

March 2004

Tesco online leads Internet grocery sales

Date: Mon, 01 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The online unit of Tesco's grocery operations has generated sales in excess of £500 million according to industry figures, signalling the retailer's dominance in the online grocery sector.

The announcement reflects the growing popularity of Internet food shopping as more consumers turn to the Internet as a source of food and drink products. Food Navigator reports that Tesco.com's total sales in December last year alone equalled those achieved in the whole of 1998.

Bosses at Tesco claim that Tesco is the only online grocer in the UK servicing 96 per cent of the population, using a fleet of 1,000 vans to deliver over 110,000 orders a week, utilising existing stores as well as dedicated warehouses to meet demand.

In addition to the UK Tesco has operations in the Republic of Ireland and South Korea, as well as a joint venture with Safeway in the US, and plans to further expand operations have been outlined for the future.

"We're always giving customers something new - this week we've launched Wines Direct, giving our shoppers the chance to buy exclusive wines, which aren't available in our stores, over the phone or online," said chief executive Laura Wade-Gery.

"Our customers can even swap utility supplier to a better deal through Tesco.com, it's that kind of innovative approach to retailing which has kept us one step ahead."

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Officials take measures against banned food dyes

Date: Mon, 01 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new screening methods designed to identify banned food dyes is to be implemented in the UK, in response to concerns raised by the European Commission over the Sudan Red line of dyes.

Calls for the testing of all chilli products have increased in number, with distributors looking to avoid batches that could be recalled at a later date due to the banned elements. Stakeholders also hope that the new screening will enable food manufacturers to more easily meet EU requirements.

Officials in the UK food industry have to date recalled over 160 products from shop shelves for destruction.

At present there is an emergency measure in place that states that chilli products, including curry powder, can only enter an EU country on the proviso that they are free of illegal chemical dyes.

This legislation extends measures that have been enforced since last year, which did not include curry powder.

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Flavour companies develop synthetic alternatives to vanilla

Date: Mon, 01 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A number of flavour and ingredients companies throughout Europe have developed synthetic alternatives to vanilla in an attempt to offer cost-effective versions of the natural product.

Vanilla is used commonly throughout the food and drink industry, in a range of products including soft drinks, ice-cream and other dairy products.

Reports state that each year somewhere in the region of 10,000 tons of vanillin, a synthetic vanilla alternative developed by Norway-based Borregaard synthesis, is produced.

UK flavours company Quest International has introduced its range, Vanilla Analogues, to the market and Danish ingredients group Danisco has also developed new flavour systems.

Despite the fact that the synthetic manufacture of vanilla is considerably cheaper than obtaining authentic vanilla, Borregaard has announced a price rise of its vanillin products, citing a "significant rise in the pricing for major raw materials" according to Food Production Daily.

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British consumers opting for Fairtrade foods

Date: Mon, 01 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New figures reveal that consumers in the UK are opting for Fairtrade food products with increasing frequency, with a 46 per cent rise in sales compared with figures to last year.

Fairtrade products are intended to guarantee producers and distributors in poorer nations fair wages and working conditions, and the industry is currently valued at £100 million.

Growth in Fairtrade sales has been spurred largely by an increase in the ranges and variety of Fairtrade foods on offer.

Additionally, a greater number of popular outlets such as national supermarkets are stocking the products, making them more available to the consumer.

To date, over 250 different products carry the Fairtrade mark, a considerable increase on just chocolate, coffee and tea ten years ago.

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Sliding GM scale for organic foods

Date: Mon, 01 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Soil Association has reported that the government may be planning to establish different GM contamination levels for different organic foods, if bio-engineered crops are grown commercially in the UK.

Current EU law prohibits the use of GM elements in organic products, allowing for accidental or technically unavoidable GM contamination up to 0.9 per cent.

According to the SA, citing minutes from a leaked meeting, the government's GM committee is arguing that different levels of contamination should be allowed for different crops.

