

June 2004

TFA calls for better promotion of British food

Date: Tue, 01 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Tenant Farmers Association is highlighting the need to promote UK-produced food.

The TFA will make its case at the Suffolk Show on Wednesday and Thursday. There is widespread agreement that more needs to be done to promote the excellent food produced from farming in the UK.

Chief executive George Dunn explained that it was important to learn lessons from the failure of the Image of Agriculture Campaign and develop a more market-focused agricultural industry.

"Consumers should have the freedom to choose where to shop and what to buy and should have access to a wide variety of suppliers and types of food production," he said.

"One route, such as supermarkets, should never be allowed to dominate the market to the detriment of others. This should then allow the diversity and quality of food to be maintained and increased."

"It should be made easy for the buyer to identify the value of the food they are buying in terms of health, animal welfare standards and impact on the environment," Mr Dunn added.

The farming expert claimed that, this way, the value of the food and farming industry would be recognised economically and culturally.

The TFA is keen to work alongside other farming organisations, to establish a strong strategy that will make an impact on the British marketplace and will establish Britain as a leading nation in terms of food culture and farmed produce.

Further information: www.tenant-farmers.org.uk/tfa

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Specialist centres champion Welsh food industry

Date: Tue, 01 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Wales now has three specialist centres dedicated to helping food companies develop new products and recipes for commercial production.

The Food Centre Wales at Horeb in Ceredigion, Coleg Menai's Food Technology Centre at Llangefni, and the Wales Food Industry Centre at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, all provide food producers with a wide range of services.

The centres have helped create some of Wales' best known products, and worked with companies such as Rachel's Organic Dairy and Graig Farm Organics.

They also conduct valuable research into food related subjects and help companies with all aspects of their businesses, including product development, promotion, packaging, and consumer trials.

The specialist food centres, supported by the Welsh Assembly Government and the WDA, can help companies navigate complex health and safety legislation and all three provide training and courses on all aspects of food production and food safety and hygiene.

At the Food Network Wales conference in Cardiff last month, organised by the three food centres, representatives from the food industry and multiple retailers discussed issues relating to the growth of the food industry in Wales and what is needed to ensure the sector continues to expand, the Western Mail reports.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk/wales
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Artificial food colourings 'increase hyperactivity levels'

Date: Tue, 01 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food colourings and preservatives can increase hyperactive behaviour in children, according to a new study.

A team of researchers from Southampton University said removing these substances from foods could cut hyperactivity rates in young children and they are now calling for a ban on artificial food colourings.

The experts screened 1873 three-year-old children for the presence of hyperactivity and carried out skin prick tests to identify atopy in 1246 of the children. The research showed that hyperactivity levels were particularly exacerbated by the food colourings and preservatives among those with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

The children were given a diet that was free of artificial colourings and benzoate preservatives for one week. The children then consumed a drink containing artificial colourings (20 mg/day) and sodium benzoate (45 mg/day) or a placebo mixture with no additives in addition to their diet for one week and switched to the alternative drink for a week.

Parental reports showed significant increases in hyperactive behaviour when children were given the drink containing additives, but such increases were not seen with the placebo drink. This was regardless of whether the child was hyperactive or allergic before the study.

The team is now extending the research to see whether additive-free diets have a positive effect on older children.

The research appears in the journal Archives of Diseases in Childhood.

Further information: www.soton.ac.uk
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FSA advises parents on fizzy drinks

Date: Tue, 01 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency recommends that parents do not give their children lots of fizzy drinks, especially between meals.

The FSA advises that it is okay for children to have some soft and fizzy drinks as part of a healthy balanced diet, but it is important to ensure they are consumed in moderation.

The agency points out that children who have lots of sugary drinks, such as cola, lemonade and squash, are more likely to be overweight and to put on weight and carbonated drinks can damage teeth. They can also fill children up, so they have less appetite for food that will give them the nutrients they need to be healthy.

The Western Mail reports that children and young people in the UK eat too much sugar, and more of it comes from fizzy drinks than any other type of food or drink.

According to the FSA, it is better to give children fizzy drinks at mealtimes, in order to help protect their teeth. Fruit juices, which contain lots of vitamins, can also damage teeth and the best drinks for children to have between meals are water and milk.

The agency adds that there is also lots of sugar in chocolate, sweets, biscuits and cakes, so children should only eat these foods sparingly. Children should be given a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables; meals based on starchy foods, such as bread, pasta, rice or potatoes; some milk and dairy products; and some foods that are good sources of protein, such as meat, fish, eggs, beans and lentils.

Further information: www.foodstandards.org.uk
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UK firms adopt new meat packaging solution

Date: Tue, 01 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new selection of meat packs has been launched by Sainsbury's, packaging firm Cryovac and meat processor ABP.

The new product available under the 'Taste the Difference' range is hoped to provide consumers with premium quality matured British beef but with an extended shelf life, according to Food Production Daily.

Sainsbury's has now used a process that mass produces meat maturation methods by ABP and a secure, high quality mix of inner and outer packaging by Cryovac.

According to the firms, consumers are increasingly moving towards such meat products and vacuum packed items, believing in the idea that the methods involved create a higher quality food.

Reportedly Cryovac has been promoting the concept for a number of years, but it is only recently UK consumers have bought into it.

A different system will be used for beefsteaks and beef joints to ensure a more tender and juicy product.

Further information: www.sealedair.com
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Experts link chocolate to healthy hearts

Date: Tue, 01 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New research has found chocolate consumption can help the functioning of human blood vessels.

According to researchers from the Journal of the American College of Nutrition, University of California, a chemical in dark chocolate makes vessels expand and therefore helps cut the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

The study focused on 21 participants who were all given dark chocolate, some with the chemical group of flavonoids and some without, blood vessels and flow was then measured by ultrasound.

Results showed that those with flavonoid rich chocolate had their blood vessel dilation boosted, with growth up by a tenth, whilst those with the other chocolate found their vessel dilation fell.

However UK heart experts have argued chocolate is usually more likely to be a problem for heart trouble and that no studies have so far looked into "long-term clinical effects".

Experts have argued instead of eating chocolate for this purpose a varied diet and lots of fruit and vegetables was much more effective and better for consumers.

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FSA issues warning about mouldy pies

Date: Wed, 02 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency has issued a warning to consumers after some pies in three batches of fruit pies were found to contain mould.

The three affected brands, all made by Manor Bakeries, are Mr Kipling Six Fruit Selection Dessert Pies, Asda Six Assorted Fruit Pies and Tesco Summer Fruit Pies.

All three brands have UK-wide distribution and, while the products are believed to have been removed from the shelves, the FSA is concerned that people could still have them at home.

The best before dates in the faulty batches of pies are up to June 11th and almost a million pies are thought to have been affected.

"Whilst eating the mouldy pies is unlikely to be a significant health risk, it could be unpleasant and there have been at least 28 consumer complaints received by local authorities so far," the FSA said.

The FSA understands the situation was caused by a preservative being left out during the production process that resulted in mould growing.

Anyone who has a product from the affected batch should return it to their retailer and request a refund.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk

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French propose wine to become food

Date: Wed, 02 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

France is planning to reclassify wine as a natural food rather than an alcoholic drink.

A majority of French MPs, backed by the country's wine industry, are reportedly due to present French prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin with the draft legislation this month.

Under the new proposals, spirits and beer would continue to be classified as alcohol, newspaper Le Monde reports.

The changes would allow wine makers greater freedom in advertising and promoting their products. Spain introduced similar legislation last year to help its wine industry.

French wine consumption has fallen in recent years, from 134 bottles a year in the 1960s to 77 a year today.

Opponents of the reclassification of wine claim it contradicts the French government's aim to reduce alcohol consumption by 20 per cent by 2008.

(no further information)

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UK shoppers treble online food spend

Date: Wed, 02 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK shoppers have spent more than three times as much online during the first quarter of this year than last year, according to a new survey.

Research conducted by Visa EU found that Visa cardholders in the UK spent more than £2.4 billion on the internet during the first quarter of 2004, 123 per cent more than the same period last year.

Online sales in the food and drink sector more than trebled over the year, while online books and music sales rose 116 per cent, domestic services more than trebled and travel and tourism grew by 159 per cent. Online food sales were boosted by a massive rise in people ordering their groceries from supermarkets over the web.

Bernard Ovink, vice president of Visa EU, said: "These are the healthiest post-Christmas online sales figures for several years. More people are beginning to shop online and loyalty to online brands is increasing. These retailers are becoming smarter at gaining individuals' share of wallet, and making it easier for the consumer to buy."

Visa is preparing to launch 'Verified', a new online password system that aims to reduce the number of disputed online transactions by up to 80 per cent.

Further information: www.visaeu.com

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Asda opts for Arla as sole milk supplier

Date: Wed, 02 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK supermarket giant Asda has announced that it has selected Arla Foods UK as its sole milk supplier.

Asda claimed the decision was a response to concerns that farmers were not being paid enough for their milk.

The supermarket group asked its three suppliers to come up with a new supply chain that would give Asda a dedicated group of farmers and awarded the tender to Arla.

"This move means that for the first time in 40 years we will have a direct relationship with every single farmer who supplies us with milk," said Asda's agriculture strategy manager, Chris Brown.

"Arla is able to provide Asda with a segregated supply chain using a dedicated group of farmers. This will enable us to trace our fresh milk from the farm through to the bottles in our customers' trolleys."

Gwyn Jones, chairman of the National Farmers Union's dairy group, described the move as "a positive step in connecting farmers with the needs of the marketplace."

Arla will now sell a further 200 million litres in addition to the 250 million litres the company already supplies to Asda. The new liquid milk supplies total for Asda is now considerably more than Danish-Swedish group Arla supplies to the Danish market.

Shares at Arla rivals Robert Wiseman Dairies and Dairy Crest dropped in response to the news and Asda's announcement is likely to shake-up the UK dairy industry. Wiseman is set to lose an estimated £70 million of revenues with its Asda contract.

The company currently supplies almost half of Asda's milk, while Dairy Crest provides around ten per cent.

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Glycaemic food labelling wins industry support

Date: Wed, 02 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new decision to include a glycaemic index (GI) on food labelling has been welcomed by a UK food scientist.

Professor Jeya Henry from Oxford Brookes University has praised the decision, claiming the index would help people to follow a healthy diet.

Tesco will be the first supermarket to place the GI of food products on labels.

Professor Henry told BBC One News: "I don't think it is going to be a fad; I think it is going to be something which is going to revolutionise our way of eating."

GI high foods release energy quickly and raise blood sugar levels meaning consumers are only filled up for a short period of time. However those with high levels release energy more slowly.

According to current advice from nutritionists whole foods rather than processed foods should be consumed as part of a diet containing low GI.

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Experts develop DNA rice testing method

Date: Wed, 02 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new method of testing basmati rice has been introduced by UK scientists, to screen DNA for adulteration identification.

The technology could help companies in authenticating rice products and help in sales, as at present certain types are attracting high prices.

Dr Andrew Tingey, head of the molecular biology laboratory at Reading Scientific Services Ltd (RSSL), explained: "During the development of this testing methodology we have been able to demonstrate that it is possible to source basmati rice that is free of contamination with other rice varieties.

"Although some mixing of rice species is permitted, those suppliers seeking to provide a premium product will welcome the assurance that this method gives in verifying that their supplies are 100 per cent pure."

At present the Food Standards Agency is urging for stricter controls on the purity of basmati rice and this new method could help in meeting these regulations in a fast and reliable way.

The new testing can identify other rice varieties mixed in with the product as well as distinguishing between the sixteen different varieties.

Further information: www.rssl.com

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Tesco introduces new labelling to help dieters

Date: Thu, 03 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The UK's largest supermarket chain Tesco has unveiled a new labelling system to help people following a new type of diet.

The company has ranked its foods according to the GI (Glycaemic Index) diet, viewed as a more moderate version of the Atkins Diet. Each food product is ranked according to its position on the glycaemic index, a system that measures the effects of food on blood sugar levels. The diet has proved incredibly popular in Australia.

A low GI food will cause a small rise in blood sugar levels, while a higher GI food may trigger a larger increase, causing glucose levels to rise. High GI foods are believed to increase the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes.

High GI foods are digested and absorbed by the body quickly, often leaving people feeling tired and hungry shortly after eating them.

Tesco is launching the new labelling system in a bid to cash in on Brits eager to slim down for summer. The company recommends that people eat at least one portion of low or medium GI food with every meal to feel fuller for longer.

Leading food scientists at Oxford Brookes University have been working with Tesco to test the GI rating of its own-label foods. The GI labels will start appearing on food products later this month.

Further information: www.tesco.co.uk
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Big Food Group loses interest in Londis

Date: Thu, 03 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK food retailer The Big Food Group has announced that it is no longer interested in grocery supplier Londis.

"The board of BFG has concluded that it is not appropriate for BFG to pursue the acquisition of Londis at this time," the company said in a statement.

Londis recently agreed to a £60 million takeover by Irish firm Musgrave. The bid has been recommended by the board and now needs to secure the approval of 75 per cent of the votes cast at a shareholder meeting on June 22nd.

BFG added that it would be interested in furthering its trading relationship with Londis if the Musgrave offer is rejected. "BFG remains convinced that it can offer Londis retailers superior trading support to that on offer from Musgrave," the statement said.

According to Londis, the Musgrave offer is not the highest it received, but provides the best long term future for the group.

If the takeover bid for Londis is accepted, Musgrave will become the biggest single supplier to independent retailers in the UK.

Convenience store business Londis is owned by its shopkeeper customers. The firm conducts purchasing, distribution and marketing on behalf of a group of independent stores.

(no further information)
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Scientists issue warning over bacteria levels in baby food

Date: Thu, 03 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Experts have issued a warning after dried baby foods and infant formula were found to contain worrying levels of potentially harmful bacteria.

A survey of 200 samples of dried baby food and powdered milk from seven European countries, the US, South Korea and South Africa, was carried out at Nottingham Trent University.

Scientists were particularly concerned about the presence of the bacterium *Enterobacter sakazakii*, which has been linked to a handful of fatal outbreaks of meningitis at children's hospitals in the US and Europe.

If the products are prepared properly, the risk to babies is very small. However, poor kitchen hygiene could cause the bacteria to multiply, putting children at risk. The research team found that the number of bacteria doubled every 10 hours in the fridge, while at room temperature it took just half an hour for numbers to double.

The study's chief researcher pointed out that even doctors sometimes mistakenly assumed powdered formula was sterile. However, he also stressed that manufacturers do not claim the products are completely free of pathogens.

Dr Stephen Forsythe said: "The message we need to get across is that people must be more aware of the potential risks. It's important to follow the manufacturer's instructions. If you must make formula up in advance, put it in the fridge. Don't keep it standing by the bed."

The research showed that eight out of 82 powdered infant formula samples contained stomach bacteria, as did 12 out of 49 dried infant food. Thirteen of the bacterial species identified were members of the Enterobacteriaceae, a family associated with hospital-acquired infections.

The research into dried baby foods and powdered formula was published in New Scientist magazine.

(no further information)

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Sainsbury's reveals plans for GM-free milk

Date: Thu, 03 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Supermarket chain Sainsbury's has announced plans to sell a range of GM-free milk.

The firm made the announcement following a widespread campaign, led by environmental group Greenpeace, against its decision to sell milk from cows fed on genetically modified feed.

Sainsbury's insisted it was not bowing to pressure from opponents of GM food; who had called for a consumer boycott of the chain. The retailer claimed the decision to stock GM-free milk was a response to increased consumer demand.

"We have been working with our main suppliers since the end of last year to develop this milk. It is only available in small amounts at the moment, but we will look at expanding the supply if customers demand it," a spokesman for Sainsbury's said.

