children from schools associated with St Cadog, from across the UK and abroad, were brought together at the official launch of the new range at the International Food and Drink Festival in Cardiff Bay,

The Cadog brand now includes products from all three ACC creameries at Llandyrnog, Cardiff and Llangadog. Cheese from Llandyrnog joins milk from Cardiff and butter and luxury canned products from Llangadog, The Western Mail reports.

Wynfford James, Welsh Development Agency agri-food director, launched the new Cadog range, saying: "We are delighted to be playing a key role in driving forward exciting new developments within the Welsh food industry and to have supported the development of new premium regional brands such as Cadog."

Alan Hinton, general manager for ACC, added: "Not only are we delighted to be launching the cheese range but we are also particularly pleased to have initiated the development of links between all the primary schools associated with St Cadog," he said.

(no further information)

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### **Brand food nutrition database launched**

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

#### **Analysis**

Brand food nutrition database set to launch

A new database of nutritional information to help patients and their carers is to be created by a medical company and UK food brands.

Medictra, an online medical resource, offers a DailyDietTracker tool which will allow users to keep note of their calorie consumption and the nutritional content in the branded food products they eat.

A host of different options including weight goals and specialist diets will also be offered with help from brands including Wimpy, Asda and Starbucks.

Ivan Southall, commercial director at IPT, which runs the site, told Brand Republic: "DailyDietTracker is geared towards loyal members who will repeatedly visit the site to update their food and exercise diaries. It is important that as many foods as possible are represented."

At present 1,254 different foods are featured on the site and UK food companies are being encouraged to include their own brand food information in the database.

Specific messages will also be provided by the brands which can be changed depending on a user's profile, for instance whether they are new or what foods are popular in the region they come from.

Further information: [www.medictra.com](http://www.medictra.com)  
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### **Dairy packaging looking innovative for the future**

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

#### **Analysis**

Arla Foods, which owns UK dairy brands such as Anchor and Cravendale, has unveiled new work planned to create dairy packaging that can monitor its own shelf life.

It is thought that the project is likely to get the go-ahead but an official decision is set to be made on October 1 when the company's supervisory board meets to decide future strategies and spending.

According to Food Production Daily, the firm also hopes to carry out market research with consumers and retailers to determine their opinions on food packaging overall.

Such packaging and the use of MAP and RFID have been described as the next important packaging concepts for the future of food production.

A new way of packaging is said to be emerging with items being developed to offer freshness and temperature trackers and communication between smart refrigerators and food items.

Arla also launched an innovative dairy packaging last year when it unveiled the Tetra Pak Carton Bottle for its Yoggi yoghurt product.

Further information: [www.arlafoods.com](http://www.arlafoods.com)  
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### **Sudan dye continues to raise concern**

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

#### **Analysis**

The list of food products found to contain the illegal red food dye sudan I continues to grow.

The Food Standards Agency has issued a further two warnings about the potentially carcinogenic dye this week.

The UK food watchdog announced that the harmful food colouring had been detected in a spice mix and tinned chilli beans in chilli sauce.

"Laziza International Tandoori Masala BBQ Spice Mix has been found to have some batches contaminated with Sudan I and the related Sudan IV, and Epicure Chilli Beans in Chilli Sauce have also been found to be contaminated with Sudan I," the food watchdog reported.

More than 200 products have been recalled in the UK, ranging from pesto sauce to chicken tikka masala, since July 2003. The recall follows a decision by the European Union last year to declare an emergency measure extending rules on the illegal carcinogenic red chemical dyes to include curry powder.

Sudan I, Sudan II, Sudan III and Scarlet Red (Sudan IV) are all classified as carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

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

### **French wines falling in popularity**

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

#### **Analysis**

Not one French wine is currently in the top ten brands sold in British supermarkets and off-licences, a new survey claims.

The wine market is dominated by New World brands, with Australian wines are in six out of the top ten spots, up from five last year. The report, published in trade magazine Off Licence News, also states that Australia takes the lead in the UK wine top fifty, producing 11 of the favourite brands.

Australian tippie Hardys is at number one in the UK wine list, followed by US label Blossom Hill at two and Aussie Jacob's Creek in third place. US wines showed the fastest growth in the British market and claimed two of the top ten places.

The data from ACNeilson shows that there is not a single European wine in the top ten and Australia has extended its lead over France in the league table of wine-supplying nations.

Australia commands 23.8 per cent of the off-licence market (meaning almost anything not consumed in restaurants or pubs), followed by France (19.2 per cent), the United States (13.5 per cent) and Italy and South Africa (both 9.9 per cent).

The ACNeilson report says: "The British wine trade's increasing reliance on New World wines, and price promotions to sell them, is brought into sharp focus. Once again Hardys takes the No1 spot. It is a neat reflection of the might of its supplier and of Australia's continuing dominance of the off-trade wine market."

The UK's take-home wine market is worth an estimated £3.6 billion and is expanding by six per cent a year.

(no further information)

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### **Celebrity food critic okays hospital food**

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

## **Analysis**

Celebrity food connoisseur Loyd Grossman has praised the food served to patients at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham.

The former Masterchef presenter deliberated, cogitated and digested the Edgbaston hospital's cuisine during an on-the-spot ward test and gave it the thumbs up, the Birmingham Evening Mail reports.

Mr Grossman complimented the chef at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and said: "The food and cutlery is wonderful here. I have been particularly impressed with the way patients have been asked for feedback in order to find out what improvements need to be made and what is important."

Patients have a choice from five hot dishes with fresh vegetables every day, including a la carte halal and kosher menus and special dishes for burns patients to aid their recovery.

The Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak hospitals produce more than 3,000 meals, from speciality curries to braised beef and steak pie, and menus come in various translations of Arabic, Bengali, Gujrate, Punjabi, Hindu and Urdu.

Mr Grossman travels the country as chairman of the Better Hospital Food Panel. During his visit to the Queen Elizabeth he was also shown a new device that allows patients to select their meals electronically from their bedside. The new Kathryn Wheel enables nurses to monitor and record the amount of food which patients are eating.

(no further information)

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## **Salt levels vary between brands**

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

### **Analysis**

Two surveys carried out by the UK food watchdog have found that the levels of salt in processed foods, such as pizzas, baked beans and tinned pasta, vary widely between brands.

Some manufacturers have reduced the salt levels in their products since the surveys were carried out, but the Food Standards Agency (FSA) insists that levels still need to fall across the full range of processed food for people to reduce their salt consumption to the recommended maximum level.

One survey found that a brand of children's pizza contained almost three times as much salt as a rival brand, while some brands of baked beans had two-thirds more salt than other tins.

Sir John Krebs, Chair of the Agency, said: "Foods such as baked beans, spaghetti and pizza are products that families rely on - 75 per cent of our daily salt intake comes from salt hidden in products such as these, and not from salt that we add ourselves.

"The fact that the salt in one can of baked beans, or a pizza, can vary so dramatically indicates that manufacturers can reduce the amount of salt they add to these products. The Food Standards Agency wants to see more substantial reductions in salt in food products."

The FSA aims to ensure that British adults are eating the recommended daily amount of 6g of salt by 2010. Adults currently consume an average 9.5g of salt a day.

Scientific research links high levels of salt in the diet to high blood pressure, which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **New alternative dairy product launched**

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

#### **Analysis**

A new product has entered the UK's expanding dairy alternatives sector, full of monounsaturated fatty acid, high vitamin E levels and prebiotic qualities.

The vegetable-based drink 'Tiger White', is based on a traditional Spanish recipe and uses ground tigernut.

Although first introduced in health food stores, the drink is now to be made available in Tesco supermarkets and Holland & Barrett stores from the end of July.

However some have claimed it may find difficulty entering the UK market since soy products are currently the popular choice and are the most dominant.

According to Beverage Daily, supermarkets are now the key channel to market non-dairy drinks, with many retailers now offering their own brands.

The new drink reportedly provides 28 per cent of the required intake of monounsaturated fatty acids and comes in one-litre Tetra Pak cartons.

At present the UK has the biggest non-dairy sector in Europe, and was said to be worth €71 million in 2002.

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### **NFU responds to EU sugar proposals**

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

#### **Analysis**

The NFU has responded to EU plans for sugar reform and has called for increased competitiveness and flexibility.

Under new proposals, the EU will make plans for sugar reform based on the same ideas as with CAP and will conduct a two-stage process of production quota and price cuts.

NFU sugar board chairman Mike Blacker said: "The NFU believes reform should not undermine UK growers' ability to compete and we will seek further clarification and formal proposals on plans to adopt the Single Farm Payment in the sugar sector and potential plans for quota transfers and other restructuring incentives.

The union also wants to ensure that "principles of supply management, carry-over mechanisms, effective Rules of Origin and the inter-professional agreements between growers and processors" are still recognised under new plans.

In addition it wants compensation paid for price cuts and is particularly interested in how compensatory action will be applied.

Mr Blacker also explained that it is important there are no trade distortions created by varied implementation in different areas.

Further information: [www.nfu.org.uk](http://www.nfu.org.uk)  
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### **Functional food researchers turn to Broccoli**

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

#### **Analysis**

A powerful cancer-fighting food compound found in broccoli could also help protect the eyes, according to US researchers.

Paul Talalay and Xiangqun Gao at the Laboratory for Molecular Pharmacology at Johns Hopkins Medical School found that the naturally-occurring antioxidant sulforaphane protects the retina from photooxidative damage. Sulforaphane is found at high concentrations in broccoli, sprouts, cabbage, watercress and salad rocket.

Photooxidative damage, caused by UV light, can lead to the common eye disease, age-related macular degeneration.

Previous research on the protective effects of sulforaphane on the human body have discovered that the antioxidant can help inhibit tumour growth and kill bacteria in the stomach that leads to ulcers and stomach cancer. A recent study released this month also found that feeding broccoli sprouts to rats prevented high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

"Baby Boomers should take interest in developments in this area," Dr Peter Gehlbach, assistant professor of ophthalmology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, said. "There is growing evidence that sulforaphane, found in broccoli and broccoli sprouts, provides protection against the types of injury believed to contribute to the development and progression of macular degeneration, the leading cause of vision loss in elderly Americans."

The study is published in the July issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA.

(no further information)

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### **Argentina approves GM crop expansion**

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

#### **Analysis**

The Argentinian government has reportedly given the go ahead for biotechnology firm Monsanto to launch a new GM corn in the country.