The leaked minutes state "a lower threshold for organic should not be ruled out immediately, instead the government should consult on its feasibility on a crop-by-crop basis," said the Soil Association in a statement, according to Food Navigator,

Criticisms have been raised that these measures would, if implemented, allow for a substantially high rate of GM contamination in organic foods.

"No-one in the food industry will take these proposals seriously," commented Peter Melchett, the Soil Association's policy director. "The government seems to be saying that some organic food can have no reliably detectable GM in it, but with other products, almost one in a hundred mouthfuls could be pure GM."

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Dairy producer launches low-fat brand milk

Date: Mon, 01 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

East-Killbride based dairy producer Robert Wiseman Dairies has announced the launch of a new brand of low-fat milk hoped to encourage consumers to drink more milk in their regular diets.

Dubbed "The One", the new milk contains one per cent fat, but its developers claim that it tastes like semi-skimmed milk, which has a fat content of 1.7 per cent.

According to the Herald Wiseman is in talks with a number of major supermarket chains over distribution of the milk. It is expected to be available for sale to the public from the end of March onwards.

"We're extremely excited about this development and think it will fill a gap in the market and attract new users to milk," commented Sandy Wilkie, company sales and marketing director.

"We believe there is an opportunity to market what is seen as a more modern type of milk in the form of a lower-fat product that is available in the dairy cabinet as a commodity product," he added.

The £2 million venture has been linked to a £500,000 ongoing industry campaign to boost milk consumption, launched by the Scottish Dairy Marketing Company.

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New cholesterol lowering milk drink for UK market

Date: Tue, 02 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Unilever is introducing a new product to its Flora Pro-Activ range this month.

The new milk drink uses plant sterols to help lower cholesterol. Plant sterols work by blocking the absorption of cholesterol from the gut and Unilever claims that three portions daily of its plant sterol-enriched foods or milk drink can reduce LDL cholesterol by 10-15 per cent within three weeks.

Unilever, which has the highest cholesterol-lowering spread sales in the UK, will be hoping the new drink will help halt declining milk sales in Britain. The company is planning an extensive advertising campaign to coincide with the April launch.

Cholesterol-lowering milk is already available in Spain and the United Arab Emirates, but Unilever's new drink is the first of its kind to be launched in Britain, according to food&drinkeurope.com.

The UK is an important market for health foods, with recent British Heart Foundation figures showing that nearly two-thirds of consumers have cholesterol levels above the recommended limit.

In 2002, UK consumers spent £100.7 million on heart health foods, and this is set to rise by around 7.6 per cent annually to £145.1 million by 2007, according to Datamonitor.

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Doubts raised over GM world hunger claims

Date: Tue, 02 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

An international religious group has voiced criticisms over claims that the widespread adoption of genetically modified food productions could help solve the problem of world hunger.

The Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) argues that the promotion of GM foods would cause insecurity among poorer nations as opposed to combating hunger.

"Most farmers in developing countries struggle to afford even the most basic inputs and cannot always afford to buy seeds each growing season," Elisabeth Lopez, CIIR's Environmental Campaign Coordinator told One World.

"Their food security is dependent on selecting, saving and sharing seeds from year to year; an age-old practice that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable."

The CIIR also maintains that so-called "Terminator Technology" that sterilises seeds as a means of containing GM contamination actually prevents farmers from saving and sharing seeds.

Reports indicate that many poorer nations have consistently rejected GM technology, despite pressures from GM advocates to adopt bioengineering in farm practices.

The UK is expected to greenlight the commercialisation of GM maize when the government announces its position on GM crops.

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Coca-cola's 'pure' water comes from the tap

Date: Tue, 02 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Global soft-drink giant Coca-Cola has found itself in deep water this week after it was discovered by a UK tabloid that the firms "super pure" Dasani bottled water is in fact taken from the mains supply to its factory in Sidcup, Kent.

The Dasani product has already become the second-biggest selling branded water in the US under the labelling and marketing campaign of it being "pure, still water".

However, in the UK, the company has invested around £7 million to launch the 95p per bottle water and these latest revelations are unlikely to wash with the potential consumer base.