The new milk comes from cows supplied with feed that is guaranteed GM-free under a farm assurance scheme run by the UK Agricultural Suppliers Trade Association, The Times reports. It will be sold in 105 stores from the end of June.

Further information: www.sainsbury.co.uk
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MP urges sporting organisations to ditch fast food sponsors

Date: Fri, 04 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The chair of the House of Commons health select committee has called on sporting organisations and event organisers to stop taking sponsorship from fast food firms.

David Hinchliffe called on sports bodies to choose more responsible sponsors, in order to set a better example to children.

"It would be helpful if sporting bodies looked at their sponsorship arrangements," he said. "It compromises the situation when organisations who actively encourage sporting participation in children have sponsors that also encourage them to eat unhealthy foods."

Mr Hinchliffe also criticised the Football Association for its £30 million sponsorship deal with McDonald's, saying: "As a leading sporting organisation, it ought to be setting an example. We should disconnect this kind of high-energy density product from sporting activity."

However, the FA said it had no intention of pulling out of the lucrative sponsorship deal, adding: "McDonald's has worked with the FA to invest in grassroots football and increase participation."

Last week the Health Select Committee reported that cases of childhood obesity had tripled in 20 years and called on junk food companies to stop sponsoring sporting organisations and events.

No further information
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KFC loses low-carb battle

Date: Fri, 04 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Federal regulators have announced that KFC can no longer claim its fried chicken is compatible with low-carb diets.

Settling complaints about the fast food chain's ads, regulators with the Federal Trade Commission stated that the company must not run advertisements claiming its food is healthier than other food, unless it can back the claims up scientifically.

The FTC also ruled that penalties of \$11,000 per violation would apply to any future unsupported claims.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest filed a complaint with the FTC over two KFC television advertisements. Both ads were pulled by KFC in November.

One of the adverts featured a woman setting down a bucket of chicken in front of her husband as they discussed their commitment to eating better. Another ad portrayed KFC as a low-carb, high-protein food fit for people trying to cut down on carbohydrates. KFC claimed the ads were "truthful and factually accurate".

Michael Jacobson, executive director for the center, welcomed the FTC decision but said it was too little, too late, and added that the center believes KFC should be fined.

FTC Chairman Timothy J Muris described the settlement as a signal to advertisers that the commission will not tolerate "misleading advertisements".

Further information: www.kfc.com

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Award-winning Welsh curry now on sale in Tesco

Date: Fri, 04 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Award-winning Welsh Beef in Brains Dark Ale Curry, made by the Authentic Curry Company of Hirwaun, is now being sold in Tesco stores across Wales.

The curry, made with Brains dark ale, Welsh Beef and Prince's Gate Water, recently took an award for joint ventures in the 2003/4 True Taste / Gwir Flas Wales Food and Drink Awards.

The dish was developed by The Authentic Curry Company's owner and managing director Paul Trotman, who claims the True Taste Award has been significant in helping the company promote its products. The company also recently launched the its new Welsh Beef Stroganoff into Tesco stores across the UK.

"I thought if you can use ale in pies and casseroles, then why not curry?" Mr Trotman said. "We are delighted that this award-winning product is going into Tesco to join our range already on sale.

"Telling people you've won a top award helps open doors, and the success of Welsh Beef in Brains Dark Ale Curry has given the True Taste seal of approval to all 46 of our different ready meals."

The Authentic Curry Company was established in 1995 by Mr Trotman at a hotel in Haverfordwest. It now turns over more than £2 million a year and employs 35 people.

Further information: www.walesthetrueataste.com

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Speciality & Fine Food Fair to showcase best in gourmet food and drink

Date: Fri, 04 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Organisers of this year's Speciality & Fine Food Fair claim there will be an enormous range of UK and international gourmet and speciality foods on offer.

The event runs from 5-7 September at the London Olympia Exhibition Centre and almost 400 companies are expected to take part. Food service professionals and caterers looking for the latest innovations in speciality foods and products new to the market will not be able to choose from a vast array of regional and speciality foods.

More than forty first time exhibitors are attending this year's epicurean event, many of whom have not exhibited on a national scale before.

Lisa Younger, exhibition director, predicted that the fifth Speciality & Fine Food Fair would attract more visitors this year, with an increase in exhibitors and a wider selection of food and drink on display.

"The Speciality & Fine Food Fair is the ideal opportunity for catering professionals based around the UK to see all the latest developments in the speciality food arena," she said. "So whatever your speciality requirement, the Speciality & Fine Food Fair is a must for any foodservice buyer looking for inspiration and fresh ideas."

The Speciality & Fine Food Fair once again plays host to the Great Taste Awards, run by the Guild of Fine Food Retailers, which take place on Saturday 4th September.

Further information: www.eco.co.uk

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New pilot project highlights benefits of vending machines

Date: Fri, 04 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Vending machines in schools can be used as a key way to promote healthier drinks to pupils and help to provide funds for the school, according to a new study.

The pilot scheme for the FSA used 12 secondary schools in England and offered vending machines that contained healthier options such as water and fruit juice, according to Medical News Today.

Results showed that schoolchildren picked healthier options more often with 70,000 healthier drinks purchased over the 24 weeks including semi-skimmed milk, milkshakes, water and pure juices.

Further benefits highlighted through the pilot was the money generated through the healthier options, with seven of the schools making a profit from the additional machine contents.

Results from the scheme will go towards the Department of Health's Food in Schools project on vending machine content and an FSA action plan on food promotion and children.

According to the FSA involving pupils in decisions on the machines, prices and products is an important factor if changes are to be successful.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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Dairy farmers to participate in costs survey

Date: Fri, 04 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A national survey has been launched to ascertain the labour involved in dairy production and to help farmers negotiate a better milk price.

The research by the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers is hoped to add to work carried out last year.

Chief executive of the association, Nick Everington told The Journal: "This survey is designed to redress the issue and provide the most accurate figures possible to reintroduce to our guidelines schemes which we have used several times already to support our lobbying activities, including with processors and the British Retail Consortium."

Mr Everington explained that the association used a random figure of £10 per hour for labour, but was aware farmer's responsibilities and skills varied considerably and that the figure was "far lower than their true value" in the majority of cases.

Dairy costing guidelines from 2003 revealed that milk production costs were "up to 23p/l on many farms".

Further information: www.rabdf.co.uk
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Britons 'turning away from vegetarianism'

Date: Mon, 07 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Almost a quarter of people who claim to be vegetarian occasionally eat red meat, a new survey reveals.

A study of 11,000 people found that around 23 per cent of those claiming to have a meat free diet sometimes ate red meat and almost six in 10 people calling themselves vegetarians ate red meat, poultry or fish during the two-week period of the study.

Just 42 per cent of respondents claiming to be vegetarian really were, with 51 per cent eating fish and one in five eating poultry, the TNS Family Food Panel survey reveals.

The proportion of people who describe themselves as vegetarian in Britain has remained static at around five per cent over the last four years, The Telegraph reports.

Dietician Juliette Kellow said: "We have seen something of a turnaround in the public perception of meat. There is more confidence in its safety and quality, and also growing awareness of the nutritional benefits.

"Atkins and other high protein diets have had an effect and there have been a number of celebrities like Madonna and Drew Barrymore who have abandoned vegetarianism."

(no further information)

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Weight Watchers plans low-carb food range

Date: Mon, 07 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Slimming company Weight Watchers has announced plans to launch its own low-carbohydrate food products.

Low-carb diets such as Atkins have proved very popular in the UK and around three million people are believed to have lost weight following low-carb, high protein eating regimes. The decision follows the UK launch in December last year of a food and drink range aimed specially at following of the Atkins diet, The Scotsman reports.

Weight Watchers operates more than 6,000 slimming clubs across the UK, based around a points-based dieting system. The company, which has been running for 35 years, already has a range of 17 branded food and drink products, manufactured under licence by food giant Heinz.

Profits at Weight Watchers have been seriously dented by the increasing popularity of low-carb diets and the firm is now fighting back with the launch of its first low-carb offerings - four frozen ready-made meals.

The four low-carb products, due to go in sale in the autumn, are: Tuscan chicken and sweetcorn and green beans, chicken in a garlic and lemon sauce with carrots and broccoli,

chicken in a red wine sauce with green beans and carrots, and chicken in a mushroom and herb sauce with carrots and broccoli.

Weight Watchers said in a statement: "Weight Watchers Points programme remains unchanged as does its message of a healthy, balanced diet including all food groups, as being the only way to achieving and maintaining weight loss."

Further information: www.weightwatchers.com
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Aluminium packaging market surges

Date: Mon, 07 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Shipments of aluminium foil picked up during the first quarter of 2004, official figures reveal.

Data from the European Aluminium Foil Association (EAFA) showed that sales rose by nearly one per cent compared with the first three months of 2003.

EAFA executive chairman Stefan Glimm told FoodProductionDaily.com: "Consumption has been good, largely because of the increasing quality of the product. There has also been a general trend towards flexible packaging, which is substituting rigid packaging."

Mr Glimm predicted that, as the demand for low-weight, flexible packaging increases, the market of aluminium is set to expand still further.

Flexible packaging appears to offer excellent barrier protection, according to a recent scientific study conducted by Fabes. The study concluded that aluminium foil of a thickness of at least 6 micron acts as an absolute barrier in food contact applications.

Flexible aluminium packaging also offers manufacturers new design opportunities, FoodProductionDaily.com reports. Larry Mucha, former director of Future Technologies at Coca Cola, recently identified it as a defining trend in packaging and predicted that packaging itself is set to become a much more important marketing tool in the future.

The EAFA report shows that a total of 208,000 tons of aluminium foil was sold in the first quarter of 2004. The organisation predicts that strong sales will continue at least until autumn.

www.alufoil.org
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Coca-Cola debuts low-cal version

Date: Mon, 07 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Coca-Cola has launched global sales of its new, low calorie Coca-Cola brand in Japan.

C2 reportedly contains 19 calories per 100 millilitres compared to 45 calories for regular Coke. The new soft drink has half the carbohydrates, calories and sugar of regular cola, and "all the great taste" of Coca-Cola, according to the fizzy drinks giant.

Coca-Cola employees handed out sample-size cans of C2 at major train stations in Tokyo on Monday morning.

A spokeswoman for Coca-Cola (Japan) Co Ltd explained that the company chose Japan to debut C2 because of its massive market for soft drinks and teas and the large volume of vending machines. Coca-Cola has an estimated 980,000 vending machines across Japan - around one for every 127 people and sales of Coca-Cola products in Japan account for about five per cent of the company's global revenue.

In the United States, Coca-Cola launched C2 with a television commercial screened during the finals of American Idol on FOX, using the Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want" as a soundtrack. C2 is expected to go on sale in the US in stages in the first half of June.

The packaging graphics feature the familiar Coca-Cola trademark in black on a "Coca-Cola red" background, to provide a distinctive visual difference between Coca-Cola C2 and Coca-Cola classic, while original point-of-sale merchandising featuring additional graphics has been developed for stores.

Further information: www.coca-cola.com
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Asda deal prompts price concerns

Date: Mon, 07 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Price concerns have been raised in the dairy industry this week following the reshuffle of Asda's dairy business.

The industry has criticised Asda and has argued that with the recent deal, the company has given more power to retailers.

Robert Shearlaw, chairman of the National Farmers' Union Scotland (NFUS) milk committee, told the Scotsman: "What Asda has done is shift power completely to the retailer by taking control of processors and producers.

"We need to ask tougher questions about this deal and what is going to happen to dairy farmers."

Dairy farmers have reportedly been shocked that the decision to drop Robert Wiseman's £70 million contract from the Wal Mart subsidiary has been welcomed by the NFU of England and Wales and has not faced much criticism from NFU Scotland.

However reports suggest that a recent survey of dairy farmers revealed that over half do not fully understand the economics of their business, deemed to be a key reason for the failure of a number of milk companies.

Now with farm gate prices on the increase and supermarkets continuing to dominate, contracted dairy farmers have been warned that they might have to cut prices.

Further information: www.nfus.org.uk
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Fast food funding plans revealed

Date: Mon, 07 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Fast food firms could be called on to help fight obesity and fund sports facilities, if new plans go ahead.

This week key food industry groups, including the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), will be meeting with the government to discuss the plans, which could entail the food industry paying up to three quarters of the costs for a National Foundation for Sport.

The FDF has claimed it is willing to consider such an idea along with any other proposals.

According to reports, a leaked memo has shown that companies including Walkers and McDonalds could have to contribute millions of pounds and if payments are not made, anti-obesity laws could be enforced.

It is also believed that the government is planning to announce a new target next month for stopping the increase in child obesity.

Policies that link food, transport, health, education and work are thought to be a key way of successfully tackling the obesity issue, in the new report.

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UK food groups launch campaign against low-carb diets

Date: Tue, 08 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The UK's Flour Advisory Bureau, Federation of Bakers and Grain Information Service have joined forces to launch a new campaign aimed at promoting flour and bread products.

The new initiative is a response to the increasing popularity of low-carb diets such as Atkins. The groups are championing a new eating plan - The Vitality Eating System - which advocates a low-fat balanced diet as an alternative to low-carb diets.

In a statement, they claimed that the eating plan presents a sensible long-term solution to yo-yo dieting and low-carb diets.

"Carbohydrates like bread have come under recent attack by the diet industry and by unqualified 'alternative' health practitioners - known for their quick fix diets and reliance on pseudo-science," the groups said. "The Vitality Eating System helps to directly counter faddy diets like the Atkins diet and the South Beach diet, which confuse consumers."

The Vitality eating System was launched at the Flour Advisory Bureau offices in central London last week. The event was attended by leading nutritionists, dieticians, GPs, health writers, government representatives and academics.

Nutritionist and health writer Anita Bean, who developed the eating plan, commented: "The Vitality Eating System provides a healthy long-term option to faddy 'quick fix' diets and is based upon effective proven strategies for tackling weight gain. Focusing on regular activity and balanced eating is the key to losing weight and keeping it off. This 7-day eating plan is flexible and practical and the weight loss is achievable and realistic".

Further information: www.fabflour.co.uk
(C) DeHavilland Information Services plc, 1998-2003.

Princes branches into mineral water

Date: Tue, 08 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food and drinks group Princes has announced the acquisition of the Aqua-Pura and Stretton Hills brands.

The Liverpool-based firm, the UK's third largest producer of soft drinks, agreed a deal to buy most of mineral water bottler Well Well Well (UK) for an undisclosed sum.

The multi-million pound deal marks the company's entry into the natural mineral water market and includes water bottling sites at Eden Valley in Cumbria and Church Stretton, Shropshire.

Princes already has soft drinks production sites at Bradford, Glasgow, Kidlington, Cardiff and Manchester. Princes owns or distributes a number of brands, including Princes, Virgin Cola, Jucee squash, Cape Fruit Juices, Ocean Spray squash and Twist 'n' Squeeze.

Trevor Millen, chief executive of Princes Soft Drinks, said: "This is a strategic acquisition for our group and gives us a firm foothold in the bottled water category. Bottled water is forecast to contribute 47 per cent of the total value of growth in the UK soft drinks market between 2002 and 2007 and we intend to capitalise on this opportunity."

Well Well Well will continue to own and operate the Ashe Park brand and the Thirsty Work water cooler business under a different name.

Further information: www.princes.co.uk
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Public health doctors call for ban on junk food ads

Date: Tue, 08 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Television advertising of junk food should be banned before the watershed in the interests of children's health, according to public health doctors.

The BMA's Annual Conference of Public Health Medicine is calling on the government to take immediate action in banning companies from promoting unhealthy food and drink to children.

The government is due to unveil a White Paper outlining its plans to tackle spiralling obesity rates, but culture secretary Tessa Jowell has already announced that ministers are looking to introduce voluntary action by the food and advertising industry rather than an outright ban.