Monsanto, which had a similar application turned down recently by the EU, said that Argentinian ministers had approved plantings of the firm's Roundup Ready corn, also known as NK603.

Plantings of the genetically modified corn could potentially reach 5 million acres, according to Monsanto. The company's Roundup Ready soybeans and cotton, and insect-protected corn and cotton are already approved for planting in Argentina.

"This is the second important biotech approval in recent weeks following the approval by Japanese regulators of the YieldGard Plus stacked corn trait for importation," said Brett Begemann, executive vice-president of international commercial, Monsanto Company.

"The new approval in Argentina indicates that the major crop-producing countries around the world continue to recognize the safety and benefits of biotechnology agricultural products."

Monsanto stated that Roundup Ready corn will be available to growers in autumn in limited quantities for the 2004 planting season in Argentina, and should be available more widely in the 2005 and 2006 growing season.

In 2004 Monsanto's global biotech acres rose by 14 per cent to 172 million acres, up from 150 million acres in 2003. NK603 maize is cleared for use in food in the US, South Africa, Australia, Canada and Japan.

(no further information)

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### **Health drive boosts McDonald's sales**

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

#### **Analysis**

Fast food chain McDonald's has announced that its second-quarter earnings will exceed analysts' expectations, largely as a result of new healthier eating ranges.

McDonald's reported that it expected earnings per share to rise 27 per cent to 47 cents, three cents above consensus forecasts.

The firm, which has come in for some heavy criticism over its promotion of junk food, has introduced healthier meal options, including a premium salad range, recently launched in Europe.

McDonald's revealed that global comparable sales, from restaurants open at least a year, were up 5.6 per cent year-on-year in June, while US comparable sales were up 6.6 per cent. Comparable sales also increased 3.6 per cent in Europe, where the effects of the turnaround plan were slower to show.

The company said year-over-year sales comparisons will become more difficult in the second half of this year. McDonald's will report second-quarter results on July 22nd.

However, Yum Brands, revealed that attempts by its KFC chain to capitalise on the healthy eating trend by offering roast chicken strips, in addition to its traditional fried chicken, had disappointed.

According to chief executive David Novak, most of KFC's advertising effort will now be redirected towards its fried products, after roast chicken sales flopped, though the company still plans to roll out a salad range this year.

Further information: [www.mcdonalds.com](http://www.mcdonalds.com)  
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### **Tesco in China expansion**

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

#### **Analysis**

Supermarket giant Tesco has purchased a 50 per cent stake in Chinese hypermarket chain Ting Hsin for £140 million.

The purchase marks Tesco's first foray into China, following a three-year search for a suitable vehicle. Ting Hsin is the largest food supplier in China and owns the 25-strong Hymall chain of stores.

Tesco has a foothold in the grocery market in 12 countries, including Hungary, Poland, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan. The British firm is aiming to overtake Wal-Mart as the world's biggest supermarket operator and sold £780 million worth of shares in February to create a war chest for global acquisitions.

"China is one of the largest economies in the world with tremendous forecast growth and a market we have researched extensively over the last three years," Tesco chief executive Sir Terry Leahy commented.

Ting Hsin, which started life as an instant noodle maker, opened the first Hymall outlet in 1998. The chain is aiming for a fivefold expansion by 2008 and is currently one of China's smaller supermarket operators. The company welcomed the deal with Tesco.

According to the Chinese government, the country's urban retail market was worth £205 billion last year, up ten per cent on 2002, and is expected to continue growing rapidly over the next five years.

Further information: [www.tesco.co.uk](http://www.tesco.co.uk)  
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### **FSA helps EC review food labelling regulations**

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

#### **Analysis**

The FSA is calling for responses to legislation on food labelling, as part of a review by the European Commission.

Reportedly the Commission wants to simplify current labelling rules and claims the exercise will probably run until some time in 2010.

However a discussion document containing initial ideas is planned for the end of 2004 to early 2005.

The FSA particularly wants to influence any decisions at any early stage and has already identified some key areas such as improved label clarity.

In addition the agency is calling for a review of the exemptions from listing certain additives, having a full ingredients listing on alcoholic drinks and origin labelling rules to be made clearer and have more information displayed.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Fruit and veg may lower risks of endometriosis**

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

#### **Analysis**

Women may be able to lower their risk of endometriosis by eating more fresh fruit and green vegetables, new research claims.

The study, published in reproductive medicine journal Human Reproduction, also discovered that eating red meat and ham appears to increase the risk of suffering from the painful condition.

Scientists from Milan are now calling for a prospective study to investigate further the possible links between diet and endometriosis.

The researchers studied the medical and reproductive history, lifestyle and diet of over 500 women with clinically confirmed endometriosis and a group of over 500 matched controls with no history of the disease. Endometriosis is believed to affect up to five in every 100 women in Italy.

In patients with endometriosis, endometrial tissue develops outside the uterus and attaches itself to ligaments and organs in the abdominal cavity. This tissue responds to the menstrual cycle and can lead to bleeding, pain, inflammation, adhesions and infertility.

Lead researcher Dr Fabio Parazzini from the Gynaecologic Clinic of the University of Milan, said: "What we found was that there was a 40 per cent relative reduction in risk of endometriosis in women with higher consumption of green vegetables and fresh fruit. But, for those with a high intake of beef, other red meat and ham, there was an increase of about 80-100 per cent in relative risk."

The scientists found no significant link between endometriosis and consumption of milk, liver, carrots, cheese, fish, whole-grain foods, coffee or alcohol and no association with butter, margarine or oil.

(no further information)

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### **Dairy Crest closes factory**

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

#### **Analysis**

UK food group Dairy Crest has announced plans to close its yoghurt factory in Enfield with the loss of 320 jobs.

Staff at the Yoplait Dairy Crest plant have been informed that the site will be closed by next spring, as it does not generate enough profit. Dairy Crest and Yoplait have run the Enfield plant jointly since 1998 and the factory makes own label yoghurts, as well as soft cheeses for Tesco and other stores.

Dairy Crest will move production of its fresh and cultured cream products to its plant in Chard, Somerset.

"The closure will have a negligible impact on Dairy Crest Group profits, excluding exceptional items, for the year ending 31 March 2005 but will result in an exceptional cash cost in the region of £2 million, representing Dairy Crest's share of the closure costs," chairman Simon Oliver said.

The company also reported that first quarter trading for the current financial year ending March 31st 2005 was in line with expectations.

Mr Oliver told the company's Annual General Meeting that Dairy Crest has successfully completed a new five year £350 million loan facility with a syndicate of 11 banks to refinance existing debt and fund general corporate purposes.

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

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## **Employers urged to promote healthier eating**

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

### **Analysis**

Corporate America has a responsibility to the health of its workforce and profit margins, according to US insurance provider UnumProvident.

UnumProvident reports a tenfold increase over the past decade in short term disability claims attributed to obesity and cost employers an estimated \$13 billion a year nationwide. Disability expenses, direct costs and co-morbid medical costs, where obesity is a contributing factor, cost an annual average of \$51,023 per claimant.

Robert Anfield, MD, vice president and medical director at UnumProvident claims that the workplace can be an effective part of an overarching public health approach for the prevention and treatment of obesity.

Dr Anfield advocates a number of best practices for employers to consider, including providing healthy options in vending machines, promoting diet and exercise, making healthy lunch and snack options available, offering weight control classes and nutrition programs, encouraging activity and offering incentives.

"American workers are spending more time at work today than in recent history," said Ken Mitchell, vice president of corporate return to work development at UnumProvident. "Labour and manufacturing jobs are declining, technology and sedentary jobs are increasing. As our time at work increases and our physical activity declines, we're becoming a workforce of desk potatoes."

UnumProvident estimates that employees would have to sit in front of their computer screens for 49 hours to work off one confectionery bar and 30.5 hours for a packet of crisps.

(no further information)

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## **EU backs modified crop plans**

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

### **Analysis**

The European Union is reportedly sponsoring a new initiative aimed at producing pharmaceuticals grown in genetically modified plants such as maize.

The network of European scientists in 11 European countries and South Africa, called Pharma-Planta, is looking into the production of vaccines and other treatments for major diseases, such as HIV/Aids, rabies, diabetes and TB.

The European Union has awarded £8 million to the consortium, which will develop the concept from plant modification through to clinical trials.

The researchers plan to start conducting human trials of the drugs within the next five years. A similar process is already underway in Cuba to create antibodies which allow the purification of hepatitis B vaccines.

However, environmental groups have criticised the plans, claiming the project has serious implications for both the environment and human health. Friends of the Earth warned that the research could have "widespread negative impacts".

The scientific co-ordinator of Pharma-Planta, Professor Julian Ma of St George's Hospital Medical School, London, said: "Using plants may allow us to produce pharmaceuticals that were previously ruled out due to production limitations or expense, and would undoubtedly help to make previously unavailable drugs accessible to the developing world."

(no further information)

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### **Organic dairy sector ready to balance out**

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

#### **Analysis**

New research has suggested that organic milk supply and demand is set to become balanced in 2006.

According to Organic Monitor, demand for organic milk has recently not met levels of production, with a third of products produced since 2001 entering the non-organic market as a result.

However findings now suggest that declining production levels and healthy market growth rates will help supply and demand become balanced.

In addition the dairy brand as a whole is expanding according to Just Food, with companies such as Yeo Valley Organic adopting strategies to target customers looking for premium dairy products.

Figures show that the biggest areas for growth are organic milk and yoghurt, with organic yoghurt sales making up seven per cent of all UK yoghurt.

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### **Industry trends hindering Canterbury Foods**

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

#### **Analysis**

Recent meat industry trends are reported to have impacted upon the performance of UK based Canterbury Foods, with high red meat prices and reduced market demand having had resulted in a challenging second quarter.

The company, which produces beef burgers, sausages and pastry products for the foodservice and fast-food markets, has managed to trade in line with expectations, but

bosses do not expect existing pressures on the business to subside before the end of the second half.

In addition, red meat prices are expected to remain at current levels until at least the middle of 2005.

"Although we are continuing to press for price increases wherever possible, we see little prospect of recovering this cost inflation through price in the short-term," chairman Christian Williams told Aroq.

"Our continued focus is both to drive top line growth and to continue to improve operational efficiencies to mitigate the margin pressures in the business.