Dr Steve Watkins called the practice of targeting children with high fat, high salt and high sugar foods "utterly despicable", adding: "I think it is utterly and fundamentally wrong that the food industry, or any other kind of industry, should assume the right, for no more than their own commercial purposes, to persuade people to harm themselves. This is especially true of children."

Dr Peter Tiplady, chairman of the BMA's Public Health Committee, criticised food manufacturers for using sports personalities to "send out the message that junk food and fizzy drinks will make them more popular" and called for an integrated approach to tackling childhood obesity.

Dr Kailash Agrawal, who chaired the conference, described childhood obesity as a "public health timebomb" and warned that rates of diabetes, strokes, cancer and heart disease would reach critical levels if the problem was not addressed.

Further information: www.bma.org.uk
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Cerestar launches new cost effective starch

Date: Tue, 08 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Cerestar, a subsidiary of US agri-firm Cargill, has unveiled a new generation of cold-water swelling starches.

The French starch company has announced that its new cold-water starch can be used in the manufacture of bakery products with fruit, cream or jam fillings.

Cerestar Food & Pharma Specialties Europe claims that the new range can reduce costs for food manufacturers through lower doses and delivers "significant production benefits", as a result of the much higher viscosity development of C*HiForm, Foodnavigator.com reports.

"Extensive trials at our application centre in Vilvoorde show that C*HiForm starches can be applied to hot or cold prepared bakery fillings, creating end-products with an exceptionally smooth texture," Johan Peremans, Cerestar application specialist, explained.

"C*HiForm is process tolerant, acid-resistant and offers freeze-thaw stability similar to that of traditional heated starches,' the company said in a statement.

Common starches used in the food industry are extracted either from cereals or roots and tubers. Starch is the primary source of stored energy in cereal grains.

Further information: www.cerestar.com
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NFU welcomes Efra report

Date: Tue, 08 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new report on milk pricing has been welcomed by the NFU, with results supporting a number of key findings previously made by the union.

The Efra committee's report concluded that the dairy industry has been unable to benefit from greater co-operation, there has been an imbalance of strength between supermarkets and suppliers and there is a lack of trust and transparency in the supply chain.

NFU dairy board chairman Gwyn Jones commented: "The NFU believes this report is an informative analysis of the events leading up to the price negotiations last autumn. We must all learn the lessons of that experience."

However the NFU argued that the report focuses on liquid milk and there needs to be a study into the rest of the market and "the lack of innovation and new products development".

Mr Jones also called on the government to take note of the report findings and address key issues such as competition and farmer co-operation.

The union provided a positive outlook for the future, claiming the future holds "firm commodity prices, stability in the cheese market and low seasonal supply".

Further information: www.nfu.org.uk
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Arla posts strong results

Date: Tue, 08 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Arla Foods UK has announced its second interim results for the six months ending March 31 2004.

Figures showed that a number of brands showed positive performance during the period with Lurpak, Anchor Spreadable and Cravendale reporting growth of 10 per cent, 13 per cent and 23 per cent respectively.

Chairman of Arla Foods, Sir David Naish, commented: "Our branded dairy products business continues to perform strongly.

"All our experience to date indicates that the merger will deliver all its anticipated benefits, and I look forward to reporting continued progress in the remainder of the current reporting period and in the longer term."

Additional results revealed continuing sales of £697.9 million and underlying pre-tax profit of £21.1 million, whilst profits as a result of a £20 million merger are expected ahead of schedule.

The company also announced in the report that it has signed an initial two year agreement with TNT Mail for packet distribution and that its enlarged supermarket milk business has maintained volumes.

Further information: www.arlafoods.com
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MPs highlight milk industry problems

Date: Wed, 09 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new report by a committee of MPs has revealed that an average of just 20p of the 50p shoppers pay for a litre of milk in the supermarket goes to farmers.

The Commons environment, food and rural affairs select committee highlighted widespread "suspicion and mistrust" in the milk industry and pointed out that it often costs farmers more to produce milk than they receive for it.

The report on milk prices claimed the current market conditions threatened the survival of many of the UK's farmers and noted that milk farmers' incomes fell by nearly half between 2001 and 2003.

Low milk prices since the abolition of the Milk Marketing Board in 1994 have hit the industry hard and the committee's inquiry found that milk processors and supermarkets refused to clarify who is taking the largest profits from the chain. Just three large processors supply the bulk of milk to big retailers in the UK

Research by Farm, the alliance representing smaller farmers, estimates that the UK has lost nearly 30 per cent of its dairy farmers in the past four years.

With supermarkets demanding low prices and dairies paying low rates to farmers, many face a stark choice between selling up or increasing their debts and expanding.

(no further information)

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Scientists unveil low-carb potatoes

Date: Wed, 09 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A team of US researchers has developed a new low-carb potato, ideal for followers of the Atkins diet and other low-carbohydrate regimes.

Food manufacturers have been keen to cater for the boom in popularity of low-carb eating plans and the new potato, developed by scientists at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, is expected to reach supermarket shelves by 2005.

"Consumers are going to love the flavour and appearance of this potato and the fact that it has 30 per cent fewer carbohydrates compared to a standard Russet baking potato," Chad Hutchinson, assistant professor of horticulture, said.

According to market research firm ACNielsen, one in five Americans are currently following a low-carb diet and recent figures have shown a decline in dollar sales of fresh potatoes.

"Although potatoes are not part of the Atkins diet, the fact of the matter is that potatoes contain no fat, and they are a good source of fibre, protein and vitamins. They have vitamin C and B-6, and they are low in sodium and high in potassium. And, potato skins are an excellent source of fibre," Professor Hutchinson explained.

The new potato, developed by Dutch seed company HZPC, is not a genetically engineered crop. UF is the first test site in the United States for the European import.

Further information: www.ifas.ufl.edu

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British food shoppers 'faced with less choice'

Date: Wed, 09 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A three-year study carried out by Lancaster University Management School has found that the food shopping habits of the British public have changed dramatically in the last two decades.

Speaking on BBC Radio Four's 'You and Yours', Professor Alan Hallsworth of Manchester Metropolitan University explained that the distances between different stores have widened, making it harder to compare prices or purchase goods in different shops.

"Now if you drive 15 minutes to a major out-of-town superstore you're not going to price compare and then drive another 15 minutes, so in a sense you're ability to choose, rather than choice, is I think what's changed," he said.

Professor Hallsworth was involved both in the most recent study and a similar survey carried out 22 years. He explained that there was now a far greater range of goods to choose from than 22 years ago and noted that different groups of shoppers looked at quite different products in the same supermarket.

"I think most supermarket policy in the past has been based on distances, number of stores in an area. What we're saying is it doesn't matter how many stores there are in an area; what matters is how the people in that area react to the store choice that they've got," he explained.

The Professor also noted that, as people became more affluent, they tended not to carry out the large frozen food shopping they had in the past, but preferred to return up to three times a week to their local supermarket to buy fresh or chilled goods.

Further information: www.lums.lancs.ac.uk
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Government investigate potential cattle disease outbreak

Date: Wed, 09 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Government vets are investigating a mystery condition in case it is a new cattle disease.

A young cow suffered paralysis and death and has tested negative for various recognised bovine diseases. The disease affected white material, or white matter, in the heifer's brain

A spokesman from the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) said the case was being carefully investigated.

"The Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) have recorded possibly a new condition in cattle in the UK," he explained. "In layman's terms, a type of cattle polio was identified which we haven't seen before."

The spokesman stressed that it was too soon to speculate about the possible effects of the new condition and insisted that no risk to public health had yet been identified. "It is impossible to make an assessment from a single case where the agent responsible is not known," he added.

The location of the farm affected has not been released and food from the animal that died has not been allowed into the food chain. Ten cattle in contact with the affected cow have been tested for illness and remain in good health.

Further investigation into the case is continuing and the latest information will be detailed in the Veterinary Record.

Further information: www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/vla
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Cod farm to address shortage

Date: Wed, 09 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The first commercial cod farm in the UK has been set up to help tackle the problem of declining stocks of the white fish.

Johnson Sea Farms in the Shetland Isles has set up Johnson Cod since stocks of the fish are low and it realised there was more opportunity than in its salmon business, according to BBC News Online.

The firm plans to raise £2.5 million in the City to buy 1.5 million codling and then raise them to maturity, with full-grown cod then sold on and investors receiving good profits.

At present the UK consumes more than 270,000 tonnes of cod each year, but now stocks are low and the price of the fish is being pushed up.

However Johnson Cod believe that by making their farm organic they will be able to produce a high quality product that will not directly compete with others.

Growing concerns have been raised over the future of cod but action is underway including in Norway, where already £20 million has been invested into developing and researching the new farmed product.

It is hoped if cod farming is successful it could save the UK's most popular fish.

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Regulations delay new berry

Date: Wed, 09 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Saskatoon berry supplies to the UK may be stopped this week as the FSA concluded they should be placed in the 'novel foods sector'.

Previously it was believed the fruit was so like a blueberry that it did not need to be subject to this regulation, according to Just Food.

However experts have said it is not related and is in fact part of the apple and plum family.

Under EU regulations on novel foods, any item that was not part of the European diet before 1997 has to go through food safety and nutrition tests before they are allowed on supermarket shelves.

Reportedly suppliers and industry experts in Canada, where the berry comes from, are frustrated at the decision.

Further information: www.foodstandards.org.uk
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Unilever unveils social responsibility plans

Date: Thu, 10 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Consumer goods firm Unilever has launched a new social responsibility strategy aimed at silencing its critics.

The Anglo-Dutch company is responding to recent attacks on the UK food industry by bringing in a raft of socially responsible policies.

Plans from Unilever include introducing freezer units that are more eco-friendly and use up to 15 per cent less energy than the group's previous models. The freezers are used by Unilever to stock retailers across the UK with its Wall's ice cream range, just-food.com reports.

Unilever also plans to use its advertisements to encourage people to eat more healthily. Last month, Unilever BestFoods chairman, Gavin Neath, admitted that the company's food labelling could be improved and levels of sugar, fat and salt in its products could be reduced.

On its website the company states: "We believe the very business of 'doing business' in a responsible way has a positive social impact, by selling products that meet consumers' needs, helping to create and share wealth, investing in local economies, developing people's skills and sharing technical know-how and expertise across borders."

Further information: www.unilever.com
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Euro 2004 'to alter shopping habits'

Date: Thu, 10 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Euro 2004 will have a significant impact on Britons' shopping habits, a new survey claims.

Retail business information firm FootFall predicts that sales of beer and barbeque food will increase during the tournament, particularly if the weather stays fine.

Research by the Birmingham-based firm found that people change their normal shopping habits and make the most of the opportunity to support England.

John Gallagher, MD of FootFall, said: "The build up to Euro 2004 has been much more evident this time around than in 2000 and England-fever will no doubt grow if we do well in

the tournament. This is likely to impact retailers - especially regional and out-of-town shopping centres - as people stay closer to home to give them time to make preparations to watch the matches with family and friends, but we predict that it's likely to be a moderate change rather than a significant swing."

Mr Gallagher pointed out that the number of shoppers around dropped by 9.6 per cent during the Rugby World Cup final, but added: "On a positive note I'm sure that the sales of beer, BBQ food, widescreen TVs, branded England goods and clothing, and, of course, flags will be on the up - especially if England does well and the heat wave continues.

"Who knows, if we get to the final it could have a significant effect - a real 'feel good' factor could affect optimism and spending in the high street, but we'll have to wait and see on that one!"

FootFall measures over 100 million shopper visits per month in over 135 shopping centres, covering more than 8,000 retail outlets.

Further information: www.footfall.com
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Prince Charles pushes for better school meals

Date: Thu, 10 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Prince Charles is meeting with council chief executives and education chiefs today to discuss ways of improving school meals in England and Wales.

The 'school meals summit' comes ahead of the introduction of new food guidelines for nursery-age children by childcare charity The Pre-school Learning Alliance.

In a meeting arranged by the Soil Association, the heads of 14 councils across England will visit a South Gloucestershire secondary school to see how it prepares healthy meals. The school sources ingredients from local, unprocessed and organic food, including Duchy Home Farm, on the Prince of Wales's Highgrove Estate.

Teachers at Brimsham Green secondary school in Yate, South Gloucestershire, claim that the healthy meals have led to vastly improved pupil behaviour and healthier diets, as well as benefiting farmers and the local economy.

The Prince of Wales will join council leaders in watching a school lunch being prepared by the kitchen staff and will meet with year 7 pupils from the school.

Recent studies have shown that the levels of childhood obesity in the UK have surged in recent years and the government is keen to improve the nutritional standards of food served in schools.

The Soil Association's director of policy, Peter Melchett, said: "Every child has the right to a healthy school meal. More county councils should be able to follow the example of South Gloucestershire in producing healthy and nutritious food their school pupils."

No further information.

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Innovation on the menu to combat new EC guidelines

Date: Thu, 10 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New rules from the EU governing food products containing cholesterol lowering plant sterols could foster a range of innovative new approaches to packaging.

The EC has launched a general ruling on phytosterol labelling, following on from approval for the use of plant sterols in foods such as cheese products, sauces and milk.

Under the new regulation all sterol-based foods including those already available will need labelling, featuring a detailed reference to the recommended daily dose of up to three grams a day.

As a result it is thought food firms will have to devise innovative approaches to packaging to ensure that the requirements can be met.

Jouko Broman, vice president of sales and marketing at Raisio Benecol told Food Navigator: "We understand the precaution for limiting the dosage of sterols but it makes the pack size of the food important. The food industry will have to get creative to get around this."

Issues that may cause problems are maximum dosage limits, products that are not consumed on a high scale or daily basis and pricing.

Further information: <http://europa.eu.int/>

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GM-free milk hits supermarket shelves

Date: Thu, 10 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new range of GM-free milk has gone on sale at supermarket giant Sainsbury's.

The firm has launched a new product that comes with a guarantee that the cows from which the milk is obtained have been fed a GM free diet.

Sainsbury's said in a statement that it had been in discussions with its main suppliers since the end of last year to develop the milk.

Ian Merton, director of Fresh Food at Sainsbury's, drew parallels with the launch of organic produce in the 80s.

"In the same way as we introduced our organic range in 1986 in response to a small but growing customer demand, this milk has been developed to allow customers to make a choice," he explained.

The launch of the new milk comes just weeks after the EU introduced strict new traceability and labelling rules for GM food and feed. Feed produced from genetically modified crops must now be clearly labelled.

Further information: <http://www.sainsbury.co.uk/>
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OECD: global food production outstripping demand

Date: Thu, 10 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has published its new report on the agricultural outlook for the next ten years.

The report, which covers the years 2004-2013, indicates that world food production is outstripping, and will continue to outstrip, demand over the next ten years.

Peter Liapis, senior economist at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, told BBC: "We expect strong productivity gains. The supply on the world is not expected to be a problem."

He continued: "As a matter of fact that's one of the reasons why the prices are relatively moderate in the outlook and if we take inflation into account the real prices for agricultural product continued their pattern over the last 20 or so years where they have been declining over time."

He also noted that countries are shifting their policies away from policies that distort markets to policies that try to transfer money to farmers, in keeping with the proposed Common Agricultural Policy reforms.

He agreed that farmers would still receive a similar amount of money from the new policies because "the overall budget for the CAP is not expected to change very much".

Pointing out that the policy change would mean greater exposure of farmers to the markets, Mr Liapis added: "The CAP budget has been basically fixed at the 2006 levels so there won't be any more increases but the shift in payment, the shift in support is changing, it's moving more towards letting the markets have a greater role."

Further information: <http://www.oecd.org/home/>
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UN agency declares Europe free of foot-and-mouth

Date: Fri, 11 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization has declared that Europe is free from foot-and-mouth disease, after centuries of epidemics.

"Europe has made remarkable progress against FMD over the last decades," said Keith Sumption, secretary of the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the creation of the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, the FAO said that 31 of the Commission's 33 Member States were free of foot-and-mouth disease; with the disease remaining endemic only in Turkey and Israel.

However, the FAO cautioned that Europe's livestock industry should remain vigilant against possible future outbreaks. Experts warn that there is still a high risk of the virus being re-introduced to Europe from regions where it remains prevalent; such as Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and parts of South America.

The FAO urged the European nations to maintain their support to these areas to ensure the virus does not return to the continent.

Four million animals were slaughtered in the UK during the most recent major outbreak in Europe in 2001. Herds in Ireland, France and the Netherlands were also affected.

(no further information)

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Soil Association searches for UK's best organic produce

Date: Fri, 11 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Soil Association has issued a statement to farms and food manufacturers, informing them there is still time to enter their top quality products in this year's Soil Association Organic Food Awards.

Top chefs and food experts, including Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Raymond Blanc, and Matthew Fort, have been lined up to judge this year's awards.

The awards, which promote the UK's best organic produce, form part of Organic Week, which runs from September 4th to 12th this year.

Over 35 categories of fresh and processed food will be judged during the awards, including fresh meats, cheese, fruit and vegetables, poultry, beer, baby foods and ready meals. A new category of best school dinner has also been introduced this year, highlighting the importance of healthy, nutritious meals for children.

Special awards are also available for the best box scheme, local food initiative and producer of the year.

The Organic Trophy will be awarded to the individual or company judged to have made the most significant contribution to the organic movement in the last 12 months.

The closing date for entries in the Soil Association Organic Food Awards is July 9th and details and entry forms are available from the OFA website.

Further information: www.soilassociation.org
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Organic food buyers patronise Welsh produce

Date: Fri, 11 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Welsh consumers are the most loyal Britons to their country's organic produce, according to a new survey.

A study into consumer attitudes towards organic food and drink showed that 80 per cent of Welsh consumers preferred organic food produced in Wales.

The survey also found that support for local, organic food was stronger in Wales than in any other part of the UK, the Western Mail reports.

The report, commissioned by the Soil Association, discovered that two of the most important motivations driving organic consumers were found to be taste and health.

Bob Kennard, chairman of the Agri-Food Partnership's organic marketing sub-group, said, "We feel that the report raises many interesting issues and very much hope it will be a useful tool for companies marketing organic produce."

The survey analysed the buying behaviour of 15,000 households and carried out more detailed studies of 4,000 people in their homes, concluding that Welsh consumers are more loyal to their country's organic food producers than the English, Scots or Northern Irish.

Further information: www.soilassociation.org
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Peruvian soft drink contains coca kick

Date: Fri, 11 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A Peruvian soft drink company has produced a new soft drink that comes with a special kick.

KDrink contains a healthy selection of vitamins, calcium and proteins, but also features coca, the green leaf used to make cocaine, as its signature ingredient.

Peruvian drinks maker Kokka Royal Food Drink has filled 200,000 of the 10-ounce (30-centilitre) KDrink bottles since operations began in February, and its lawyers have been negotiating with health authorities in Europe to secure import permits.

Anselm Pi Rambla, the Spanish investor who has spearheaded the project, said: "You don't get this from Gatorade. It does not give you a high like crack cocaine. But it does give you energy you can use."

The new drink, costing \$1 a bottle, has reportedly been flying off the shelves in some of Peru's biggest supermarket chains, selling about 50,000 bottles a month.

If KDrink is sold in Europe, the beverage could present a solution for thousands of poverty-stricken coca farmers in Peru who are continually under pressure from Washington to destroy their crops.

KDrink's makers claim European distribution would convert an oddity of a concoction into a real competitor for the world's big-name beverages.

(no further information)

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Image revamp for poultry producers

Date: Fri, 11 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Poultry firm Manor Farm Ducklings has undergone a revamp and revealed a new logo and corporate identity.

The company is one of the largest producers of white Pekin ducklings and one of the top suppliers of whole, portioned and added value duckling products in the UK.

Managing director Dale Cole explained to EDP 24: "The new image represents progression for the company and its products; and this is entirely appropriate as we continue to consolidate our position within the UK duck producing market."

Reportedly the image change is part of celebrations at the company, which is now 50 years old and is also set to offer some new own-brand products to be available in supermarkets soon.

The firm has been experiencing a steady increase in business as wholesale and retail customers return to British-reared poultry items.

Further information: www.manorfarmducklings.co.uk

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FSA nuts survey reveals positive results

Date: Fri, 11 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new survey carried out by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) into aflatoxin content in nuts has revealed positive results.

Findings showed that the amount of the naturally occurring toxins were not present or below legal levels in 95 per cent of the samples, with those above the level occurring significantly less than previous surveys.

As part of the study 197 samples were analysed and in 70 per cent no aflatoxins were found.

Some products were found to contain above legal levels and will be removed from sale by the FSA accordingly, but it argued findings did not raise any new safety concerns for consumers.

In response to the results, Waitrose commented in a statement: "We have in place strict procedures to ensure the safety of all our products including careful supplier control and regular testing.

"This has been given the fullest discussion both with our supplier and internally to determine what improvements could be made and we are taking best advice on what products can safely appear on our shelves."

Aflatoxins are naturally produced by some moulds which grow on certain food crops during storage or production and in some cases evidences has suggested links to cancer or damaging DNA.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk

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UFU outlines response to EU food hygiene legislation

Date: Mon, 14 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) has considered a new package of food hygiene legislation, adopted earlier this year by the EU Farm Council.

UFU Policy Officer Ian Stevenson assessed the implications of the new rules at ground level and predicts that the new legislation will create much more debate over the next 18 months, as National Authorities put in place procedures to implement the requirements.

Mr Stevenson claims that the UK Food Standards Agency has been the lead negotiator on food hygiene policy development and has taken the lead role in preparing for implementation of the package.

The UFU has been a key member of the FSA's Meat Hygiene Policy Forum, set up in 2002 to engage with interested parties on a regular basis, and has been working to ensure that any

new rules to be implemented are done so in a proportionate, cost effective and unbureaucratic manner.

Mr Stevenson stresses that the interpretation of the framework legislation by UK Policymakers is pivotal to the implementation of the new EU rules at ground level.

The new hygiene legislation, drawn up to simplify and consolidate existing food hygiene rules, took a long time to agree, but it is now scheduled for implementation from January 1st 2006.

The UFU has been working with other industry partners to encourage FSA and government departments to implement the new legislation in such a way that it will not unduly burden an already overregulated farming and food sector, farminglife.com reports.

Further information www.foodstandards.gov.uk

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US scientists explore organic food safety

Date: Mon, 14 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Organic food has higher levels of E. coli and more Salmonella bacteria than conventional fruit and vegetables, according to a new study.

Research conducted by scientists from the University of Minnesota showed that organic produce may have higher bacterial risks than conventional fruits and vegetables.

However, the researchers are urging consumers not to worry, as finding more E. coli bacteria on organic foods fertilized with manure does not mean that organic food is more dangerous, but merely that it "is more susceptible to fecal contamination."

The scientists claim that organic produce does not contain the most virulent E. coli O157:H7, but only generic, non-pathogenic E. coli, which is less harmful.

The Hudson Institute's Center for Global Food Issues (CGFI) argues that, food safety authorities have been using the increased presence of generic E. coli as a red flag for risk.

The University of Minnesota researchers found Salmonella on 0.4 percent of organic samples (2 out of 476). Salmonella can cause diarrhoea, typhoid fever, and Reiter's Syndrome, which causes joint pain and painful urination.

The CGFI writes: "Organic food activists (including many activist researchers entrenched in liberal university halls) have claimed organic food superiority for years in their efforts to mould society and scare consumers into buying their politically correct fare. Now their farcical facade is crumbling."

Further information: www.umn.edu

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Bakers react to Atkins popularity

Date: Mon, 14 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Promoters of carbohydrate-rich foods are going to more and more extreme measures to increase sales, following the popularity of low-carb diets.

Producers insist that eating plans such as the Atkins Diet, which cut carbohydrate-rich food out, have had no impact on sales. However, foodanddrinkeurope.com reports that British bakery industry groups have been forced to react to the growing popularity of low-carb diets, despite repeated assurances that bread sales had not been affected by the trend.

The Federation of Bakers, the Grain Information Service and the Flour Advisory Bureau claim to be concerned about the accuracy of the information being given to dieters about the role played by carbohydrates. The organisations suggest that much of the current information in support of low-carb diets is misleading and potentially dangerous.

"Consumers will believe what they read, and the sheer volume of coverage given to low-carb diets has already led to considerable confusion about what is healthy and what is not. This is what makes us particularly angry - consumers are being deliberately misled in order to stimulate interest in diet products," Dr Tamara de Grassi, head of communications at the Flour Advisory Bureau, said.

The potato industry is also keen to promote the benefits of carbohydrate consumption. Kay Hogg, assistant marketing manager at the British Potato Council told FoodandDrinkEurope.com that a £1 million marketing campaign, entitled 'Fab not Fad', would be run this summer to promote the health benefits of potatoes.

"We have always promoted the health benefits of potato consumption. They are a great source of energy, low in salt, virtually fat free, cholesterol free and provide important vitamins and minerals," she said.

Further information: www.bakersfederation.org.uk
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Raw food diet takes off in US

Date: Mon, 14 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new diet from the US forbids cooked food and all animal products and converts are claiming they are living the way nature intended.

The raw-food diet has hit an all-time popularity high in the United States, with stars including Demi Moore, Woody Harrelson and Robin Williams visiting raw-food restaurants.

Followers of the diet only eat uncooked plant food, avoiding animal flesh of any kind, and processed and refined foods such as dairy, cereal grains, salt and sugar. Many claim the diet

looks back to the way our ancestors ate and report benefits from increased energy levels and resistance to colds and flu, to clearer skin and healthier, glossier hair.

In the UK, information resource group the Fresh Network has reported a recent increase in subscribers to its magazine Get Fresh!, while London restaurants such as Heartstone and Vita Organic are experiencing higher-volume sales of their raw-food dishes.

However, critics of the diet claim that many people do not have access to an abundance of good quality, fresh fruits and vegetables, and what we do have is often picked too young or under-ripe. They also argue that dining out with friends can become awkward for raw food diet followers and the diet could lead to an imbalance of nutrients.

"It's not advisable for people to eat nothing but raw foods for long periods," author and raw-food revolutionary Leslie Kenton writes in her latest book, The Powerhouse Diet, "but an all-raw diet can be a wonderful tool for short periods, especially if you are healing something like cancer, Aids or depression."

Further information: www.fresh-network.com
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FSA investigates meat contamination in vegetarian products

Date: Mon, 14 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The FSA is funding new research into meat-free products to ensure vegetarians and members of certain ethnic groups are not consuming products that have been contaminated by meat.

Findings from the study could help food manufacturers to ensure quality is high and products really are meat-free, according to Food Production Daily.

Items will be tested with a DNA-based method that can find the presence of meat even at levels as low as 0.5 per cent.

Previously no techniques have been found to satisfactorily detect meat contamination, a key issue for those who stick to a meat free diet.

Studies conducted so far have found very occasional low-level contamination in commercial products caused by lack of acceptable cleaning procedures.

In addition a study into the presence of meat-derived fats in vegetable oils and fats is also being conducted with funding from the FSA.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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New Sudan I dye concerns

Date: Tue, 15 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New concerns have arisen following the discovery of the illegal red dye Sudan I, claimed to be potentially carcinogenic and to have links to cancer, in new batches of food.

The Food standards Agency (FSA) is alerting both consumers and trading bodies to the discoveries. Sudan I was banned last year under EU rules, but has since been found in over 150 food products including chutneys, relishes and seasonings.

"We have undergone a constant process since July, tracing products throughout the chain and building up a picture of where contaminated products could have ended up," a spokesman for the UK's FSA recently told FoodNavigator.

"It is impossible to say when this will end - there are lots of contaminated products," it was added.

A number of supermarkets have been affected by contaminated batches, including Safeway, Sainsbury and Morrisons.

All retailers have been asked to withdraw and recall contaminated products as soon as they are identified.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk

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Pork sales show positive signs

Date: Tue, 15 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New research has shown that pork is becoming increasingly popular in the UK catering sector.

A new survey by the British Pig Executive (BPEX) revealed that the amount of pork purchased is up 28 per cent this quarter based on the previous year.

The sale of pork products such as sausages, bacon, and ham were all up considerably, making pork the fastest growing protein sector, according to The Pig Site.

In addition a growth in the amount of pork bought by workplace and educational establishment caterers is said to be due to a focus on healthy eating.

Trade sector manager for BPEX Tony Goodger said the figures were "encouraging" and commented: "We are also pleased with the increase in sausage volumes across the hotel and cafe sectors.

"This comes in the wake of a series of major roadshows at catering colleges where the trainee chefs were introduced to the delights of versatile pork and given tips on how to cook it to retain its flavour and succulence."

The Meat and Livestock Commission set up the Foodservice Quarterly Protein Monitor in association with the Friary Marketing and Consulting Group (FMCG).

Further information: www.bpex.org.uk
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Food experts develop new sweets technology

Date: Tue, 15 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new technology has been launched which helps place gum and gum bases into sweets and lollipops, by three European food firms.

ABV Baker, a UK based leading provider of depositing technology, leading gum base supplier Cafosa and leading flavours supplier Firmenich have all joined forces to create the equipment.

The sector is now the fastest growing area in the confectionery industry and multi coloured gum products and striped or see-through lollipops help create new product potential due to added variety.

According to the manufacturers the new service offers a complete preparation to packaging system that offers new innovation in gum shape and colour combination.

Existing plants can simply add new depositing lines and conversion kits to take advantage of the new technology.

Benefits of the system include better quality and marketing opportunities, such as accurate shape and weight for cost control and packaging efficiency, as well as low scrap rates and maintenance needs.

At present APV has over 400 confectionery depositors around the world that make a wide selection of hard and soft sweets and lollipops.

Further information: www.cafosa.com
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Poppets packaging wins design award

Date: Tue, 15 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The new look for confectionery brand Poppets, which is made by Fox's Confectionery, has won a Food and Beverage design award.

The new packets were redesigned by London agency Turner Duckworth to reflect Poppets' new positioning as the 'ballsy little chocolates', according to Food Navigator.

According to Fox's, new "anarchic" Poppets characters, such as Completely Mintal and Chocwork Orange, and the on-pack dares, have also resulted in strong appeal with both adult and teenager consumers.

"We are thrilled by this win. The redesigned packaging was the result of a complete shift in positioning for us and this FAB award stands testament to its success, which very much reflects the feedback we've been receiving from our trade customers and consumers," said Emma Gilbert, marketing manager for Poppets.

Further information: www.foxs.co.uk
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Nut products found to contain harmful toxins

Date: Tue, 15 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency has said it has found harmful toxins in some of the nut and nut products on sale in the UK.

The food watchdog sampled 197 products from a range of retailers for its annual survey and found aflatoxins, naturally occurring toxins, in five per cent of samples taken from nuts and nut-based products, according to Food Navigator.

"Where aflatoxins above the legal limits were detected, the agency has taken action to ensure that these products are no longer available for sale," said the FSA in a statement.

Aflatoxins are produced by certain moulds growing on some food crops during production and storage and are usually harmless, but have been linked to cancer in some animal species.

"There is also some evidence to suggest they may be harmful to humans. Experts have recommended that aflatoxins in food should be reduced to the lowest levels achievable," added the FSA.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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Heinz lowers salt content amidst concerns

Date: Tue, 15 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Heinz has revealed further recipe changes to its baked beans in response to continuing concerns over processed foods.