"Despite the current overall lack-lustre trading environment, we are confident that the improvements to the business will continue over the coming months," he added.

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### **Egg industry back on the boil**

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

#### **Analysis**

New reports suggest that the UK egg industry may be set for a boost as eggs begin to regain popularity.

A report from Mintel reveals that while volume sales have risen by 10 per cent between 1999 and 2003, value sales have increased by 23 per cent, nearly double this amount.

Commentators argue that this is representative of declining health fears over egg consumption, but many maintain that the industry still has a long way to go before returning to former glory.

"There has definitely been a resurgence in eggs over the last two or three years; eggs are more relevant to lifestyles today, and we are advertising on television again," Robert Newell, marketing manager for major egg producer Deans Foods told Food Production Daily.

"But we are nowhere near where we were 20 years ago."

The growing popularity of organic and free-range eggs has been attributed to the overall revitalisation of the industry. Legislative pressures are also shaping egg production, such as EU laws passed this year requiring eggs to be stamped with a home address, producer code, country of origin and best before date.

Furthermore a new EU directive proposes to introduce legislation by 2012 that will give laying birds twice the space that is provided in non-EU countries. Such a measure could threaten to force some smaller producers out of the market, and push prices up as a result of higher production costs.

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## **New Heinz 'Beanz'**

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

### **Analysis**

Veteran food company Heinz has announced that it is changing its baked beans logo for the first time in 76 years.

As part of a £5 million makeover, the world famous black and blue cans will soon state 'Heinz Baked Beanz'.

The new label is a tribute to the company's 1960s 'Beanz Meanz Heinz' slogan, but is likely to infuriate people who care about spelling.

Heinz plans to launch the new Beanz with a large-scale television campaign, the firm's first in a decade.

In response to government concern about salt levels in food, Heinz has also announced that the Beanz will contain 15 per cent less salt.

"Heinz Baked Beans are a British institution and are ingrained in the nation's everyday eating habits," Ben Pearman, marketing manager at Heinz, said in a statement. "It is important to ensure that baked beans continue to be seen as contemporary food."

The Beanz Meanz Heinz slogan was voted the best of all time by a panel from the British advertising industry in 2000.

Further information: [www.heinz.co.uk](http://www.heinz.co.uk)  
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## **Motorway and airline food under criticism**

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

### **Analysis**

Most people would prefer to forego the inflight meal in favour of cheaper flights, a new survey claims.

So bad is the state of food for British travellers, that only ferries were given the thumbs up in a survey by BBC Good Food magazine, although food available when travelling by sea was seen as overpriced.

The survey of more than 600 Good Food magazine readers discovered that 56 per cent of respondents thought the quality of food served up at motorway service stations was poor and 67 per cent said it was far too expensive.

Almost a third (31 per cent) of passengers thought that airline food was poor, while 62 per cent said they would prefer airline meals to be scrapped entirely in favour of cheaper seats on short-haul flights.

The survey also revealed that it was not the bargain airlines that were serving up the worst foods, but some of the biggest names in the business. The top five worst airlines for meals named as: British Airways, Monarch, American Airlines, Britannia and Air 2000.

(no further information)

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### **EU eases import bans**

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

#### **Analysis**

The European Union has eased restrictions on imports of Chinese food products.

The EU executive commission announced that health experts from the 25 member states had agreed to "authorise the import from China into the EU of shrimps, farmed fish, honey, royal jelly, rabbit meat and a number of other products of animal origin."

The EU banned all imports of animal products from China in January 2002 due to health concerns.

The European Commission said in a statement that aspects of the ban had been lifted following "significant improvements" in China's veterinary standards. China has committed to test all food shipments out of the country and "each consignment will be certified as meeting the relevant EU food safety standards".

However, certain restrictions remain in place. For example, concerns over bird flu mean poultry products are banned, while imports of pork, beef and dairy products also remain banned, due to the presence in China of foot and mouth and other animal diseases.

(no further information)

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### **New sausages for Spar**

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

#### **Analysis**

A new sausage company in Mid Wales has reportedly won a contract to supply its products to the Spar convenience store chain.

The Welsh Sausage Company, based in Welshpool, is taking on four additional staff to cover the new order to supply sausages to Capper & Co, the Spar distribution company. Under the new deal, around 20,000 sausages a week will go to stores across South Wales and a further 250 stores across the UK.

The Welsh Sausage Company attended the Food Expo event in Birmingham with the Welsh Development Agency in March where owner John Langford met with representatives of Capper & Co and agreed the sausage deal.

"They were very helpful in setting up the partnership as it was one of our first convenience store groups," said Christine Gethin, who created The Welsh Sausage Company with butcher John Langford, the man behind Langford's Food Hall in Welshpool, in 2003.

The Welsh Sausage Company started producing sausages in May. The factory currently has a workforce of 15 and produces sausages for the Co-Op and Harry Tuffins. A £260,000 WDA processing and marketing grant part-funded the purchase of the new factory and the cost of installing specialist machinery and equipment.

The Welsh Sausage Company will be exhibiting at this week's Royal Welsh Show where it will be launching a new "Exotica" range of sausages, including flavours such as pork and Welsh cheese; pork, Cumberland and honey; and a "Toulouse" sausage made with beef, red wine and garlic.

Further information: [www.spar.co.uk](http://www.spar.co.uk)  
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### **Defra reports on food pesticides**

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

#### **Analysis**

The Pesticides Safety Directorate's Annual Report for 2003/04 has been released today by Defra.

As part of the report, the work of the directorate is reviewed in regulating the use and registration of pesticides in association with food storage and other factors.

Chief Executive, Dr Kerr Wilson commented: "I am delighted with our achievements in 2003/04. This is a tribute to the skill and dedication of our staff as well as the ability of our organisation to meet the changing demands of our stakeholders."

According to the new report, the directorate continued to monitor the use of pesticides and levels of pesticides in food and the impact of pesticides on the environment.

In addition a website was launched to offer comprehensive information on pesticide related matters and the report argued the directorate had played a leading role in shaping European regulations.

Further information: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
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### **New weighing tool launched**

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

#### **Analysis**

A new weight checking system has been launched for the food and drink industry.

The DACS-Zenith has been created by weighing and packing line supplier Ishida Europe, and is claimed to be the fastest and most accurate checkweigher.

According to Food Production Daily, the new system has been launched specifically for high-speed food applications with low target weights including dairy products and biscuits.

Weighing is now an important factor in the process flow and for product tracing and the new machine can reportedly detect even the slightest deviation from pre-programmed measurements.

It is hoped the weight tool will help companies to meet upcoming EU legislation on product tracing.

Two models are on offer to manufacturers which are each suited to particular weights.  
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### **EU GM voting resumes**

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

#### **Analysis**

EU agriculture ministers are to vote again today on whether to allow Monsanto GM maize to be imported.

Today's vote is the seventh attempt to gain support from member states with all previous voting failing to gain approval even though there has been UK support.

Friends of the Earth GM Campaigner Clare Oxborrow commented: "The Commission knows it has failed on six previous occasions to get sufficient support from the member states. If they fail again then their position on GM foods will look increasingly untenable."

The NK603 maize has been engineered by US firm Monsanto and has been approved by the EC and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

In addition the qualified majority needed to use the maize as animal feed has also not been obtained.

However, groups like Friends of the Earth are still against the crop, arguing there has been no analysis of its long-term effects or allergenicity.

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### **Organic box schemes increasingly popular**

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

#### **Analysis**

Sales from box schemes for organic fruit and vegetables in the UK surged by over 50 per cent in the past year, from 306 to 471, a new report claims

The trend for box schemes looks set to continue as Brits become increasingly concerned about healthy eating, chemicals in food and animal welfare, Simon Toseland, spokesman for the Soil Association, reports.

In an article published in The Scotsman, Mr Toseland points out that some organic shoppers are reducing their support for supermarkets and instead getting their supplies from local businesses.

For the first time in five years, the share of the organic market made up by supermarket sales fell, from 82 per cent to 81 per cent.

Organic box schemes deliver fresh seasonal organic fruit and vegetables, normally direct to the door from local farms and are now one of the fastest growing forms of direct marketing in the UK. Most schemes operate locally or on a regional basis, but some also deliver nationally.

A typical organic box will cost between £5 and £15 and contain a broad range of produce which varies each week and according to the season. Vegetable boxes are usually guaranteed to include potatoes, carrots and onions.

Further information: [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)  
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### **Concerns over water-injected meat**

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

#### **Analysis**

Raw meat injected with water and additives is being sold alongside ordinary fresh meat by leading UK supermarkets, a new report claims.

Shropshire County Council's trading standards service report reveals that raw pork with added water is being sold alongside genuine uncooked pork often at a premium price. The Trading Standards Institute (TSI) is now urging the government's Food Standards Agency to intervene in the matter.

David Walker, TSI spokesman and Shropshire's chief trading standards officer, said: "Some supermarkets, and at least one manufacturer, have now started to add water to raw pork. This is being sold alongside genuine raw pork, causing confusion for shoppers. The actual meat in some of the products is as low as 87 per cent."

Supermarket giant Tesco confirmed in the UK's Guardian that it had been injecting its "Finest" pork for about three years, claiming it added water to the meat "to improve eating quality". In a letter to the paper, Tesco company secretary Lucy Neville-Rolfe insisted that Tesco had a clear labelling policy and customers were well aware if water had been added to a product.

However, the TSI has dismissed such claims and found that references to 'added water' were often in the small print on labels, foodproductiondaily.com reports. Some products with

added water are promoted as 'premium' brands with extra 'succulence', meaning that consumers sometimes pay more for meat with added water.

The TSI is calling for the reference 'added water' on the meat label to be in the same size lettering as the description of the meat itself and also wants meat products with added water to be placed in a separate supermarket section and clearly labelled.

Further information: [www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Beef Expo 2004 to put industry under spotlight**

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

#### **Analysis**

Several thousand UK beef producers and around 500 delegates are expected to descend on Ingliston, near Edinburgh, on August 4th for Beef Expo 2004.

This year's event, organised by the National Beef Association, will focus on technical aspects of the industry.

Beef producers are currently receiving the highest prices for years and the Department of Health and the European Union are in the process of lifting blocks to export trade, implemented after the BSE crisis in 1996, the Herald reports.

Keith Redpath, the chairman of the event, said: "Beef Expo 2004 has always been designed to provide a springboard for the UK beef industry to get back into export markets, both with genetics and beef itself. The timing is spot -on in view of the ongoing political developments which, hopefully, will see the removal of the last remaining impediments to re-opening the world market."

The government is expected to make an announcement this week about removing the Over Thirty Month (OTM) rule for beef exports, ahead of the Parliamentary summer recess.

Beef Expo 2004 will present a packed programme of seminars and demonstrations, as well as national shows, featuring almost 1,000 live cattle.

Further information: [www.nationalbeefassociation.co.uk](http://www.nationalbeefassociation.co.uk)  
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### **Premier cuts share price**

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

#### **Analysis**

Food giant Premier Foods slashed the price of its shares ahead of a public flotation.

Premier advised bankers ABN Amro, JP Morgan and Merrill Lynch, that it had decided to reduce the price per share to 215p to 230p, valuing the company at around £552 million.

Investors cast doubt last week over Premier's plans to set share prices at between 230p to 260p a share, particularly in light of the increasingly competitive UK food market. The company is now valued at around £80 million less than when moves for a stock market listing were first made on July 5th.

Reports ahead of the float suggested that a large-scale marketing drive had garnered interest for more than half of the shares at the higher price.

Premier is being sold by its venture capitalist owners, Hicks, Muse, Tate & Furst. The company owns a host of household brands including Typhoo tea, Branston Pickle and Smash.

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### **Cadbury's takes a bite out of the wafer market**

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

#### **Analysis**

A war of the wafer bars has been created with the announcement that Cadbury is to launch Dairy Milk Wafer next month, in competition with Nestle Rowntree's Kit Kat.

According to reports, the brand will be aimed at young male consumers and is a move to take Dairy Milk into the morning snack market.

However, the new product will be in the same block as typical Dairy Milk Bars, but each square will be filled with a wafer biscuit and will be 1p cheaper.

The move follows recent attempts to boost sales by KitKat by announcing new flavours such as Curry and liquorice, after sales dropped by over nine per cent last year.

Although sales are falling, Britons are still top for chocolate consumption and at present Kit Kat is the UK's favourite chocolate bar.

Further Information: [www.cadbury.co.uk](http://www.cadbury.co.uk)

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### **Memory affected by coffee consumption**

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

#### **Analysis**

New research has suggested that although a morning cup of coffee may wake you up it could actually hamper your short-term memory of particular words.

According to Valerie Lesk and Stephen Womble of Trinity College, Dublin, caffeine appears to make it more difficult for people to find a word they already know.

"In some conditions caffeine helps short-term memory and in others it makes it worse. It aids short-term memory when the information to be recalled is related to the current train of

thought but hinders short-term memory when it is unrelated," Miss Lesk explained to BBC News Online.

As part of the study, 32 college students were divided into two groups, one with caffeine and one without and given general knowledge questions with one-word answers.

The study is now going to be expanded to aphasia sufferers, who have problems with word retrieval.

However a spokeswoman from the British Coffee Association has argued the study is too small to allow generalisations to be made.

Further information: [www.britishcoffeeassociation.org](http://www.britishcoffeeassociation.org)  
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### **BFG shares rise amidst takeover rumours**

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

#### **Analysis**

Big Food Group, parent company of the Iceland frozen food chain, saw its shares surge by eight per cent on Monday.

The share increase is a response to recent market speculation regarding the possible takeover of BFG.

Rumours suggest that recent difficult trading conditions have increased the chances of the retail group being sold.

Big Food Group, which also owns cash-and-carry business Booker, recently reported a dip in its first-quarter like-for-like sales.

Increased competition in the UK retail sector is hitting many companies hard, particularly since the merger of Morrisons and rival store group Safeway.

Some reports suggest that Icelandic retail group Baugur might be planning to raise its stake in BFG.

Further information: [www.thebigfoodgroup.co.uk](http://www.thebigfoodgroup.co.uk)  
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### **Cadbury optimistic**

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

#### **Analysis**

Cadbury Schweppes has reported strong interim profits and claims it is "cautiously optimistic" about its prospects for the full year.

The world's biggest confectionery group announced that underlying profit before exceptional items rose 1.6 per cent to £371 million in the six months to June 30th.

"Although we have a number of challenging integration projects in the second half, we remain cautiously optimistic about the outcome for the full year and expect to deliver results within our goal ranges," chief executive Todd Stitzer said.

The company's profits, which exceeded analysts' expectations, were boosted by increased demand for its diet soft drinks in the US. Cadbury reported that sales volumes for soft drinks rose by 23 per cent, including strong growth in demand for Diet Dr Pepper. Cadbury also revealed that the relaunch of its Dairy Milk range in the UK led to double-digit growth.

The food and drink group said sales from its "base" businesses, stripping out the impact of acquisitions and disposals, rose three per cent, at the bottom of its three to five per cent forecast.

In October, Cadbury launched the "Fuel for Growth" revival strategy, designed to make annual savings of £400 million by 2007. The plan involves closing an estimated 20 per cent of the company's 133 factories worldwide and reducing its 55,000-strong workforce by 10 per cent.

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

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### **Concerns over cereal sugar content**

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

#### **Analysis**

An MP has launched an attack on cereal company Kellogg's, the Amateur Swimming Association, and the English School Swimming Association.

Stourbridge MP, Debra Shipley, criticised the parties involved for promoting high sugar breakfast cereal to small children receiving swimming awards. The Puffin Award is given to children who are able to swim five metres using a buoyancy aid and features the Kellogg's Frosties logo and Tony the Tiger.

Ms Shipley claims there are also often other promotional materials near the swimming facilities where the children receive the reward.

"Given rising childhood obesity levels, it is outrageous and irresponsible that a cereal with 40 per cent sugar is being promoted to children in this way," the MP said. "Promotional schemes that hijack healthy activities in order to cynically market high sugar products to children completely undermine the healthy living message."

Ms Shipley pointed out that Kellogg's produces a range of cereals but chooses to promote one high in sugar to children. She has taken up the issue with the three organisations concerned, insisting that they abandon promotional schemes linked to high fat, high sugar and high salt food and drink.

"I am hopeful that the implementation of Food Standards Agency proposals to toughen the regulation of food promotion will soon end this kind of behaviour once and for all," Ms Shipley added.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Retail group rates Tesco best**

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

#### **Analysis**

An independent retail research group has rated supermarket chain Tesco as the UK's best retailer.

Richard Hyman, chairman of Verdict, explained: "Tesco has put the customer at the heart of everything it does. For decades they had an inferiority complex because Sainsbury's was the Rolls Royce of food retailing. That led to a culture of everybody striving to do better and they've retained that. They are simply phenomenally good at what they do."

Tesco now sells everything from food and drink, to medicines, clothing and videos. The company recently announced that pre-tax profits in the year to the end of February rose 21.9 per cent to £1.7 billion and the company predicts that it will break through the £2 billion barrier this year, The Scotsman reports.

However, Tesco has come in for some heavy criticism from lobby groups and environmental agencies. Dan Barlow, of FoE Scotland, explained: "Tesco, as the UK's market leader with a presence in many countries around the world, is able to lead national price wars based on unfair and unethical trading practices. What it does, others will follow."

James Withers, of the National Farmers Union of Scotland (NFUS), added: "Eighty per cent of farm produce goes to the supermarkets, which gives them huge leverage. When the supermarket says, 'Jump', your average farmer asks, 'How high?'"

Dr Hugh Phillips, retail psychologist at the University of Bournemouth, argued that many of the arguments used against supermarkets were 'myths'. He insisted: "The supermarkets, and retailers in general, are more ethical than many other organisations. They have to be because they need the trust of the consumer. If they lose that trust, they are dead."

More than 13 million customers shop at Tesco each week and the supermarket chain accounts for £1 in every £8 spent in British shops. Tesco now boasts 326,000 employees worldwide, twice as many people as the armed services.

Further information: [www.tesco.co.uk](http://www.tesco.co.uk)  
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### **Expert underlines need for bioengineered foods**

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

**Analysis**

A leading food and plant science expert is warning that the world may need to adopt wide scale food biotechnology if it is to increase food production and meet projected rises in global food demand.

Professor Mike Gale of the John Innes Centre, one of Europe's largest independent centres for research into plant and microbial science, argues that a failure to exploit GM technologies could result in a food crisis in as little as 15 years.

Speaking at the UK BioScience 2004 event, he warned that the current annual production of 1.8 billion tons of cereals must be increased to three billion tons a year.

"We have doubled food production over the past half century. Now we have to do it again, but this time we have to do it sustainably," he said according to the Scotsman.

"We don't have any more good land and we don't have any more water and we have to use fewer chemicals. At least half of these increases will have to come from improved varieties, especially varieties bred to tolerate drought and salt and be resistant to pests and diseases."

With regard to GM trials in the UK concluding that two of the three crops tested had a damaging effect on wildlife, Professor Gale continued: "If you look carefully at the trials it is evident that the GM crops required half of the herbicides compared to non-GM varieties, and also required half of the passes through the field by tractors.

"The results of the field trials carried out in this country are of absolutely no concern."

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**Food pathogens under investigation**

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

**Analysis**

A new study launched by the Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association (CCFRA) is investigating the risks posed by pathogens on fresh produce such as ready-to-eat fruit and vegetables.

The research looks at each of eight significant pathogens and their likely survival on fresh produce, before summarising surveys of pathogens on such produce.

It will also assess pathogens with regard to outbreaks associated with these products.

CCFRA asserts that that the research could be of value to anyone working in the fresh produce sector with an interest in or responsibility for product safety assurance, highlighting the fact that demand for fresh produce has increased significantly in recent years.

These consumer trends have led to a growing number of producers offering minimally processed products, incorporating raw fruits and vegetables that have been cut, trimmed, peeled and washed.

This has sparked growing need for stringent health and safety standards.

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

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### **Innovative vehicle aids Geest production**

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

#### **Analysis**

A new electric vehicle, designed and manufactured by SEV Group, is improving production at redy meal maker Geest's Milton Keynes factory.

Gateshead-based SEV has supplied the specially-adapted 2,000kg capacity Easyloader vehicle to Geest to transport bulk containers of food from the preparation area to the cooking area, the Business Echo reports.

The vehicle is fitted with side and rear loading ramps instead of a tail lift operation, bypassing the associated health and safety issues and speeding up distribution operations.