The food firm has announced it will reduce the salt content by 15 per cent to make the beans healthier.

In addition the whole food range is to be adjusted to ensure salt content is below the Government's target of 0.87 per cent.

Heinz has been making the famous food product with the same recipe for 109 years, but results have shown that they contain too much salt added as a preservative and for flavour.

The reduction in what has been seen as one of the healthiest convenience foods on the market will take place this summer.

Further information: www.heinz.com
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Crown Foods introduces new salmon cans

Date: Wed, 16 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Crown Food Packaging has developed a new steel can that it claims will enable salmon processors to use the same packaging for global distribution.

The new cans are constructed from advanced polymer-coated steel manufactured by Netherlands-based Corus Packaging Plus, according to Food Production Daily.

The company claims that 'Protact' cans exceeds all FDA and European Union food safety standards and will enable salmon processors to use the same packaging for global distribution.

Crown Food Packaging also claims that the Protact cans are specifically engineered to withstand the demanding salmon packing process in order to deliver the best possible product to the consumer.

Applied by direct extrusion, polymers used in Protact cans are chemically inert, so there is no effect on product taste.

"Design opportunities are very attractive with this progressive packaging," said Peter Pan Seafoods chief executive Barry Collier.

"The fact that Protact meets or exceeds food safety standards in all of our markets is a tremendous benefit for us logistically," he added.

Further information: www.crownfoods.co.uk
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Bighams launches new microwave product

Date: Wed, 16 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK ready-to-cook food firm Bighams has announced the launch of a new microwave meal range.

The new 'Steam' range includes eight varieties and will be sold in Waitrose stores across the UK from August, according to Datamonitor.

It is thought the move is to take advantage of the growing trend for convenience, but products are to be launched with a more upmarket appeal with dishes including Pesto Salmon, Florentine Chicken and Atlantic Cod.

Prices are expected to be a little higher than those typically available on the market, although recipes will all include fresh ingredients and new recipes are set to follow soon after the product becomes available.

In addition the products which are said to provide health benefits are packed with the latest technology and follow the move by M&S to steam based cooking.

Further information: www.bighams.co.uk

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New Tesco branch to create 200 jobs

Date: Wed, 16 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Tesco has announced plans to open a new store in Dundee, expected to create 200 new full and part time jobs.

The leading UK supermarket chain has taken over a former B&Q DIY store in South Road and is currently in the process of investing several millions of pounds in the property. The 30,000 square foot building has been gutted and is being renovated for use for food-based retail.

"We will need over 200 employees for the store and the recruiting of staff will begin in early to mid July," a spokesman for Tesco told the Evening Telegraph.

"The project involves quite major works, but nothing that we haven't done before. We hope to be open for business before the end of the summer."

The new development marks a new stage of competition with Asda, planning to develop a 90,000 square foot supermarket and filling station in the local area.

Tesco has also submitted plans to the city council seeking permission for its own superstore and filling station development in South Road, on a site yards from the land Asda wants to utilise.

www.tesco.co.uk

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Oilseed rape vote draws near

Date: Wed, 16 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK advisors to the government on GM products have raised serious concerns about oilseed rape as the EU prepares to vote on the issue today.

Monsanto's GM oilseed rape has already been given approval by the EU GM food safety body, but today officials from all 25 Member States will decide its fate.

However it is still unsure which way the Government will vote, with the UK's Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE) claiming that in a confidential Monsanto study rats fed on the GM product had a 15 per cent increase in liver weight.

Reportedly ACRE did try to address the issue but the European Food Safety Authority claimed it was purely incidental.

Clare Oxborrow, Friends of the Earth's GM-Free Britain campaigner said: "The UK must reject this unsafe and unwanted GM food. Its scientific advisors have raised serious concerns about the safety and environmental impact of this product. The Government must stand up for British public and environment and vote against this GM oil seed rape."

Additional concerns are that seed spill is likely to occur and that no plan appears to have been set up in case the seeds escape into the environment.

The vote today will see the UK represented by Defra officials and could be viewed as a test case for the newly expanded EU.

Further information: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/acre
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Arla foods posts strong results

Date: Wed, 16 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Arla Foods UK's has posted strong results since the merger with Express Dairies.

Before exceptional items and goodwill amortisation, pre-tax profits were £21.1 million based on sales of £697.9 million, according to foodproductiondaily.com

During the first half year, sales of Lurpak rose by 10 per cent while Anchor Spreadable accounted for even stronger growth, 13 per cent.

Arla's filtered milk, Cravendale, recorded an advance in sales of 23 per cent.

"The first trading results of the merged company demonstrate progress in all key areas," said Arla Foods UK chairman Sir David Naish.

"Our brands are performing strongly, supermarket milk volumes are in lines with expectations, our major dairy investments are on schedule and we have continued to outperform the market in home delivery."

The company said it is confident of consolidating its new position as the country's leading dairy firm.

Further information: www.arlafoods.com

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Campaigners call for ban on fatty foods in lunch boxes

Date: Thu, 17 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food campaigners say children should be banned from bringing crisps and chocolate into school as part of the war on obesity.

The non-profit Welsh Food Alliance (WFA) has urged the Government to tell headteachers which types of food and drink are "acceptable" to carry into school, according to The Daily Post.

Other health campaigners have called for schools to simply ban snack machines but the move by the WFA raises the prospect of pupils being ordered to replace fatty snacks in their lunch boxes with fruit and other healthy choices.

The proposals were put forward in evidence to the Commons health select committee which has recently carried out an inquiry into obesity.

"The Government should specify the acceptability of food and drink that may be brought into school," said the WFA.

Any decision to ban snack machines in Welsh schools or to restrict fatty foods in lunch boxes would be taken by the Assembly government in Cardiff.

Further information: www.welshfoodalliance.org.uk

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Specialist foods fuel growth for FM

Date: Thu, 17 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Specialist health food company FM Foods has revealed growth in the company is progressing well.

According to figures the company achieved a growth rate of 1,375 per cent in the last five years and current turn over stands at £1.08 million.

Following its positive progress, the firm was awarded a grant from Sunderland Council, the city where it is based, and has now doubled the size of its operation and created more jobs.

Managing director, Peter Fawcett said: "FM Foods continues to go from strength to strength... our expansion programme has already increased our workforce by at least 20 per cent."

FM Foods was first launched in 1994 and works with partners in Pakistan, Uganda and Burkina Faso to help import and package fair trade dried fruit.

The business also produces snack bars for the organic, dietary and sports markets.

Further information: www.fmfoods.co.uk
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Tesco warned to improve ethical policies

Date: Thu, 17 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Leading UK supermarket chain Tesco is being urged to make greater efforts regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), on allegations from a number of groups including Friends of the Earth (FOE).

According to FOE Tesco is damaging communities, putting local shops out of business, and threatening the livelihoods of many UK farmers.

These concerns are being presented to MPs today, along with accusations that the food retail group is failing to live up to its promises on ethical trading with overseas suppliers.

Speakers from Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, the Association of Convenience Stores and the NFU council will reveal how Tesco is able to abuse its position because of weak controls, while highlighting a "lax government attitude" to controlling supermarket power.

"Tesco's success has made it immensely powerful, a position that it is clearly abusing by putting small traders out of business and killing off local high streets, bullying suppliers, and damaging the environment through its never ending demand for cheap food," stated Friends of the Earth Food and Farming Campaigner Sandra Bell.

"The evidence against Tesco can no longer be ignored. It is time for the Government to regulate and tame this corporate beast."

In light of these allegations Foe is recommending that the Government enforce a number of new measures, including more robust planning policies to protect town centres and high street shops, a stricter and statutory code of practice to ensure that suppliers are treated fairly and supermarket watchdog to ensure that the grocery market is operating in the interests of consumers, farmers and small retailers.

Further information: www.foe.co.uk
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KK Fine Foods installs new technologies

Date: Thu, 17 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Frozen convenience food manufacturer, KK Fine Foods, has announced it has installed a new technology system for business manufacturing and planning.

The company has implemented the Ross iRenaissance suite to help boost management reporting and allow it to meet upcoming EU traceability regulations, which are set to come into effect in January 2005.

Graham Jackson, chairman of KK Fine Foods told Food Production Daily: "We are a growing company and realised that we needed a more sophisticated system to support us through our next phase of growth."

"Food manufacturers in the past have tended to differentiate themselves on price and customer service. Now we are seeing a third consideration: brand protection. And this can be seen up and down the supply chain," Scot McLeod, vice president for marketing at Ross added.

Since KK Fine Foods is a manufacturer that makes to order it completes many short production runs each day and needed a replacement to its old linked spreadsheet system.

Traceability is now a key issue for the food industry with supermarkets wanting to know exactly what happens to products during each stage they go through in production.

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Salt reductions for food industry

Date: Thu, 17 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The food industry has confirmed it is planning further salt reductions in products to help support Government food and health plans.

Among the salt reduction plans already given to Ministers are another five per cent decrease in sliced bread and cuts in leading branded soups and meal sauces, biscuits and cakes.

In addition the snacks sector has promised to reduce salt even further after already achieving a 25 per cent reduction in the last ten years.

Martin Paterson, Food and Drink Federation Deputy Director General, said: "The UK industry has made huge strides, welcomed by the Food Standards Agency, in reducing salt across a range of products. In addition to further reductions pledged this year, an industry-wide plan for reducing salt in meat products is to be shared with the DoH shortly.

However Mr Paterson claimed that the industry can only move at the same pace as consumers, explaining "a reduced salt product which is left on the shelf by consumers or to which they add salt at the table, will not benefit anyone".

To help with reductions, caterers have been providing advice, new technical research is to be commissioned and companies are also offering reduced sugar and fat alternatives.

According to Mr Paterson the issue is particularly difficult since "salt content has an important role to play within food production... In many cases salt has a multi-purpose use".

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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Warning issued over fish oil deficiency

Date: Thu, 17 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A leading expert on brain chemistry has announced warnings that a mental health crisis could result from a lack of fish oils in the average diet.

Professor Michael Crawford asserts that omega-3 oils, found naturally in oily fish, is essential for healthy brains as well as having definite benefits for the heart. His claims follow recent research findings that draw the same conclusions.

"We are facing a very serious sinister problem," Professor Crawford told the BBC. "The brain simply won't get the building materials that it needs to grow, to develop and to maintain itself in adult life.

"If we don't get enough of these things then what will happen is that we will see a decline in mental ability and an increase in psychiatric disorder."

The latest figures indicate that UK individuals eat an average of 7.5 kilos of fish over the course of a year; near double the figure 50 years ago.

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Bakkavor increases Geest stake

Date: Fri, 18 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Iceland based food firm Bakkavor has announced that it has increased its stake in Geest, but asserts that it is not yet planning to make a formal bid for the acquisition of the UK convenience foods group.

According to Aroq Bakkavor has increased its stake in Geest to 20.03 per cent, after taking a 10.3 per cent stake in the company late last month.

Lydur Gudmundsson, Bakkavor's chief executive officer, commented on the move and possible action in the future.

"We have no plan to make an offer for Geest but we see the sector as a good investment opportunity," he stated.

"It is based on our knowledge of the industry and we believe that the industry is going to continue to grow."

Further information: www.bakkavor.is
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New national food policy proposals announced

Date: Fri, 18 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new proposal for a national food policy is to be presented today by Liberal Democrat spokesman on food and rural affairs, Baroness Sue Miller.

'Hungry for Change' is reportedly the first comprehensive document to address food and covers all areas including health, retail, education and food sources.

Baroness Miller commented: "Every day we seem to lurch from one food crisis to the next - from BSE to foot and mouth to obesity. Yet the Government still has no coherent food policy. Food issues are addressed by simply plastering over a series of problems."

Among the suggestions made in the report is the creation of a Nutrition Council to provide a long-term plan for improving the national diet, setting up a traffic light system, regulations to ban children's food advertising and a stronger code of practice for supermarkets.

In addition Baroness Miller believes 'healthy' products should be available in school vending machines, the National Fruit scheme should be extended to all school children and at every level of government food strategy should be included.

"Food is one of the best examples of what sustainable means; where social, economic and environmental influences are so closely interwoven that if one of them is missing, food policy will fail. This report provides a balanced set of proposals and I hope it will be a focus for debate," she added.

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Tesco sales on the up

Date: Fri, 18 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Britain's largest supermarket chain Tesco has announced that first-quarter sales rose by 12 per cent as the company continues to cut prices.

The sales rose by 7.8 per cent, beating industry forecasts of between six and seven per cent. Tesco plans to spend £70 million on price-cutting in order to maintain its advantage over main rivals Asda.

Chief executive Sir Terry Leahy said: "I am particularly pleased that our core UK food business has continued to grow market share and to perform very strongly in the first quarter."

The chain is also moving towards selling more goods such as DVDs and clothes in an attempt to tap into the estimated £111 billion customers spend on non-food goods. The supermarket has launched a line of budget priced non-food items, under its popular Tesco Value label, which is currently the largest retailing brand in the food market.

Tesco is also the largest supermarket chain in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia and sees Asia as a key growth area for the company.

Further information: www.tesco.co.uk
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EC approves Flagship Foods sale

Date: Fri, 18 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The European Commission has approved the acquisition of the UK's Flagship Foods by Danish Crown.

Through the new deal Danish Crown will be able to boost its presence in the UK and the Commission felt that the main effects would be in the fresh pork for processing and processed pork products markets.

Flagship is a private company, which includes subsidiaries such as Dalehead Foods, Roach Foods and Flagship Fresh Meats, according to Just Food.

Danish Crown is the largest Danish cooperative slaughterhouse and is active in the areas of cattle and pig slaughter and meat processing and trading.

It was concluded that although the company would gain an important position in the UK, competition would still occur from rivals such as Kerry Foods, Grampian and Cranswick.

Flagship's business areas include pig slaughter for human consumption and further processing, as well as other meats, along with processed meat products for the UK.

Further information: www.danishcrown.dk
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Irradiation promoted as food poisoning solution

Date: Fri, 18 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A number of international bodies and industry groups are promoting food irradiation as a solution to food poisoning, as well as a potential means of combatting world hunger by reducing spoilage and extending shelf life.

In light of these recommendations proposals to relax the global standards governing food irradiation, including the removal of the current maximum irradiation dose limit are currently under discussion.

These proposals include the removal of the current maximum irradiation dose limit, and the European Commission is also deliberating over whether to extend its list of foods permitted for irradiation in all EU member states.

The current list includes only herbs, spices and vegetable seasonings, but the possible extension would include a number of other food products.

According to Medical News Today concerns have been raised that increased utilisation of irradiation could result in a lax attitude towards contamination prevention among consumers.

Worries have also arisen that irradiating fruit and vegetables to extend their shelf life can mislead consumers by making 'old' food look 'fresh', in light of the fact that the greater the age of fruit and vegetables, the lower their overall nutritional value.

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EU confirms investment in food safety

Date: Mon, 21 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The European Commission has announced that it will extend investment in food quality and safety in the second year of the EU's Sixth Framework Programme for Research, according to Aroq.

Funds totalling €192 million will go to 31 research projects and networks of excellence and 13 smaller support actions, addressing a variety of issues.

Included among these are traceability, contaminants in food, emerging pathogens, diseases affecting animals and crops, food allergy, obesity and various aspects of nutrition.

European Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin expressed his support of the funding initiative.

"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.

"Furthermore, many of these major research initiatives will contribute to the development of EU policies based on sound science," he added.

Further information: europa.eu.int

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DIY sausages a recipe for success

Date: Mon, 21 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A North West sausage business launched by a Manchester mother and daughter is proving a big hit.

Owners of Spicetech UK, Janet Schuster and Gaynor Preece, offer make-your-own sausage kits, after wanting to offer healthy eating sausages and tasty, innovative recipes.