The Easyloader is powered from a 30 cell, 60 volt battery pack, controlled by a SEV Powerpak transistor control system, and has hydraulic braking and power assisted steering.

Geest previously moved the ingredients for its ready made meals around the plant using fork-lift trucks.

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

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### **A doughnut in a cup**

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

#### **Analysis**

US doughnut retailer Krispy Kreme has unveiled a new frozen blended beverage line.

The company, which opened its first UK outlets in recent months, has turned its signature glazed doughnut into a new drink for summer.

The new line of frozen drinks includes frozen original kreme -- a drinkable version of the company's original doughnut - raspberry, latte and double chocolate. Customers can add coffee to the kreme and double chocolate.

The new drinks are available in selected outlets now and come in three cup sizes (12-ounce, 16-ounce and 20-ounce). The frozen beverages will retail for between \$2.79 and \$3.99.

"Just as we did with our new signature coffees, our team took great care in developing four new, great-tasting frozen blended beverages, designed to offer customers an even greater

variety of choices and taste experiences," Krispy Kreme president and CEO Scott Livengood said in a statement.

Krispy Kreme is looking to open further outlets in the UK in the near future. The company, based in North Carolina, has seen stock slide by more than 45 per cent this year, largely as a result of recent low-carb diet fads and concerns about the firm's aggressive new stores policy.

Further information: [www.krispykreme.com](http://www.krispykreme.com)  
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### **Producers criticise government approach to older beef**

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

#### **Analysis**

Beef producers have attacked a decision by MPs to delay ruling on the sale of meat from cattle over 30 months old until the autumn.

Figures out this week show that cases of BSE have dropped by around 40 per cent every year. The number of BSE cases in UK cattle was down 37 per cent last year to 374.

Farmers insist that beef from older cattle is now safe to eat and have criticised the government's failure to make a decision on ending the over-30 months ban on beef cattle before the Parliamentary summer recess.

National Beef Association chief executive Robert Forster said: "All sectors of the beef industry, including ourselves, are surprised and disappointed by the Department of Health's inability to accept that the continued spending of £360 million a year to defend the public from the theoretical risk of one death in more than 60 years is completely disproportionate."

The Food Standards Agency, Defra and the Government's BSE advisory committees all now agree that beef from cattle over 30 months old is now safe to eat and claim that the incidence of BSE in cattle is now low enough for the risk to human health to be negligible.

The over thirty months ban has been in place for more than eight years as part of precautions introduced to prevent BSE infecting humans. The meat was originally meant to come back into the food chain in January but the Department of Health has delayed proceedings.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Neighbours Stores sold**

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

#### **Analysis**

United Co-operatives has agreed to purchase the 12-outlet Neighbours Food and Drink Stores chain.

Neighbours, which operates in the Cheshire, Shropshire and North Wales areas, is part of family-owned firm Cheers Shropshire Limited.

The deal increases United's convenience store total to 415. General manager Tim Hurrell said: "We are keen to expand our business portfolio by purchasing further convenience stores, together with add-on businesses and new-build stores. We look forward to welcoming the 200 staff and the thousands of 'Neighbours' customers to United Co-operatives, post completion on August 2nd 2004."

United has acquired 190 stores over the past five years and is investing heavily in refurbishing its existing stores. The firm plans to spend £100 million on acquisitions during 2004.

Neighbours managing director Howard Jones commented on the sale: "Our prime concern was to find a retailer who would continue with the business ethos which we have generated, where staff are respected and cared for, and where the level of retail service is the prime motivator.

"I believe that United Co-operatives is best placed to meet these criteria."

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### **Junk food advertising ban 'unlikely'**

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

#### **Analysis**

The telecoms regulator Ofcom is due to publish its conclusions of a review into rules on advertising food and drink to children on television, in light of continued worries that food promotion may be contributing to the obesity epidemic.

Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell asked Ofcom to consider strengthening the existing code of practice for advertisers as part of efforts to tackle childhood obesity.

However, the report is not expected to recommend a complete ban, with David Currie, chairman of Ofcom, having described such a ban as a "very blunt instrument".

According to a recent report from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) television commercials accounted for almost three-quarters of the money spent by food companies on advertising in 2003.

The same study found about 40 per cent of adverts during children's TV are for food, of which 70 per cent are for sweets, fast food, sugary cereals, savoury snacks and soft drinks, underlining connection between food promotion and child health issues.

Further information: [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

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### **Scrapie consultation launched**

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

#### **Analysis**

A consultation into a new scrapie-testing programme has been launched, with sheep farmers being asked for their views on a number of options.

The Government has published a consultation document in which the options are outlined. According to the Scotsman the voluntary National Scrapie Plan has cost about £19 million over three years with some 10,000 UK pure-bred flocks having taken part.

A compulsory European Union eradication scheme is being introduced from April next year, on concerns that scrapie is "masking" the presence of BSE in sheep.

Under the EU plan from April next year, all "high genetic merit" rams, probably to be defined as all pure-bred sires, must be tested before they can be sold or used in the flock of origin.

The new consultation document argues that the current EU plan is not extensive enough, and calls for a wider scope of livestock testing.

One option proposed is to genotype all pure-bred rams, regardless of whether they are to be used in pure-bred or commercial flocks, which could theoretically reduce scrapie incidence by 55 per cent in the flock and by 77 per cent in lambs going for slaughter at a cost of about £4 million by the end of the decade.

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### **ABF acquires yeast, bakery and spice units**

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

#### **Analysis**

UK food, ingredients and retail group, Associated British Foods, has announced that it has acquired an international yeast, bakery ingredients and US herbs and spices businesses.

The deal with Burns, Philp & Company of Australia, is worth around \$1,350 million (£730 million), subject to regulatory approvals. The combined businesses had a profit of \$129 million on turnover of and sales of \$708 million in the year ended June 2003.

AB Foods' shares rose 19 1/2p to 627p following the announcement. The deal will make the firm the second-biggest maker of industrial yeast in the world and the second-largest herbs and spices maker in the US.

The ABF group, which owns brands such as Ryvita and Twinings, is controlled by the Weston Family, with a 55 per cent stake. The company has been scouting for a while for a big acquisition in order to spend some of an accumulated £1 billion cash pile.

Peter Jackson, ABF chief executive, commented: "These businesses are a perfect fit for ABF. They have a significant presence in growing markets, strong market positions and are

cash generative. The broad international footprint will be an excellent platform for further growth."

The global market for baker's yeast is growing at an overall three to four per cent a year, while the worldwide bakery ingredients market is growing at five per cent per annum and the US herbs and spices market at three per cent.

Further information: [www.abf.co.uk](http://www.abf.co.uk)  
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### **KFC scandal raises supply concerns**

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

#### **Analysis**

Fast food chain KFC is battling poor publicity following the release of a shocking secret video.

The footage, filmed by an animal rights activist from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta), shows improper treatment of chickens and unhygienic behaviour at a US plant that was named KFC's "Supplier of the Year" in 1997.

Eleven workers from a poultry processing plant have been fired and KFC has halted purchases from Pilgrim's Pride following the release of the video, shot at the company's plant in Moorefield. Pilgrim's Pride is one of the largest poultry producers in the United States and Mexico.

KFC President Gregg Dedrick said the company will stop buying from the Moorefield plant until Pilgrim's Pride can ensure no future abuse will occur and the fast food firm will place a full-time inspector in the plant to watch for further abuse.

The video, available on Norfolk-based Peta's website, reportedly depicts workers at the plant owned by Pilgrim's Pride breaking birds' beaks, stamping on them, throwing them into cages and spitting tobacco in their eyes - all while the chickens were alive.

The release of the film has caused outrage among animal rights campaigners. Kerry Burgess, communications director Compassion in World Farming told FoodProductionDaily.com: "Cruelty in industrial factory farming is a big problem. We recently took the UK government to court over the treatment of broiler breeders, and are currently awaiting the results. These chickens have their feed restricted so that they live long enough to breed."

(no further information)  
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### **Seafood worth £5bn a year**

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

#### **Analysis**

The seafood industry in the UK contributes an estimated £5 billion to the national economy, new figures reveal.

A study by the Sea Fish Industry Authority (Seafish) found that retail sales of seafood are worth a total of £2.2 billion, with independent fishmongers contributing only £90 million to the national economy.

The most comprehensive survey of the industry ever undertaken in Britain also reveals that sales of fish suppers in chip shops are worth £500 million annually, while pub, hotel and restaurant sales of seafood account for around £1.6 billion a year.

However, the report also discovered that, although the supply of seafood in Britain is now worth an estimated £2.1 billion a year, fish landed by the UK fishing fleet account for only 19 per cent of the total, according to The Scotsman.

More than 62 per cent of supplies in the UK come from foreign imports and a further 3.5 per cent from fish landed in the UK by foreign trawlers, although the British fishing industry exports almost £900 million worth of seafood annually.

Ceara Nevin, market insight manager at Seafish, explained: "Our previous studies have valued the seafood industry as producing around £3 billion worth of seafood on an annual basis. The revision to nearly £5 billion comes from a better understanding of the food service sector and the inclusion of farmed and canned seafood into the survey data."

(no further information)

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### **ABP acquires Scottish sausage producer**

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

#### **Analysis**

Irish Food Processors has announced that its UK subsidiary, Anglo Beef Processors Ltd (ABP), has purchased Scottish sausage manufacturer.

The Glasgow-based firm was previously owned by Freshbake Foods Limited, which went into administrative receivership on June 22nd this year.

The plant in east Glasgow employs 230 workers and has been operating under joint administrative receiver Iain Bennet from PricewaterhouseCoopers.

A spokesman for ABP said: "We have been enthusiastic to gain a foothold in sausage manufacture, and the Glasgow plant gives us a base from which to quickly expand production in both frozen and fresh sausage manufacture. We see great potential in this sector of the food market."

The Glasgow sausage maker is a major supplier of frozen sausages to many of the UK's leading supermarkets and food service companies.

Further information: [www.abpltd.com](http://www.abpltd.com)  
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### **EU to examine effects of food chemicals**

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

#### **Analysis**

A new EU project has begun, looking at the effect of chemical contaminants in food on human health.

Conducted by the CASCADE (chemicals as contaminants in the food chain) network, the research will study the damage caused by endocrine-disrupting trace chemicals in particular.

The chemicals are thought to upset hormone distribution and have also been linked with cardiovascular disease, obesity, cancer and diabetes, according to Just Food.

To reassure consumers and ensure the correct information is provided, the organisations will create animal, computer and cell based tests to examine food extracts for a host of chemicals.

In addition the team of 23 research bodies will investigate the chemical's "potential to interfere with nuclear receptor signalling pathways".

It is hoped the work will help boost public awareness and "promote better decision making amongst consumers and policy makers regarding food".

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### **Thai food proving popular with UK consumers**

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

#### **Analysis**

Thai cuisine is emerging as number one for new food products, as ethnic ingredients prove increasingly popular with consumers.

One company taking advantage of the new trend is Jacobs, with a new rice and potato cracker product 'Fusions', part of the UK Thai Bites range.

Katia Zavidonova, Thai Bites senior brand manager told Food Navigator: "These product launches represent a huge step for Thai Bites, moving them into more eating occasions. We are confident we will achieve impressive penetration and sales."

According to reports, the market for ethnic products is becoming more successful due to an increasing interest in ethnic foods, the development of ethnic restaurants, the popularity of ready meals and more long-haul travel.

In addition market analysts Mintel believed the emerging ethnic food market was worth around £115 million in 2002, with Thai food growing the fastest, to £62 million in 2003.

Additional products recently launched into the market include Phad Thai wok sauce, Nissin Foods cup noodles and the Sensations premium crisps range.

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### **Sugar content affected by storage temperatures**

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

#### **Analysis**

A new process that reduces the sugar content in potatoes has reportedly been developed in India.

The new technique, which relies on regulation of storage temperature, will prove beneficial to diabetics, who avoid potatoes because of the sugar content.

Research has shown that potatoes by themselves have very low sugar content and it is during storage that a certain strain of bacteria infects them, triggering an increase in sugar levels.

Swapan Mondal, the chief promoter of sugar-free potato production in West Bengal told newkerala.com: "When a potato is stored in low temperatures, the sugar content in it goes up."

The 'almost' sugar-free potatoes have been developed by scientists at the Central Potato Research Institute, who claim that storing potatoes at a higher temperature prevents the sugar content going up.

Warehouses in India generally store potato at a temperature of about 36 degrees Celsius, but the researchers claim that potatoes kept at about 50-52 degrees Celsius develop sugar levels suitable for consumption by diabetes patients.

A special warehouse has been built in Kerala for the storage of sugar-free potatoes, which will be sold at a higher price due to the increased storage costs.

(no further information)

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### **Tesco signs eDiets deal**

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

#### **Analysis**

UK supermarket giant Tesco has reportedly signed a deal with eDiets.com.

Under the terms of the £2 million licensing deal with the US online diet service, Tesco will have access to eDiets.com's technology in the UK and Ireland.

Britain's largest supermarket chain is aiming to gain a share of the UK's £10 billion market for healthy eating and plans to allow dieters to have products contained in their personal meal plan delivered to their door once a week.

Subscribers will pay Tesco £12.99 a month for the service, which will offer members one of 19 personalised meal plans, a fitness programme, newsletters, access to support groups, and a mentor programme.

Tesco will pay eDiets £2 million plus ongoing royalty fees in exchange for unlimited access to the website's services for its customers, according to The Telegraph.

Tesco estimates that over 1 million adults in the UK are members of slimming clubs and that over half of these people use the internet. eDiets has 1.5 million users worldwide, who lose an average of 1.8 pounds a week.

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

### **Certain foods may help prevent gut cancers**

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

#### **Analysis**

Some fruits and vegetables may help prevent certain forms of gut cancer, a new report claims.

Research conducted by the Institute of Food Research found that, although fruit and vegetables are generally beneficial, onions, apples, celery and broccoli are all particularly beneficial in preventing some forms of the disease.

Cancers of the gut are one of the major causes of death from cancer, but studies have shown that they are not purely genetic and can be modified by diet.

Professor Ian Johnson, author of the review and head of Gastrointestinal Health and Function at the Institute of Food Research, said: "The adverse effects of diet are caused by over-consumption of energy coupled with inadequate intakes of protective substances, such as micronutrients, dietary fibre and a variety of plant chemicals."

The walls of the gut are lined with a layer of cells, the epithelium, covered with a film of mucus. The epithelium is the first contact for food, bacteria and anything else ingested, but can also be susceptible to the development of abnormalities over time.

There is evidence that some food components and gut fermentation products can provide protection at various stages of cancer formation, while compounds can also increase the activity of detoxifying enzymes and delete genetically damaged epithelial cells.

Scientists are continuing to investigate how agents within foods can help prevent cancer.

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

### **New low carb store opens in UK**

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

**Analysis**

A new "low carb" food store has opened in Swansea.

The new store in Swansea's High Street Arcade is called 'The Low Carb Guys'. It is run by business partners Jane Richards and Mark Guy, who opened the new venture after finding it hard to purchase low carbohydrate products.

The store imports around a third of its products and features a selection from the Atkins range, The Western Mail reports.

Swansea was recently named as one of the "fattest" in Britain, by lifestyle publication Men's Health.

Low carb diets and eating plans have become increasingly popular in the UK in recent years, with research conducted by ITV indicating that three million people have tried the Atkins Diet.

(no further information)

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**New Cranberry ingredient unveiled**

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

**Analysis**

The European food market is to receive a new health ingredient within the next few months thanks to Ocean Spray.

US based Ocean Spray Ingredient Technology Group (ITG) has revealed it is to roll out a bigger version of its health ingredient for use in bakery products in Europe.

According to Food Production Daily, the firm has created an "improved" soft dried cranberry ingredient, which is said to be "juicier" than before.

Although the last two years have seen low prices and high yields, the sector has recently seen an improvement in prices and the focus on value added ingredients is hoped to boost the sector even further.

Annual sales of the sugar-infused, dehydrated fruit are said to be around £37 million.

The ingredient is used in confectionery, bakery and snack products.

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

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**Seafood industry innovations ready for launch**

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

## **Analysis**

A conference is to be held in September on European fish processing, in a move to highlight the latest developments that could help revamp the industry.

Among the issues to be showcased at the event will be fish identification DNA chips, fish labelling developments and rapid techniques for monitoring fish product quality.

Around 17 speakers will take part in the conference, including members of Seafood UK, Scottish Quality Salmon and the Hokkaido University of Fisheries.

Conference organiser, Andrew Moore told Food Production Daily: "I anticipate that the fish industry will benefit enormously from the event and I am certain that the large cross section of speakers will make for a lively and informative couple of days."

Additional topics to be covered include traceability in a research context, predictive microbiological modelling in food safety management and potential opportunities for seafood by-products.

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## **Firm awarded for innovative grape extracts**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

An award-winning Australian firm is reportedly hoping to export its new range of heart healthy grape extracts to Europe and Japan.

Tarac Technologies was awarded a food industry prize for its Vinlife heart healthy grape extracts, but could face problems marketing its functional food products in Europe due to health claims regulations, according to Nutraingredients.com.

Manufacturers of grape extracts or other polyphenol ingredients may be forced to run costly clinical trials and submit extensive product dossiers to back their products' health benefits under the new EU rules.

Experts predict that some companies will be unable to afford such trials and could see a sharp reduction in marketing opportunities as a result.

"Market studies indicate that Japan accounts for 40 per cent of the global functional food sales, while the UK has in place industry friendly regulations and a pro-active process for the inclusion of health claims on food packaging," Grahame Tonkin, managing director of Tarac Technologies, told nutraingredients.com.

Tarac estimates revenues for the overall European polyphenols market in 2003 of around AS\$99 million (€77.88m). Polyphenols are increasingly replacing synthetic colours and are expected to become popular in new product formulations or as replacements for other synthetic ingredients.

Vinlife, derived from the seeds and fruit of Australian grapes left over from the winemaking process, has been used in low-fat Chocollo ice cream, manufactured by ice cream retailer Wendy's.

Further information: [www.tarac.com.au](http://www.tarac.com.au)  
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### **Nestle pods draw criticism**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Nestle has come under fire from healthy eating campaigners for providing schools with its 'Refuel:Pods', or vending machines.

The food giant uses the slogan 'Energy in - energy out' to justify selling high-energy snacks to pupils, claiming the machines help explain the importance of a balanced diet.

However, the Pods reportedly include savoury products high in salt, including Oriental Barbecue Spudz, with a salt content of over six per cent, according to The Food Magazine. Other products available in the Pods are high in sugar and fat, including Aero chunky, Nestl Double Cream, Polos, Kit Kat Chunky and Toffee Crisp.

Of the 46 listed products to be available in the Pods, no more than seven (15 per cent) could reportedly be deemed to be even relatively healthy, including dried fruits, fruit juices and sugar-free Polos.

Nestle claims to offer "products with varying energy content to suit the needs of different children", but its Pods appear to provide children with an array of junk food.

Further information: [www.nestle.co.uk](http://www.nestle.co.uk)  
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### **IFR stages food health seminar**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A nutrition seminar, in collaboration with cancer groups and healthy eating campaigners, is due to take place at the Institute of Food Research.

GPs from Norfolk and other health professionals will reportedly use the event to will focus on compounds in fruits and vegetables that provide a defence against cancer and heart disease, the two main causes of death in the UK.

Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Cancer, Dr Ian Gibson, who will open the seminar, said, "The science of cancer prevention could ultimately save the NHS millions of pounds as well as many lives. To take the latest science straight out of the lab and apply it where its needed most, you need to make it available to GPs and other health professionals".

Dr Gibson will use his speech to outline the role of government in healthy eating strategies, while IFR scientists will present the latest research on natural plant chemicals and their role in halting tumour formation.

Dr Liz Lund of the IFR added: "Our research has shown that plant chemicals created during the preparation of some vegetables could kill colon cancer cells in a similar way to some cancer drugs. By giving clinicians access to the latest laboratory research, this fact could translate into helpful nutritional advice for patients".

The half-day seminar takes place on September 21st 2004 and will provide clinicians with greater insights into the hard science behind the government's 5 A DAY message. It is open to local general practitioners, practice nurses, dentists, health visitor team leaders, chief executives, directors of public health, prescribing leads and those in leadership positions in their field in Norfolk.

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

### **Food Group expands rice market operations**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Leading Spanish food group [www.ebropuleva.com](http://www.ebropuleva.com), which already has a presence in the UK rice market, has agreed to buy Riviana Foods, the largest rice processor in the US.