Ms Schuster told Manchester Evening News: "Finding healthy eating sausage these days is very difficult - so we started to make our own.

"Making your own sausages is a solution to many people's special dietary needs, whether it be low fat, low carbohydrate, gluten free or even vegetarian."

The beautiful bangers even include spices offered by the company, which supplies herbs and spices to UK wholesalers and are used in a number of supermarket goods.

Each design-a-sausage kit costs £55 and includes a traditional mincer, attachments, breadcrumb coating, spices, casing and recipes, whilst kits without the mincer cost £18.99.

The sausage business was set up in January and has already had orders from all over Europe from places such as France and Germany.

Further information: www.spicetech.co.uk

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Food groups develop hi-tech vending machines

Date: Mon, 21 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Dairy firm Fonterra and vitamin maker BASF are funding new research into dairy machines of the future, designed to customise foods to an individuals personal dietary needs.

The new project, worth NZ\$13 million is to be carried out at a New Zealand university-based functional foods centre, based on a 'point-of-sale individualised foods' system (POSIFoods).

According to Food Navigator the POSIFood system would allow consumers to alter the nutritional make-up of foods and drinks offered to suit their personal health needs.

For example an individual concerned about osteoporosis and iron levels could opt for a product high in a dairy calcium and iron, just by pressing a button. Then someone else could choose the same product but enriched with omega-3.

"While being able to dial up food in the way you want sounds the stuff of science fiction, this heralds the next era in food technology," commented Fonterra's director of marketing and innovation Bob Major.

"Consumers will be able to receive a healthy, nutritious snack with a specified nutritional benefit and the convenience of instant vending."

Further information: www.fonterra.com
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Spurway installs new packaging technology

Date: Mon, 21 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Spurway Foods has announced it has installed new packaging technology to make processing more efficient and to move into the gas packaging market.

The UK ethnic snacks producer has installed Packaging Automation's Vision heat-sealing machines at its factory in Middlesex, according to Food Production Daily.

Spurway's sales director Derek Ord explained: "We were looking for a machine to help us get into the gas packaging market so we could service two new clients - Makro and Iceland.

"We had just won business from them for the first time and we were also quite keen to expand our customer base for the 250 products we supply. So we needed something to cope with the high speeds and throughputs we had to achieve."

Supermarket supplier Kerry Foods has also recently implemented the technology to package its new line of chicken pieces.

Packaging Automation is a leading manufacturer of heat-sealing machines for the food industry.

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Atkins rival

Date: Mon, 21 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A collection of UK bakers have developed an innovative new eating regime that recommends the intake of bread, potatoes and other foods with high carbohydrate content, in response to popular low-carb diets.

The 'Vitality' diet is claimed to be healthier than low-carb regimes such as the Atkins diet, because it promotes a more balanced intake of the main food groups, according to the Federation of Bakers, the Grain Information Service and the Flour Advisory Service.

"Atkins and other low-carb diets have succeeded while the more orthodox dieting message has failed to get through, and that is down simply to the marketing," Dr Tamara de Grassi, head of communications at the Flour Advisory Bureau told the New Zealand Herald.

"These diets are all image driven, helped by celebrity endorsements and a false promise of sustainable weight-loss.

"The diet industry has become big business and it has a lot to lose if consumers lose interest, so companies are investing in keeping their interest," he added.

According to the Vitality regime complex carbohydrates should make up half of our daily intake and some nutritionists suggest that there are health risks associated with the diet such as osteoporosis and kidney problems.

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New drink helps against mental illness

Date: Mon, 21 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new drink developed by researchers at Oxford University is said to contain elements that can help ward off mental illnesses such as mania and schizophrenia.

The drink, Tyrodep, is high in amino acids and helps control levels of the chemicals in the brain that are thought to underlie schizophrenia. Developers claim that it can boost the effects of medication for the illness.

According to the BBC over one million people in the UK are affected by mania or schizophrenia and many control their symptoms with antipsychotic drugs. In light of this, mental health charities have described the new research as "an important breakthrough".

"Conventional antipsychotics can be used effectively in managing mental illnesses like schizophrenia and mania," commented research leader Guy Goodwin. "However, the side effects can understandably cause some patients to become cautious in taking them.

"The drink we've developed, when taken alongside medication, has proven to be a real step forward."

Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of mental health charity Sane, shares this enthusiasm.

"The frustration that so many individuals with schizophrenia or manic depression, and their families, experience is that often treatment is limited to medications which mostly have debilitating side effects," she said.

"If this product proves as successful as its early results suggest, it could be an important breakthrough in encouraging people to work with their medication and lead more positive lives."

Further information: www.psychiatry.ox.ac.uk

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Arla sights possible mergers

Date: Tue, 22 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Danish-Swedish company Arla Foods is rumoured to be seeking a cross border merger with other dairy groups.

Company spokesman Loui Honore told AFP that Arla was looking for partners, most notably in Germany and the Netherlands, according to Food Ingredients First.

The co-operative group produces around 8.6 billion litres (2.2 billion gallons) of milk per year.

Arla "is ready to merge, if the conditions are right, in particular with cooperatives like the Dutch Campina or the Germans Nordmilch, Friesland and Humana," Mr Honore said. "But we are not ruling anyone out, we are looking for viable partners across Europe."

In March 2003, Arla Foods merged with Express Dairies in Britain, creating Arla Foods UK.

Arla is not believed to be involved in any current concrete negotiations. The firm has carried out 25 mergers and acquisitions since 1995.

Further information: www.arlafoods.com
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MPs highlight dairy price problems

Date: Tue, 22 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

An influential committee of MPs has heavily criticised the dairy market for forcing thousands of farmers to sell their milking herds.

The House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee found that the average farmer gets less than 20p of the 50p average retail price for a litre of milk and concluded that, "The dairy market is not operating correctly."

In recent years some farmers have been paid as little as 16p a litre for their milk, meaning that their farms are running at a loss, the committee's report states. The inquiry by the House of Commons committee into milk prices found that supermarkets blamed the processors and the processors blamed the supermarkets for the low prices paid to producers. MPs were unable to account for 18p of the retail price.

The report concludes that dairy processors are taking too steep a share of the retail price of liquid milk, while power in the chain is unbalanced and supermarkets are also exploiting their dominant position.

The MPs also discovered that the average dairy farmer earns just £2.90 an hour, well below the national minimum wage and advised farmers to band together in co-operatives in order to increase their negotiating power.

"Although co-op membership may be a less financially attractive option for farmers in the short term, it is the most effective long-term option available for farmers to gain greater control over when, to whom and at what price they sell their milk," the report concludes.

Further information: www.nfu-cymru.org.uk
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Food packaging firm expands to South Wales

Date: Tue, 22 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food packaging company Seda UK has announced plans to open a new plant, creating 190 new jobs in south Wales.

The new plant at Hawtin Park, near Blackwood, Caerphilly, has been part-funded by a regional selective assistance grant from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Seda UK, part of the Italian-owned Seda International Packaging Group, is the largest food packaging business in the UK. The Seda group has factories in Italy, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Spain and England to supply customers who include Unilever, Nestle, Coca-Cola and McDonald's.

Antonio D'Amato, president of Seda International said in a statement: "The decision to invest in the South Wales operation is a fantastic opportunity for us all and will give us the platform to develop our European and international business."

Andrew Davies, Welsh minister for economic development and transport commented: "This investment and the creation of 190 new manufacturing jobs is further excellent news for the manufacturing sector in Wales and a demonstration of the strong confidence in the Welsh economy."

A recruitment drive will begin immediately for new staff for the Caerphilly operation, led by Acorn, Wales' largest independent recruitment and training specialist.

Further information: www.finseda.com
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EU blocks import of GM rape

Date: Tue, 22 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

European member states have voted against approving the import of a genetically-modified product.

The majority of the European Union's 25 member states voted against supporting an application to import GM oilseed rape from biotechnology firm Monsanto into Europe.

Six of the ten new accession states voted against the application, which will now go back to the European Commission. A further six of the 'old' member states - Austria, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg and the UK - also voted against the authorisation for import of Monsanto's GT 73 oil-seed rape, modified to resist the company's own chemical herbicide.

Four member states abstained from the vote and the European Commission will now decide whether approval of the GM rapeseed will go forward for a vote by ministers.

"This shows that in the newly enlarged EU there is still no majority of member states willing to authorise GMOs", said Eric Gall of Greenpeace. "The Commission should withdraw the application rather than pushing it forward to satisfy the US in the WTO case".

The US administration is threatening to launch a challenge against the EU's opposition to GM foods at the World Trade Organisation.

Last month the EU approved imports of GM sweetcorn to Europe, ending a five-year moratorium on GM food.

(no further information)

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FSA consults on food labelling

Date: Tue, 22 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A public consultation has been launched by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on new rules that could see food labels having to list particular ingredients that people may be allergic to.

Currently there is no such requirement, meaning that the presence of some allergens is not always indicated on packaging.

Among the typical ingredients which would be included are cereals containing gluten, eggs, nuts, soybeans, mustard and milk.

In addition labels will need to provide clear information about ingredients made from such allergens, such as a glaze made from egg.

The new EU rules will come into force in November in the UK and would make the labelling requirements compulsory on pre-packaged food.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk

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Food consumers becoming more daring

Date: Tue, 22 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new report out by Mintel has found that consumers are now using an increasing amount of different food and a higher number of better quality ingredients.

In addition findings showed that celebrity chefs are a key influence with six out of ten British consumers claiming they have changed their cooking habits after watching the chefs.

James McCoy, senior market analyst at Mintel told Grocer Today: "This growing readiness to consider change will embrace a number of elements; for instance it may relate to a healthier diet, to greater use of organic foods, cutting down or omitting meat, buying higher quality produce, or trying to cook from scratch."

Other figures reveal that over a quarter of adults reported they have tried a new recipe after watching it cooked on TV and one in five believe TV cookery shows have made them try more adventurous food.

"These days the media plays a very large role in our lives and this is true also of our cooking habits. Today many adults have been inspired to change the way they cook and experiment more with new recipes," Mr McCoy added.

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GMO issue reaches enzyme market

Date: Wed, 23 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Bakery enzymes is likely to be the fastest growing of the three largest segments of the food enzyme industry, a new report claims.

Research conducted by market analysts Frost and Sullivan claims that the bakery sector is the fastest growing market in food enzymes in the US, but warns that GM controversy could affect market growth. The report states that innovation is the key to success in a product-driven marketplace, but points out that concerns over genetically modified organisms could cause investors to become wary of investing in recombinant enzymes.

"Most of the high selling products in this industry are developed based on GMOs. The media and some non-governmental organisations have been successful in generating a strong debate on the negative effects of GMOs. But with the European governments looking to ease the regulations on GMOs, the R&D efforts are likely to receive a boost resulting in newer and effective products," the report states.

The market for bakery enzymes reached \$42.1 million in 2003 and is expected to climb to \$68.7 million by 2010, growing by 7.1 per cent, according to bakeryandsnacks.com.

The survey examines the starch and sugar processing enzymes, dairy enzymes and bakery enzymes markets, collectively worth \$142.4 million in 2003, and concludes that starch and sugar processing enzymes form the largest market, but demonstrate a slow growth rate hit by industry consolidation and low profit margins. The dairy enzymes market was found to be

more mature and established than the starch and sugar processing enzymes market and is expected to grow to \$43 million by 2010.

Frost & Sullivan reports that technology is still dominated by investments made in the areas of biotechnology and genetic engineering, but predicts that excessive supply and low demand will affect prices and large participants will force smaller ones to create their own identities and develop new products.

(no further information)

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UK drinks consumers look for 'refreshment and convenience'

Date: Wed, 23 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Affordable refreshment and convenience were the drivers of growth in the UK soft drinks market in 2003, according to a new report.

Research from drinks industry analysts Zenith International found that UK soft drinks consumption rose by seven per cent in 2003 to 13,295 million litres, translating into a retail value of £11,050 million, helped by the hot summer weather.

All sectors of the soft drinks market reported growth, with bottled water recording the steepest rise in volume sales; accounting for 33 per cent of total growth. The carbonates market also saw healthy sales last year, boosted by brand extensions such as Vanilla Coke and Fanta Zesty Berry.

Innovation played a key role in the 2003 soft drinks market, with a number of key brand developments during the year, including Red Bull Sugarfree, Ocean Spray Light and Lucozade Sport Hydro Active.

Zenith research director Gary Roethenbaugh commented: "Consumers are seeking more from their drinks purchases in terms of health and functionality; the intensifying debate on obesity has heightened this demand. Already 63 per cent of total soft drinks consumption is no or low calorie."

Zenith predicts that the UK soft drinks industry will see a steady advance in consumption during the next five years, climbing to 16.8 billion litres by 2008.

(no further information)

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Unilever, Coca Cola & McDonalds opt for HFC-free equipment

Date: Wed, 23 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Global corporations Unilever, Coca Cola and McDonalds have pledged to halt the use of environmentally-damaging chemicals in their refrigeration equipment.

The decision by all three companies to completely phase out the use of hydrofluorocarbons has been welcomed by the United Nations and environmental pressure group Greenpeace.

Unilever Ice Cream company announced that it is committed to buying only HFC-free freezers from 2005, while Coca-Cola claims that by the 2004 Olympics in Athens, it will no longer purchase new cold drink equipment that uses HFCs.

The new freezers use the hydrocarbon, propane as refrigerant. Hydrocarbons are natural gases that do not harm the ozone layer and have virtually no impact on climate change.

Unilever reports that laboratory trials suggest the hydrocarbon freezers are also more energy efficient, using up to 15 per cent less energy than other models, while trials in the Australian market showed a nine per cent reduction in energy use compared with HFC cabinets. Unilever has been working in close co-operation with Greenpeace in the development of the new technology since 1996.

"Today is a significant day in the fight against climate change," said Stephen Tindale, executive director of Greenpeace UK. "Unilever has shown genuine commitment to the environment and genuine business leadership. This sends a powerful message to the rest of the industry that climate-friendly technology is available and must now be used."

Further information: www.unilever.com, www.greenpeace.org

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GM expert urges Wales to stand firm on ban

Date: Wed, 23 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

An American GM expert has urged the Welsh Assembly to continue its policy of keeping the country GM-free.

Dr Myron Stagman has published a report during a visit to Wales, insisting that the ban on genetically modified organisms has legal validity, and calling on the Assembly to maintain its strong stance against GM.

In the report, *Banning GM by Law*, the scientist cites a series of UK and EU legal provisions, which he says prove Wales has the power to enforce a ban, according to the *Western Mail*.

Dr Stagman claims the report could be used by the Assembly to fend off any legal challenge to a ban. He cites examples in the Food Safety Act 1990, Regulation 258/97/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers and EU Directive 2001/18/EC, which are all focused on the protection of human health.

Dr Stagman explained, "Both the Protocol and this EU Regulation can be used to justify banning GM by law. Among many other stipulations, note the accent on the precautionary principle and the key phrase and concept, "ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of

biological diversity, taking into account risks to human health", which may be threatened by GM organisms."

"The Westminster Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly all possess ample legal jurisdiction to legislate a ban," he added. "Doing so is a matter of political will and moral courage."

(no further information)

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New dairy body established

Date: Wed, 23 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Members of the milk chain are to work together under a new venture by the Dairy Industry Association.

'Dairy UK' is being launched in a bid to make the dairy industry more united, to create a better price from major supermarkets.

SW NFU regional director Anthony Gibson told This is Devon: "Anything that gets the various warring factions of the dairy industry sitting down and talking constructively together has to be a good thing.

"It is at least a positive move, demonstrating a new determination by the industry to work together. We have the best market for milk in Europe and the lowest milk price - and that's caused by a failure of the dairy industry to co-operate."

It is hoped the organisation will help increase the prices by supermarkets for milk, and would be funded through levies on raw and processed milk.

In addition it will aim to boost supply chain efficiency and cost effectiveness and monitor and lobby Defra to ensure enough action is taking place for the industry.

Set to begin by the autumn, the organisation will represent farmer-owned dairy cooperatives, dairy farmers and milk-processing companies, and will have 12 board members including two chosen by the NFU.

Further information: www.dia-ltd.org.uk

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Sprouted veg may ward off cancer

Date: Wed, 23 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Eating sprouted vegetables may protect against cancer, according to research carried out at the University of Ulster.

The School of Biomedical Sciences has studied the protective effects of eating around 100 grams of sprouted vegetable salad. The human trial involved subjects eating a mix of vegetables including broccoli, radish and alfalfa every day for a fortnight.

The results, presented to a biotechnology conference, showed that the vegetables appeared to protect against DNA damage in blood cells and it is believed this could help prevent cancer progression, according to Food Navigator.

Ian Rowland, a human nutrition professor at the university, said: "DNA damage is associated with cancer risk. Sources of DNA damage include diet-related carcinogens, and bodily processes like oxidative stress - and the raw sprouts protect against this kind of damage."

Professor Rowland's research is due to be published later in the year in the Cancer, Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention academic journal and the university is hoping to conduct further research into the chemicals contained in fruit and vegetables.

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Report highlights London 'food deserts'

Date: Thu, 24 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

In some parts of London there is no local provision of fresh fruit and vegetables, a startling new report reveals.

Despite the breadth of international cuisine and food outlets available in the capital, 13 wards in East London have been identified as "food deserts"

In three-quarters of the council wards in east London, more than two-thirds of residents live more than 500 metres from the nearest shop selling fresh fruit and vegetables, according to research conducted by Sustain, the Alliance for Better Food and Farming, on behalf of the London Development Agency.

Capital Eats - An Analysis of London's Food Economy reveals that Londoners spend an estimated £11 billion on food every year and waste at least half a million tonnes, but in less fashionable areas the only local food provision is junk food.

The severe shortage of fresh fruit and vegetables in some areas has led to several food initiatives organised by community, statutory and voluntary agencies running cooperatives, community cafes, mobile supermarkets and trading systems.

Ben Reynolds, project officer of London Food Link said: "We need to ensure the whole of London's food sector becomes more sustainable, more fresh food is available and currently niche projects such as locally grown food become mainstream, affordable and accessible to more Londoners. There is a clear need for more coordinated action to ensure more Londoners benefit from fresher foods which will promote good health."

The LDA also announced that it launching a new London-based food body - London Food - which will address concerns over diet and the manufacture and environmental impact of food production.

Further information: www.lda.gov.uk
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FSA investigates failures to test for BSE

Date: Thu, 24 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency has launched an investigation into the apparent failure of its meat hygiene unit to test some cattle for BSE before they entered the food chain.

The FSA is looking into how the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) allowed the 200 casualty cattle aged between 24 and 30 months to enter the food chain. The cattle, which entered the food chain over a 16 month period, should have been tested because they were at higher risk of having the disease.

The food watchdog stressed that any risk that might have arisen from the animals entering the food chain without having been tested 'was minimal'.

The removal of the SRM - including brain and spinal cord - is the main BSE control measure and, according to the FSA, should remove at least 99 per cent of BSE infectivity. The agency claims there have been 'no BSE positives' in the 2,800 casualty cattle tested to date in Great Britain.

FSA chairman Sir John Krebs said in a statement: "Whilst the risk is minimal, I consider these apparent failures unacceptable. We need to be confident that all measures are properly enforced - both food safety and surveillance - if BSE risks are to be effectively managed."

The BSE testing programme is carried out by the Meat Hygiene Service on behalf of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. The findings of the FSA investigation will be made public.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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Fyffes acquires Everfresh

Date: Thu, 24 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Irish fruit importer Fyffes has announced that it has agreed to purchase 100 per cent of Swedish fruit firm Everfresh.

Fyffes entered into the agreement with the Everfresh group on May 6th. The Irish firm has now acquired 60 per cent of Everfresh for an initial consideration of €28.7 million, with the acquisition of the balance of 40 per cent to be completed in 2007.

The consideration of €28.7 million has already been paid and represents the minimum consideration payable for the entire shareholding. The profit-related deal, spread over three years, will cost a maximum of €77.6 million.

Commenting on the deal, Fyffes chairman Carl McCann said: "This transaction offers us a significant growth opportunity and represents a continuation of our development strategy, of acquiring strong businesses in our sector.

"Everfresh is one of the leading fresh produce groups in the Swedish market. It is a highly mechanised, efficient, low-cost operator that adds significant value for its customers.

The Everfresh group is a leading distributor of fresh produce in Sweden.

Further information: www.fyffes.com
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Canbra develops new oils container

Date: Thu, 24 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Canbra Foods has developed a new line of clear, handled 64-ounce rapeseed oil bottles.

The bottles are Canbra's first application using Eastman Chemical Company's Eastar copolyester for handleware. The copolyester material reportedly provides exceptional clarity, toughness, chemical resistance and environmental responsibility.

The Canola Harvest container from Canbra - extrusion blow moulded by Polybottle - is designed to provide consumers with the convenience of portability and versatility for reaching, lifting and carrying the bottle and pouring the contents, according to foodproductiondaily.com.

"Canbra Foods previously used a PVC application that lacked clarity and was not recycle-friendly," said Eric Hunter, director of sales and marketing, Canbra Foods. "We chose Eastman's Eastar copolyester material because we required a large container with an integrated handle that retained its clarity, and we believed it was the best choice maintaining the integrity of the Canola Harvest bottle application."

Courtland Jenkins, market development manager, durables and food packaging, Eastman Chemical Company, added: "Eastar copolyester is useful in a variety of processes and applications because of its clarity, toughness and good melt strength at processing temperatures. Using other materials means choosing between clarity and grip. With Eastar copolyester, you can have both."

Further information: www.volta.net
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FSA advises on oily fish consumption

Date: Thu, 24 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is to announce new guidelines on oily fish today, in the first time it has issued maximum consumption levels.

Under the new plan fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, mackerel, herring and trout will be advised on, which contain omega 3 fatty acids, according to the Scotsman.

At present adults are told to eat at least two servings of fish a week, with one of those recommended to be oily.

New levels have been investigated after a report by experts showed that increased consumption of oily fish can also put consumers at greater risk of dioxins and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) which can cause health problems.

However the FSA claims there is no immediate harm from consuming the contaminants and that the majority of people in the UK are still not eating enough white or oily fish.

The new recommendations are set to be announced by Sir John Krebs, the chairman of the FSA and the leader of the oily fish report, Professor Alan Jackson, from the University of Southampton.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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QMS looks to improve Scotch Beef PGI status

Date: Thu, 24 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) has announced it is fighting for PGI status (protected geographical indication) for Scotch Beef.

The food group argues it should be clearly defined since the difference between imported meat and highland beef is so great.

Scotch Premier Meat Limited Managing director, Raymond Wight explained: "It's all about the quality of the feed, the minerals in the ground and the water we have is what contributes to the flavour."

There has been a loophole in the definition, which meant a lot of cattle wasn't actually born in Scotland, but according to QMS it contacted the EU around a year and a half ago and it is waiting for developments.

The PGI system was introduced in 1992 by the EU and is used to show "the geographical link [which] occurs in at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation", according to the Scotsman.

PGI status for the meat is not new, but QMS is hoping approval by the EU would lead to a more meaningful status and would mean all Scotch beef would come only from cattle born and raised, processed and prepared in Scotland.

Further information: www.qmscotland.co.uk
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McNeil Nutritionals unveils new Splenda baking product

Date: Fri, 25 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

McNeil Nutritionals has launched a brand new product - Splenda Sugar Blend for Baking.

The new product aims to build on the success of the company's, Splenda No Calorie Sweetener and blends pure sugar with Splenda brand sweetener to provide a sugar alternative for baking.

McNeil claims the new Splenda Sugar Blend for Baking allows consumers "to experience the taste and benefits of sugar when baking at home while cutting sugar in half".

"With the success of Splenda No Calorie Sweetener as the nation's number one branded retail sweetener, we have seen that Americans are not willing to compromise on taste when looking for healthier solutions," said McNeil Nutritionals president Colin Watts.

"We created Splenda Sugar Blend for Baking to offer a true sugar baking replacement option for the growing consumer demand - over 66 per cent of consumers would purchase Splenda Sugar Blend for Baking instead of sugar."

Consumers substitute half a cup of Splenda Sugar Blend for Baking for every full cup of sugar required in a recipe. The product contains sugar, which allows consumers to achieve the browning, rising, spreading and texture that baked goods made with sugar possess.

Further information: www.splenda.com
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Anti-smoking tactics to tackle 'globesity'

Date: Fri, 25 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Global tactics similar to those employed against smoking are needed to tackle spiralling levels of obesity, according to new research.

A report in the British Medical Journal claims that diets worldwide are being shaped by a concentrated and global food industry resistant to public health attempts to promote healthy eating.

In the article, the researchers accuse international food companies of using similar tactics to the tobacco industry, including misinformation, use of supposedly conflicting evidence, and hiding negative data.

The authors recommend implementing various tactics employed against the tobacco industry. 'It will be much more difficult to establish internationally binding instruments or conventions like those achieved in tobacco control. Nevertheless, their importance in bringing about changes in national behaviour should not be under-rated,' the report states.

The researchers recommend potential international standards covering issues such as marketing restrictions for unhealthy food products, restrictions on the advertising and availability of unhealthy products in schools, or potential price or tax measures, to reduce the demand for unhealthy products and tackle rising obesity levels.

'The public attention generated by the discussion and formulation of such standards may set general standards for corporate conduct without being potentially unacceptable and even generate enough political capital for national legislation,' the article concludes.

(No further information)

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New Omega-3 drink launched

Date: Fri, 25 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Canadian firm Natrel has unveiled Natrel Omega-3, a new variety of enriched milk beverage, in Ontario.

The leader in value-added milk claims that Natrel Omega-3 achieves the highest standards for a healthy milk beverage with a number of advanced product attributes.

The new milk drink includes one of the highest concentrations of Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in milk products available in Ontario and is low in saturated fat. The new product has been recognised as a source of Omega-3 by Health Canada standards.

"We have opted to use organic flaxseed oil to provide Omega-3 fatty acids in our milk beverage" said Greg Turcot, Category Development Manager for Natrel. "Our decision was made to provide consumers with a truly natural and low-fat milk option. Importantly, this product sets itself apart by meeting Health Canada's standard as a legitimate source of Omega-3."

Omega-3 are essential fatty acids that the human body is unable to produce on its own, and must be incorporated into a healthy daily diet. Benefits of consumption of Omega-3 include the reduction of blood cholesterol, prevention of certain illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, improved immune reactions against allergies and a reduction in the threat of blood clots.

Health Canada recommends a daily intake of Omega-3 between 1 and 1.5 grams to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Drinking four 250ml glasses of Natrel Omega-3 per day will enable people to meet this guideline.

Further information: www.natrel.ca
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FSA releases advice on oily fish

Date: Fri, 25 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Authority (FSA) has officially released its recommendations on oily fish consumption.

According to new guidelines, pregnant women or those who plan to have a child one day should eat up to two portions of oily fish a week.

In addition other women, boys and men are allowed up to four portions of oily fish a week.

FSA Chair Sir John Krebs said: "Eating oily fish is a simple way for people to reduce the risks of heart disease. Eating just one portion of oily fish a week has clear-cut health benefits.

"This extensive review of the scientific evidence has reduced uncertainty about how many oily fish people can safely eat without the benefits being outweighed by the risks."

The new levels are said to ensure that the health benefits of eating the fish will outweigh any possible risk from dioxins.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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New report raises concern over UK eating habits

Date: Fri, 25 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new report by a children's charity has raised concerns over the pricing of healthy food products, finding that some parents even go without food so that they can afford to feed their children.

'Going Hungry' by NCH revealed that 46 per cent of UK parents on a low income have consumed less food to help the rest of their family and that one in four children and parents never eat salad or green vegetables.

Jayne Isaac, NCH Cymru's policy officer, told BBC News Online: "It is right to be concerned about rising levels of childhood obesity, but NCH's new report shows it's unfair to place all the blame on parents and children.

"The comparatively high cost of healthy food and sophisticated marketing used to encourage children to eat junk food are also significant factors."

According to NCH, consumers pay around £23.78 for a basket of healthy food, compared to £20.92 for an 'unhealthy' equivalent.

The report was completed by the Food Commission and NCH, which is now urging the government to focus on the effect poverty is having on people's eating habits.

However a number of food initiatives have already been introduced including "free breakfast, food co-ops and fresh food in schools".

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EU looking to cut sugar prices

Date: Mon, 28 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The European Commission has submitted a draft proposal to cut sugar prices by over 40 per cent and quotas by around 16 per cent.

The proposed legislation, put forward by EU agriculture commissioner Franz Fischler, aims to bring European Union sugar prices in line with the rest of the world. Sugar in the EU currently trades at three times the world prices and the European Union spends €1.3 billion in subsidies to its sugar producers.

The EU was the world's biggest importer of sugar in 2000, buying €674 million worth of sugar from developing countries

In an analysts comment on the proposals, investment bank Goldman Sachs said the draft proposal aims for bigger cuts than expected in a shorter timeframe. The bank had previously predicted that the EU would agree on a 30 per cent cut in support prices and 10 per cent reduction in quotas.

The draft proposal now faces discussion within the different directorates of the Commission ahead of the release of the finished proposal on July 14th, according to FoodNavigator.com. A spokesperson for the Commission told the website that the draft proposal was not yet in the public domain.

A recent Oxfam study of the European sugar industry estimated that six of the largest processors received export subsidies totalling €819 million last year. Global sugar prices have remained relatively flat recently, due in part to a ten-fold increase in exports from Brazil.

(No further information)

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New low-carb pasta brand launched

Date: Mon, 28 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

US firm Dreamfields has unveiled plans to spend \$10 million in broadcast and cable network advertising its new low-carb pasta.

The North Dakota-based company's Dreamfields pasta is now stocked on the shelves of more than 15,000 US grocery stores.

Dreamfields claims the pasta contains about one-eighth the carbohydrates of regular pasta - only five grams of carbohydrates per two ounce serving - and insists it tastes as good as regular pasta.

The pasta is made without removing the durum wheat semolina contained in the flour before the product is manufactured. Other lower-carb brands tend to replace the semolina with soya flour and can be quite chewy or mushy.

Dreamfields pasta is available in spaghetti, linguine, elbow and penne rigate varieties. It is slightly more expensive than regular pasta, with a suggested retail price of \$2.59 per pound.

Dakota Growers has converted two of seven production lines in its Carrington plant to manufacture Dreamfields pasta and is expecting to launch the product worldwide soon.

DNA Dreamfields Co. is a joint partnership between Dakota Growers, the third-largest manufacturer of dry pasta in the United States, Switzerland-based Buhler AG, the B-New LLC marketing firm of Cincinnati, and TechCom Group LLC. The DNA stands for Design Nutritional Alliance.

Further information: www.lowcarbdiets.about.com
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USDA to retest for mad cow disease

Date: Mon, 28 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The US Agriculture Department (USDA) has announced that more extensive tests are being run on a cow that tested inconclusive for BSE.

Government and beef industry officials are urging consumers not to worry about the safety of meat as they await further test results.

The Department of Agriculture will not identify the animal, the state it came from, or the facility in which it was killed, until more exacting test results have been obtained.

The department confirmed that a screening test designed to give rapid results had identified bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), but the preliminary tests could not confirm whether the animal truly has mad cow disease, so the results have been labelled inconclusive.