The Spanish firm, whose revenues broke the €1 billion barrier last week, will take control of Riviana Foods in a deal worth up to €312 million.

The firm currently operates in the UK through Stevens and & Brotherton, which has based its rice milling and rice flour production in Liverpool.

In August last year, Riviana joined forces with Ebro Puleva to step up its presence in the UK rice market. Both companies already operated there - Riviana through Stevens & Brotherton and Ebro Puleva via Joseph Heap & Sons - and agreed to merge these businesses to form a new UK unit owned 51 per cent by the Spanish group and 49 per cent by its US counterpart.

"The transaction provides us with penetration in the US market and improves our balance between domestic and international business, giving us worldwide leadership in rice," said Antonio Hernandez Callejas, CEO of Grupo Ebro Puleva.

Further information: [www.ebropuleva.com](http://www.ebropuleva.com)  
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### **Traffic light system to extend to Tesco health products**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Latest findings have suggested that UK supermarket Tesco may have to label some of its Healthy Living products in its upcoming 'traffic light' labelling system.

The retailer first revealed it planned to test the idea in May in a bid to offer consumers better nutritional advice.

However, research by The Food Commission has found some of the products advertised as healthy by the supermarket may need amber or red labelling, based on current FSA guidelines.

A spokeswoman for the Food Commission pointed out: "Tesco is not alone in having high levels of salt, fat etc in its 'healthy' range."

Whilst Tesco defended itself arguing: "Our Healthy Living range is designed to offer customers a healthier alternative to some of their favourite foods."

The trial is due to start in September and could mean Tesco's Healthy Living Sultana Bran Flakes would display red for high sodium and sugar content and Healthy Living Liver Pate would be amber for fat and sugar, and red for saturated fat and sodium.

Further information: [www.tesco.co.uk](http://www.tesco.co.uk)  
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### **Morrisons criticised over bacon prices**

**Date:** Tue, 27 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The National Pig Association (NPA) has criticised Morrisons supermarket, claiming it has caused the price of bacon to crash this week.

According to The Pig Site, the company now offers 'Farm Fayre', a low priced brand that has meant its bacon is now more than £1 a pack cheaper than other high street rivals.

However, the bacon is also said to be Danish and produced with farm systems that would be illegal in the UK.

NPA chairman Stewart Houston claimed: "The Farm Fayre brand is clearly a flag of convenience. Customers may think they are buying British bacon but the true story is very different."

Reportedly more than 90 per cent of British consumers claim they want imported meat to come from farms that meet British production standards and in response the NPA launched Best Practice Guidelines for Retailers and Foodservice.

Under the guidelines, retailers have to ensure all bacon, pork, ham and sausages meet legal standards for British pig production and are clearly labelled with country of origin on all packaging.

Further information: [www.npa-uk.net](http://www.npa-uk.net)  
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### **United Biscuits under review after Jacob's acquisition**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Ratings agency Moody's has put UK biscuit manufacturer United Biscuits under review following concern over its acquisition of Jacob's.

French food giant Danone has agreed the sale of its British and Irish biscuit units to privately-owned United, subject to regulatory approval from UK and Irish authorities.

The acquisition, rumoured to be worth over £200 million, is expected to be funded through bank debt.

However, Moody's has placed the ratings of United Biscuits Finance and its units under review for possible downgrade, reports Business World.

United Biscuits, Britain's biggest biscuit maker, owns the McVitie's, Penguin and Hula Hoops brands, and is now due to take over Danone brands such as Jacob's Cream Crackers, Thai Bites and Twiglets.

The Danone companies, Jacob's Bakery Ltd and Irish Biscuits, had 2003 sales of 266 million euros (£150 million), while United Biscuits' sales last year were £1.3 billion.

Further information: [www.unitedbiscuits.com](http://www.unitedbiscuits.com)  
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### **Organic superfood claims to combat ageing and repair DNA**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new organic 'superfood' has been developed which is believed to assist weight loss, anti-aging, and DNA repair.

The creators of EssentialFood claim it is the world's first totally organic superfood and the formula, which has a high nutritional and energy content, "makes its already potent ingredients more bio-available to the body".

The specific patent-pending formula barley used in EssentialFood is over 400 per cent more effective than any other barley, and far more effective again than wheat, according to its developers. The new product is based on activated pre-sprouted barley and is "grown in the pure air and fertile soil of Northern Sweden under the generous rays of the Scandinavian midnight sun".

The component ingredients of EssentialFood are part of the key to its success. Dr. Howard Lutz, director of the Institute of Preventive Medicine in Washington DC, has said that barley

grass is "one of the most incredible products of this decade. It improves stamina, sexual energy, clarity of thought, and reduces addiction to things that are bad for you. It also improves the texture of the skin, and heals the dryness associated with aging."

EssentialFood also reportedly provides a medium for sustained, stable energy and nutrient release, as well as re-enforcing the staggered energy release from Pre-Sprouted barley's carbohydrate content. This sustained energy release lasts on average for over 4 hours.

Further information: [www.essentialfood.co.uk](http://www.essentialfood.co.uk)  
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### **Nestle launches Dairy Milk rival**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food giant Nestle is reportedly planning to launch a new chocolate bar to challenge Cadbury's Dairy Milk.

The Swiss food company's new Blue Label block chocolate bar will initially be sold in two flavours - milk chocolate plus fruit and nut.

Nestle Rowntree spokesman Graham Walker told The Grocer magazine: "We are the ones who are leading the innovation in this category and it is us - not our competitors - who will continue to drive its growth."

A 200g bar of Blue Label is expected to retail for 79p - 50p less than the recommended retail price for a Dairy Milk bar of the same size.

Cadbury recently launched its Dairy Milk Wafer bar as a rival to Nestle's Kit Kat.

Further information: [www.nestle.co.uk](http://www.nestle.co.uk)  
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### **McDonalds launches Go Active happy meal**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Fast-food chain McDonald's has unveiled a new Go Active Happy Meal for adults in the UK, to coincide with the Olympic Games in Athens.

The meals come in a box and contain a salad, a drink and a Stepometer, for customers to measure the number of steps they take. The Go Active Happy Meal, the first Happy Meal in adult size, costs £3.99 and comes with a choice of four salads and any drink.

Sprinter Darren Campbell and former Olympic swimmer Sharron Davies have helped launch the new meals, which come with a guide containing tips from Polish race-walking world champion Robert Korzeniowski.

Russ Smyth, president of McDonald's Europe, said: "McDonald's is committed to playing a responsible, proactive role in encouraging our customers to lead healthy, active lifestyles."

In a bid to counter its junk food image, McDonald's has also made changes to its Happy Meals for children and parents can now choose to swap fries for a side salad in meals.

McDonald's is placing a greater emphasis on healthier eating and is now selling a range of low calorie products, such as salads and sliced apples in bags.

However, health campaigners criticised the new salads range after it emerged that at least one contained more calories than a Big Mac when the dressing was added.

Further information: [www.mcdonalds.co.uk](http://www.mcdonalds.co.uk)  
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### **New project to investigate Scottish meat industry**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new £500,000 initiative has been launched hoping to help Scottish farmers and the processing sector on how to make pork with a continuously high eating quality.

The Meat Eating Quality Project is funded by the Scottish executive and looks at pig production methods and issues in the food chain that influence consistency and quality in the Scottish meat sector.

Ross Finnie, rural development minister told The Herald: "We are totally committed to working with producers to drive up the quality of Scottish produce.

"This project provides an excellent example of joint working - involving producers, processors, industry bodies and academics - for the benefit of the industry and consumers."

Already key findings have suggested that pork from slightly heavier pigs tastes better, something that has been supported by Asda.

Research is being conducted by the Scottish Agricultural College, Scottish Quality Food Certification and Quality of Meat Scotland.

Similar surveys are also taking place investigating beef and lamb and results are expected within months.

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### **FSA issues seaweed warning**

**Date:** Wed, 28 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new survey has indicated that a certain type of seaweed is not advisable for consumption in the UK since it contains high levels of a form of arsenic that could increase the risk of cancer.

The FSA has now urged consumers not to eat the hijiki seaweed after a previous study found problems with it in Canada.

However those people who have eaten the food occasionally are being told they are probably not at any risk, but to cut it out of their diet from now on would be sensible.

The black shredded product could now face action from the EC, as international experts recommended levels of the ingredient it contains should be significantly reduced.

Hijiki originally comes from Japan and Korea and is mainly used as part of a starter in some Japanese or Korean restaurants, although it can sometimes be used in food products for sale too.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Malt ingredients firm performing well**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK firm Muntons Malted Ingredients (MMI) has reported an increase in turnover for the third time in as many years.

The Suffolk-based malted ingredients company claims that its aggressive marketing and sales strategies have paid off and announced that it had received the Queen's Award for Enterprise and International Trade 2004.

Muntons saw export sales turnover grow from £2.5 million in 2001 to £7.9 million in 2003 and the company has invested about £6 million in the business in the last few years.

Andy Janes, marketing manager at MMI told FoodNavigator.com that the growth was down to multiple factors. "A healthy market moving in our favour contributed, as did a strong global marketing, sales and advertising push from the company," he said.

Mr Janes said sales had also been boosted by the acquisition of a malt extract manufacturing plant in the UK from Novartis

Muntons makes malted food ingredients for confectionery, bakery, breakfast cereals and beer applications worldwide. Mr Janes said: "Malt ingredients are made, without the use of chemicals or additives, through temperature- and moisture-controlled conditions. As a natural sweetener, they can be used just like sugar as a flavour enhancer."

Further information: [www.muntons.com](http://www.muntons.com)  
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### **Govt investigates dietary solutions to diabetes**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The UK government has awarded a grant of almost £1 million to researchers studying the effects of diet on people with type 2 diabetes.

Scientists at the University of Bristol will also examine the role played by exercise in treating diabetes, making the largest diet and exercise study in the world for people with type 2 diabetes.

The trial, which is due to run alongside a £2.7 million Food Standards Agency(FSA) study into the impact of different foods on the chances of developing risk factors linked to heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Dr Robert Andrews from the University of Bristol, who will lead the trial, said: "We feel it will be a land mark trial from which crucial information on long-term glucose control, insulin sensitivity, insulin resistance, weight and blood pressure will emerge, allowing us to compare the effects of these conditions in each of the groups."

The trial aims to recruit 750 people from across the Southwest who have been newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Participants will remain in the trial for a year and the trial itself will run for three years. The study will be launched in November 2004.

The UK has seen a sharp rise in cases of type 2 diabetes, which is closely linked to recent increases in obesity levels.

Type 2 diabetes, previously known as 'adult-onset diabetes', commonly starts in adulthood, after the age of 30. In the last 30 years the number of people with the disease has trebled and a further trebling in the number of patients is expected within the next ten years.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Calls for support for new dairy body**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers has appealed to producers to support proposals for a new organisation.

The proposed body, Dairy UK, aims to unify and drive forward the industry in Britain and the association believes it is the best opportunity to develop the sector and achieve a sustained improvement in producer milk price.

Farming Life reports that Dairy UK currently consists of a mix of dairy producer co-ops, farming unions and the Dairy Industry Association (DIAL).

RABDF council member, John Beckett., said: "We believe Dairy UK's proposals to be a positive move for the entire industry at a time when the UK finds itself at the bottom of the west European milk league price table for the sixth consecutive year, and farm gate prices are continuing to plummet when all signals are for the market strengthening.

"Furthermore, the select committee's recent milk pricing inquiry report recognised that there was fundamental imbalance of negotiating strength between supermarkets and their suppliers."

Mr Beckett called on all producers and processors to support Dairy UK and insisted that RABDF would endeavour to ensure that the organisation has appropriate representation from producers and outside the food sector.

Further information: [www.rabdf.co.uk](http://www.rabdf.co.uk)  
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### **Farmers' markets growing in popularity**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Britain's farmers' markets are growing increasingly popular, with numbers more than doubling in the past two years.

There are now around 450 farmers markets across the UK, up from 200 two years ago, attracting an estimated 15 million visitors a year.

Annual sales through farmers' markets are worth over £100 million a year and small and medium-sized farmers are finding it increasingly beneficial to sell directly to consumers, the Financial Times reports. Farmers' markets offer consumers good quality, fresh produce in a completely different environment from supermarkets.

"It is fun. You can talk to the producer. People lighten up in a way they can't in a supermarket," says Rita Exner of FARMA, the farmers' market association.

However, farmers' markets are not posing much of a threat to Britain's supermarket sector. Around 93 per cent of consumers say they prefer to shop in supermarkets because of the convenience, though 90 per cent of households claim they would use farmers' markets if they were available.

The Farmers' market sector is now finding it increasingly difficult to navigate problems of identifying further available sites and constraints on farmers' time. The sector is expected to grow at a slower rate in the next few years.

Further information: [www.nfu.org.uk](http://www.nfu.org.uk)  
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### **Celebrity fruit and veg could boost sales**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new report by market analysts Keynote has suggested that celebrity branding could be the new way to boost UK sales of fruit and vegetables.

The fruit and vegetable market stood at £7.6 billion in 2003, with fruit sales performing the best, reportedly due to the increasing demand for convenience, according to Food and Drink Europe.

However Keynote claims that although there have been a number of government-led campaigns to boost consumption, another form of driving growth is needed.

The company believes that campaigns that have proved successful using icons are the way forward, such as Action Man oranges and Superman satsumas.

UK retailer Tesco has reportedly considered using male stars such as David Beckham to encourage young males to eat more fruit and it has already used Barbie to promote its Pink Lady apples, with sales rocketing by 300 per cent.

Keynote also claims that supermarket chains are now prepared to spend a bigger share of their marketing budgets on fruit and vegetable products in their bid to reap the benefits of a health conscious market.

Further information: [www.tesco.co.uk](http://www.tesco.co.uk)  
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### **EU calls for lifting of GM bans**

**Date:** Thu, 29 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The UK and five other countries are to be pressed into lifting bans on a number of gene-modified foods that are allowed elsewhere in the EU.

Monsanto, Syngenta and Bayer could all gain wider access to the EU biotech market in countries including the UK, according to Bloomberg.

The products all previously won approval but health and environmental concerns led to a block on them in 1998, meaning that the corn varieties and rapeseed cannot be sold in all EU nations.

Ewa Hedlund, a commission spokeswoman in Brussels argued: "These measures aren't justified and need to be repealed."

The remaining 19 EU governments will be asked near the end of September to order the six to lift their bans.

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### **Glisten making new moves in confection market**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

British confectionery firm Glisten has reportedly increased its share of the higher end confectionery market with the purchase of Kiril Mischeff's House of York toffee brand.

Food ingredients business Kiril Mischeff has sold its manufacturing equipment, product recipes, its order book and the confectionery brand to Glisten in a £120,000 deal.

Glisten announced that all assets would be transferred to its sites at Skegness and Blackburn and predicted additional sales of £500,000 a year. The firm also said the acquisition would deliver new capabilities, including the ability to produce 'swirl' toffees and 'bonfire' treacle-based toffees for retailers in the UK and abroad.

"The House of York asset purchase adds to our capabilities in terms of toffee manufacture and gives us access to some interesting retail and export customers," said Glisten chairman Jeremy Hamer.

Glisten reported that results for the year to June 30th were in line with expectations, adding that sales were "significantly ahead" at the start of the current year.

The company, which makes SunMaid chocolate raisins, also bought confectionary manufacturer Fravigar from Kiril Mischeff earlier this year for £6.5 million, and last year bought Sunya, a division of Leeds food business Renshaw Scott.

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

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### **UK chicken farming within EU law**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Court of Appeal in London has ruled that the factory farming of chickens does not contravene European Union law.

Animal welfare charity Compassion in World Farming took the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to court, accusing the government of allowing chickens to suffer.

The charity asked the court to outlaw intensive farming methods which keep broiler chickens used for breeding in a state of hunger, insisting that the restrictive feeding regime caused suffering to millions of birds.

The charity's QC, Rabinder Singh, asked the Lords Justice Judges to overturn a High Court decision last November upholding the government's policy. However, the judges said that it was not possible to say on the existing evidence that the standard system of feeding broiler breeders was unlawful.

Lord Justice Sedley said in his ruling: "Here I accept that the behavioural evidence shows that breeders are distressed by the low level of feeding to which they are confined for their first 20 weeks, and that this on the face of it is inimical to their wellbeing.

"We do not know, however, what level of feeding would assuage the breeders' hunger and thereby, as I accept, help to promote their net wellbeing, without the concomitant risk of compromising it by overfeeding."

More than 800 million broilers are reared for their meat each year in the UK, with birds pushed through a selective breeding regime to reach their slaughter weight in just 41 days. Vital organs are often affected by the practice and breeding birds are kept hungry to prevent them dying before reaching maturity.

(no further information)

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### **Food producers address impact of fad diets**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The fad for low-carbohydrate diets appears to be on the wane, according to recent surveys and reports from producers.

Kellogg is the latest producer to declare that diets like Atkins have peaked in the US, following comments earlier this week by PepsiCo to the same effect.

Sales of low-carb products have slowed and several consumer surveys have revealed that fewer Americans are on low-carb diets now than in the first quarter of 2004, the Financial Times reports.

However, the low-carb boom will not disappear completely, based on evidence from the last comparable trend, low-fat foods. Many Americans are expected to continue watching their intake of sugars and highly-refined carbohydrates, even after they have ditched Atkins.

Recent publicity surrounding soaring obesity levels and cases of obesity-related illnesses, such as heart disease and diabetes, is likely to see consumers turning increasingly to low-fat, low-sodium, low-sugar foods.

Roger Deromedi, chief executive of Kraft Foods, recently said the growing importance of health has altered buying patterns "to a degree not seen before".

Producers now face the challenge of altering products to make them 'healthier', while still retaining their distinctive flavour, and are expected to spend greater sums on research and development in future years.

(no further information)

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### **Scots spend most on food for the home**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Scots are reportedly the UK's biggest spenders on food in the home, according to new figures from the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The government statistics from 2002-03 also show that Scots drink more alcohol at home and have the highest consumption of soft drinks, including milk, in the UK.

The figures, based on the Family Food Survey, also reveal that the British diet is growing healthier, with fresh fruit consumption 5.8 per cent higher than during 2001-02. It has risen by more than 50 per cent since 1975, The Herald reports.

Average energy intake from all food and drink in the UK remained unchanged during 2002-3, at 2301 Kcal per person per day, but there has been a continuous downward trend in energy intake gained from food and drink consumed in the home since 1964.

The percentage of energy derived from fat, excluding that gained from alcohol, is slightly lower than in the previous year at 37.6 per cent, still above the recommended 35 per cent, while the percentage of energy gained from saturated fatty acids fell to 14.7 per cent in 2002-03, above the recommended level of 11 per cent.

During 2002-03, levels of consumption of alcohol and other drinks, fish and fish products, and potatoes all fell. Meanwhile consumption of cheese and egg dishes, pizza, salads, and ethnic meals all increased.

Further information: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
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### **Healthy eating varies geographically**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new study by Defra has found that healthy eating differs depending on which region consumers live in.

According to 'The Family Food Survey 2002-2003', people in the East and South West eat the most healthy foods.

The study was based on food consumption and expenditure across the UK and also found Londoners eat the least amount of nutrients, according to the Scotsman.

Additional findings showed that Londoners spend more than twice as much on eating out at restaurants such as Chinese and Indian, with 38.4 per cent of their food and drink spending going on eating out.

However, overall average calorie consumption has stayed the same in the last few years at 2,301 Kcals and fresh fruit consumption was up by 5.8 per cent since the 2001-2002 study.

Figures were based on 6,927 households with one person in each home over the age of seven questioned and asked to keep a food diary for two weeks.

Further information: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
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### **FSA reassures over fruit pesticides**

**Date:** Fri, 30 Jul 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The FSA has reassured customers that pesticide levels in fruit are safe following new criticisms by Friends of the Earth (FoE).

According to the charity, which based its figures on government data, around 220 young children could be subject to the dangerous levels of pesticides from just eating an apple or pear.

Imported produce was particularly high and FoE feel that government testing is based on blended batches rather than individual items.

The main pesticides tested for were carbendazim, dithiocarbamates and phosmet, which is not licensed for UK use so only occurs on imported fruit.

Although there are no clear immediate effects from consuming high levels of the chemicals, FoE believe there could be long term implications, with children more at risk.

However the FSA has said it would be "unfortunate" if the study puts parents and children off of eating fruit and believes the paper is "unrealistic".

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