"The inconclusive result does not mean we have found another case of BSE in this country," John Clifford, deputy administrator of the department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection

Service, said when he announced the preliminary finding. "Inconclusive results are a normal part of most screening tests."

The US government began using rapid test kits on June 1st as part of a program to test more American cattle for BSE. The faster test carries a greater risk of false positives.

The US diagnosed its first ever case of mad cow disease six months ago. BSE can lead to a fatal brain disease, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, in humans.

(No further information)

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Ministers reject EU beef labelling plans

Date: Mon, 28 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

EU ministers have rejected proposals that the European Union's (EU) beef origin labelling scheme should be amended to allow products to be labelled Made in the EU.

A suggestion from the European Commission to allow the supply of meat from more than one Member State to minced meat production plants was also dropped by the EU Council of Ministers (agriculture).

A majority of delegations opposed the proposals, preferring instead to maintain national origin marks, Just-food.com reports.

However, the Council supported harmonising voluntary labelling specifications and simplifying EU rules on beef batches.

Ministers also agreed that beef origin labelling rules should not yet be extended EU-wide to restaurants, but that member states could impose such rules nationally.

(No further information)

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Somerfield profits on the up

Date: Mon, 28 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK supermarket chain Somerfield is set to reveal huge profit increases this week when it announces its full year results.

Forecasts for pre tax profits for the year are set at £38-£40 million, compared to £25.8 million last year, according to Grocer Today.

The supermarket has recently been trying to boost its supply chain efficiency as well as converting a number of its Kwik Save stores to the Somerfield format.

In addition it is believed the company's predicted success will have been helped by cost-cutting and in-store refurbishments.

Somerfield will announce its full year figures this Wednesday.

Further information: www.somerfield.co.uk

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MDC launches dairy innovation awards

Date: Mon, 28 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK dairy farmers are preparing to register with the Milk Development Council (MDC) as it launches its annual awards for dairy innovation.

The awards are to recognise innovation in dairy development and this year include some new categories, as well as boosted product development funding and additional promotional opportunities for the winners.

MDC chairman Brian Peacock *The Journal*: "These awards provide us with a great opportunity to shout about the exciting developments taking place in our industry and showcase award-winning products, services and businesses to retailers and consumers alike."

Farmers and firms will be judged by a panel of supporters of the UK dairy industry, as well as industry leaders including celebrity chef Antony Worrall Thompson, senior executives from the NFU and John Beckett from the Milk Strategy Initiative.

This year will see new awards including innovation in dairy development, farm business development and outstanding contribution to dairy development.

Nominations for the awards can be provided from the farming, media, processing and retail industries.

Further information: www.mdc.org.uk

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Cadbury unveils obesity prevention measures

Date: Mon, 28 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK chocolate firm Cadbury has announced a number of measures to help add to moves by the food industry to tackle obesity.

The Birmingham-based company has revealed it may get rid of its king-size bars and some reports have suggested it is attempting to create a lower fat chocolate bar made with skimmed milk.

A spokesman for Cadbury told ic Birmingham: "King-size portions are a very small part of our business. We are looking at whether dropping them would be a supportive step.

"If there are steps we could take which would help get the message on consumption across to the public, then we are looking at that."

It is hoped the move would also boost popularity with the public, by showing a responsible approach to health.

The decision to remove large versions of bars such as Dairy Milk and Fruit and Nut comes after an obesity report revealed a 100g king-size Snickers actually held 460 calories, more than a meal of potatoes, sirloin steak and broccoli.

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OFT clears Sainsbury acquisitions

Date: Tue, 29 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Office of Fair Trading has cleared supermarket giant J Sainsbury to purchase a group of 14 stores from rival Wm Morrison Supermarkets.

Sainsbury's announced in mid May that it had agreed to buy the 14 stores, located primarily in the Midlands and the north of England.

The OFT opted not to refer the anticipated acquisition of 13 Safeway branded stores and one Morrisons store to the Competition Commission, just-food.com reports.

Announcing the acquisition, Sainsbury's chief executive Justin King, said: "When we announced the sale of Shaw's, our US supermarket business on 26 March 2004, we indicated that we would use a proportion of the funds generated to develop further Sainsbury's core UK supermarkets business to strengthen our market position and deliver future growth.

"These stores from Morrisons give us a great opportunity to increase our selling space in the UK by over 400,000 sq ft, a little under three per cent. Such opportunities have become increasingly rare and we are delighted to secure these stores and look forward to introducing Sainsbury's products and services to new areas and customers."

Further information: www.sainsburys.com

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EU nations fail to agree on GM proposals

Date: Tue, 29 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

European Union ministers have failed to reach an agreement on controversial proposals to approve a genetically modified corn.

Biotech giant Monsanto, the US company responsible for production of the GM corn, known as NK603, has applied to the EU for permission to use it in processed animal feed.

Talks among 25 ministers representing the EU member states ended in deadlock after nine EU countries voted against approving the corn, nine, including the UK voted in favour, and a further two abstained.

Responsibility for approving the GM corn will now go to the European Commission, which has already signalled its backing of the product. The Commission is expected to announce its decision in the next few weeks.

If approved, the NK603 corn can be imported into the EU for ten years for use as animal feed, but cannot be cultivated or used in the manufacture of human food.

The Monsanto corn has been genetically engineered to resist the company's RoundUp herbicide.

(No further information)

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US follows EU's lead over allergen labelling

Date: Tue, 29 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The United States has introduced new legislation forcing food manufacturers to clearly state if a product contains any of the eight major food allergens.

The US House Committee on Energy & Commerce gave its approval in a voice vote to the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act, which covers the eight major food allergens responsible for over 90 per cent of all allergic reactions. The new legislation is supported by the Food and Drug Administration and Department of Health and Human Services.

The decision to pass strict allergen labelling rules follows the introduction of similar legislation in the European Union. The European rules, which come into force in a few months time, aim to provide consumers with a means of easily identifying potential allergens in food.

The eight major allergens are: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat, and soy. Labelling of foods can often prove misleading to allergy sufferers, who may not be aware that albumin refers to egg, caseinate to milk and textured vegetable protein to soy. The new legislation aims to address this issue.

Recent studies estimate that over seven million Americans have a food allergy and the number of children with a peanut allergy has doubled in the past five years.

US Representative Nita Lowey, one of the authors of the bill, said: "Food-allergic consumers depend on food labels to make life-and- death decisions, yet they are forced to crack a code

of complicated scientific terms for every food product they eat. It's time for Congress to end this dangerous game by passing my bill to require everyday language and complete food ingredient lists. The Energy and Commerce Committee did a tremendous service for these individuals by passing this bill."

(no further information)

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New bottled organic tea unveiled

Date: Tue, 29 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Honest Tea has become the first company to offer organic ready-to-drink tea in 100 per cent recyclable plastic bottles.

The firm, a leader in product innovation and social responsibility, launched its healthy, low-sugar/low-carb line of teas in brand new panel-less bottles; giving a sleek, eye-catching look that highlights the health benefits of the teas.

Unveiled at the New York Fancy Food Show on June 27th, the bottles utilise a new filling technology that eliminates the need for the heat expansion panels and ribs found on most hot-fill plastic bottles.

"We wanted to develop an exciting package that complements our glass line while allowing people to enjoy our tea in new places," Seth Goldman, president & Tea-EO of Honest Tea, explained. "And we wanted to do it in a way that didn't compromise our brand or our commitment to sustainability."

The 15.5 ounce plastic bottles are available in four organic varieties: Green Dragon Tea; Lori's Lemon Tea; Peach Oo-La-Long; and Black Forest Berry. Honest Tea stresses that consumers will enjoy the same high quality and taste of Honest Tea in the new bottles.

The PET plastic in Honest Tea's new bottle is fully-recyclable and is widely considered the most environmentally-friendly form of fossil-fuel derived plastic. The new bottles are being launched on the East Coast this month and are expected to rollout across the US later this year.

Further information: www.honesttea.com

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Defra dairy proposals spark concern

Date: Tue, 29 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Dairy farmers have criticised new proposals by Defra for cross compliance implementation in England.

The Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers has argued the plans are too prescriptive and obsessive and has called for a more pragmatic approach similar to one being taken in Scotland.

RABDF chairman, Tim Brigstocke told The Journal: "We fully appreciate the need for cross compliance as part of mid term review.

"However, the costs associated with the proposed measures will have a direct effect on the industry's profitability. They will impose unnecessary burdens on the industry and will reduce the opportunities that CAP reform may offer to the dairy sector."

Although a key objective was to allow farmers to make decisions influenced by market opportunities, RABDF argue that these latest demands do not do this.

According to RABDF a number of problems could be created by the measures such as additional costs and a lack of standardisation.

Further information: www.rabdf.co.uk
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Prickly pears may ward off hangovers

Date: Tue, 29 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New research has found that eating prickly pear before consuming alcohol can help to cut the severity of hangover symptoms the next day.

Researchers in New Orleans studied 55 volunteers and gave some participants extracts of the fruit before they consumed enough alcohol to cause a hangover.

Findings showed that after eating a fast food dinner and consuming the alcohol, those who had the extract had considerably reduced symptoms, in particular dry mouth, nausea and loss of appetite.

The results could create a new market for the fruit, which has already been shown in the past to reduce inflammation, something that can be caused when a protein is produced by the liver in breaking down alcohol.

Those taking part, aged between 21 and 35 took the extract five hours before taking part on the four hour drinking spree.

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Packagers urged to capitalise on MENA dairy industry

Date: Wed, 30 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Western packagers should move swiftly in order to capitalise on the growing Middle East and North Africa (MENA) dairy market, according to UK market analyst Proteus Insight.

The analyst estimates that consumers in the region bought around 200,000 tonnes of processed cheese last year, a rise of nearly 18 per cent on 2000.

During 2003, spreads were the most popular sector in the Middle East and North Africa, accounting for nearly 70 per cent of volume, and paper and foil packaging for these products usually has to be imported for locally-produced brands, according to Food Navigator.

"Many packaging formats in this region are different," said Proteus insight director John Meropoulos. "In the Middle East for example, you can get a 64-piece family pack of cheese portions, which you wouldn't get in the west. This shows how packaging can be utilised to suit the market."

Canning is used as a form of cheese packaging in the region, where the severe climate and lack of chilled distribution network requires reliable shelf life. However, Mr Meropoulos predicts that sliced cheese will take market share away from the canned cheese sector in the future.

"These markets will continue to expand, but what will likely bring a further boost to the MENA region as a whole is the development of markets such as Iraq, Yemen and even white cheese consuming nations such as Iran and Turkey over the next five years," he added.

The analyst pointed out that western packaging and cheese processing firms can successfully transfer innovations to the MENA region and gain an early foothold in a growing market.

(no further information)

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Demand picking up for meat free ready meals

Date: Wed, 30 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The market for meat-free products in Europe has started to pick up again, following a slow 2002, according to new research.

Market analyst Prosoy claims that a growing interest in healthy eating, an ageing population, and concerns about meat safety and animal welfare, are driving the market for meat-free meals.

The meat-free ready meal market has seen a surge in recent sales, with the chilled products market growing more rapidly than frozen meat-free sales.

"The demand for meat-free products has shown to be sustainable. In the aftermath of the 2001 BSE crisis, the market has grown again by three per cent," said Gerard Klein Essink, senior researcher at Prosoy Research & Strategy. "Meat-free consumption is here to stay."

According to the survey, the market for soyfoods is booming, with the soya-based drinks and desserts and meat-free and tofu products generating €1.5 billion in 2003. The soyfood

sector has seen double figures growth for the past few years and Prosoy expects the market to continue growing in the same way between 2004 and 2006.

"New European and national health claims regulations on soya, which are now being drawn up are likely to have an impact in the years ahead as well. Particularly because medical research on soya has already shown positive effects on blood cholesterol levels and heart diseases, bone strength and menopausal problems," Mr Essink said.

(no further information)

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UK tea company nets China export deal

Date: Wed, 30 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Yorkshire-based tea company Taylors of Harrogate has signed a new deal to export tea to China.

The family-run business, which produces speciality tea blends, announced that it exported £30,000 of speciality blends to Shanghai.

This month's exports included "China Rose Petal Tea", which is grown and blended with rose petals in China and imported by Taylors to the UK. The order for Shanghai also included a selection of Indian teas such as Assam and Darjeeling as well as Moroccan Mint Tea and South African Kwazulu tea.

The company, which already exports to 30 different countries, compared the Shanghai deal to "sending coals to Newcastle".

Taylors' Export Sales Co-ordinator Emma Laing said: "Recognising how much the Taiwanese loved the traditional English blends and packaging, we've been able to work with our Taiwanese customer to sell tea to China.

"It's still very early days, and at this point we're only exporting speciality teas. Maybe one day we'll even export Yorkshire Tea."

Taylors, which belongs to the same company as the Bettys tea rooms, has been exporting its teas worldwide for 12 years, but China is believed to be the most difficult market to crack.

Further information: www.bettysandtaylors.co.uk

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FSA investigates BSE testing errors

Date: Wed, 30 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency has announced the appointment of an independent steering group to oversee an inquiry into recent failures by the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) to test some cattle for BSE.

Earlier this month, the FSA revealed that it was planning to conduct an inquiry into an apparent failure by the meat hygiene arm of the food watchdog to test some casualty cattle aged between 24 and 30 months for BSE before they entered the food chain.

At the height of the BSE epidemic in 1992, around 60,000 of the highest risk animals went into the food supply, compared with less than one a year today. The removal of SRM, including brain and spinal cord, is the main BSE control measure and is believed to remove at least 99 per cent of any BSE infectivity present.

The MHS has attempted to reassure consumers, claiming that any risk from these animals entering the food chain without having been tested "was minimal".

The FSA has stressed that the testing is required for surveillance purposes and not as a public health protection measure. The FSA claims there have been "no BSE positives" in the 2,800 casualty cattle tested to date in the UK.

The investigation will be carried out on behalf of the steering group by independent auditors PKF. Following the inquiry, the steering group will make recommendations to the FSA in September on the best course of action to prevent a repeat problem occurring.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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No change in UK cereal and oilseed rates

Date: Wed, 30 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Levy rates for oilseed and cereal processors and dealers have been kept the same as last year.

In a joint announcement from the agriculture departments of the UK, the Home Grown Cereals Authority (HGCA) rates will apply from July 1 2004 - June 30 2005.

Under the latest ruling, the cereal grower levy will remain at 40p (plus VAT) per tonne of cereals sold, whilst dealers will be charged at the same rate of 43.3p (plus VAT).

In addition the processor rates and oilseed rates will remain the same as before.

The HGCA was set up in 1965 and is responsible for improving production and marketing of cereals.

All buyers are legally required to register with the authority and to collect the levy.

Further information: www.hgca.com
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Food companies react to health trends

Date: Wed, 30 Jun 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Supermarkets have responded to recent criticism of high priced healthy foods, arguing they offer more promotions on them and are meeting consumer demand.

Supermarket bosses from Asda, Co-op and Tesco reportedly told an Efra Food Information sub-committee that consumers are now implementing healthy eating guidelines and so the stores were responding by making efforts to promote such food.

According to the head of the Co-operative Group, David Croft, positive messages tend to take longer to get through to consumers but gradually healthy eating ideas were being acknowledged.

In addition Tesco argued that in fact it offered more instore promotions on salad at 80 per cent a week, compared to only 15 per cent on confectionery, according to Grocer Today.

Further evidence of food retailers responding to demand was shown at the Co-op, which reported increased sales of fruit and vegetables, and Asda, where it claims 10,000 tonnes of salt has been removed from products in the last three years.

Adrian Hill, policy and standards manager at the Co-op explained: "Customers are more aware of what they are consuming."

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