While brand PR manager for Dasani, Judith Snyder, conceded that the water is taken from "municipal" supplies, she was adamant that the product undergoes a special filtering process to remove impurities before going on to the market.

"We would never say tap water isn't drinkable. It's just that Dasani is as pure as water can get - there are different levels of purity," she said.

A spokeswoman for the National Consumer Council commented: "It sounds like the episode from Only Fools And Horses when they sold tap water from what they called the Peckham Spring."

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Dairy association supports value adding

Date: Tue, 02 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Royal Association of Dairy Farmers has voiced its support for adding value to milk-based products.

Chief executive Nick Everington said it was essential for dairy farmer to examine ways of increasing their current margins.

Speaking to BBC Radio Four Framing Today programme, Mr Everington claimed, "What is sadly lacking in the dairy industry at the moment is innovation.

"We have seen a lot of products in the EU which have been developed - such as cheesy snacks - and which are different and command a niche in the market."

He warned farmers that they were "coming to a crunch situation" in the dairy sector and needed to look hard at such options. "I'd like to see farmers going into added value look very carefully at developing a brand that they own," Mr Everington continued.

"It is looking at where your milk is going and how best to maximise the return from that milk."

However, he also stressed that value adding was not the only means of increasing revenue and suggested that farmers look at supermarkets that pay a premium for dairy products of a certain composition.

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Low-carb conference set for April

Date: Tue, 02 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Low-Carb Manufacturers Alliance (LCMA) has announced the date of a special conference designed to provide a forum for food and drink producers to discuss the future of and best practices for the low-carb sector.

The LCMA exists to provide research, education and public affairs on behalf of manufacturers, distributors and marketers of low-carb products.

A number of high profile companies will be present at the conference, including Coors Brewing Company and McDonald's, as well as representatives of the Nutrition and Scientific Policy, Grocery Manufacturers of America.

Kyle Cox, publisher of Low Carb Energy magazine will moderate a panel of leading advertising agency executives discussing marketing and advertising trends and techniques for low-carb products.

"This will be the most informative, focused opportunity to-date for anyone and everyone involved in the low-carb arena to come together to learn and share best practices," he stated.

The conference will take place on April 15th in Chicago, co- sponsored by Progressive Grocer and Low Carb Energy.

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Fast food retailers thrive from competition

Date: Tue, 02 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Industry reports are suggesting that UK fast food retailers may actually benefit from high levels of competition, often establishing themselves in areas near-saturated with alternative fast food outlets.

New research funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has found that competitors typically situate themselves near one another.

Looking specifically at popular US chains McDonalds and Burger King, the study found that development patterns in the same regions were similar, the presence of more fast food stores conducive to increased economic activity.

"One surprise is how unconcerned these big organisations appear to be about the impact of competition on their outlets," commented study leader Professor Michael Waterson to Food Navigator. "It is remarkable how closely they locate to each other in shopping districts.

"Notwithstanding the importance of competition in markets with a small number of key layers, watching and learning from rivals seems to be of overriding importance when it comes to deciding on a new location," he added.

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Sainsbury's to offer black tomatoes

Date: Tue, 02 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Sainsbury's has announced plans to sell a new breed of tomato called the Kumato, recognisable from its distinctive black colour.

The Kumato is significantly sweeter than existing breeds of the fruit, originating from the Galapagos Islands, according to Aroq. It has now been cultivated to withstand conditions in the Mediterranean, enabling it to be more widely distributed.

Sainsbury's asserts that the new tomato is high in vitamin C and antioxidant levels, as well as being somewhat of an aphrodisiac.

"The story goes that seeds were fermented and spread by giant tortoises after consumption of the tomato," stated Sainsbury's.

"Moreover, it was said that tortoises eating these tomatoes were mating considerably more than those who didn't, harking back to the once traditional view that tomatoes are a natural aphrodisiac," it was added.

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Industry groups reiterate call for junk food ad regulations

Date: Wed, 03 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The government is coming under renewed pressure to introduce new regulations to control the advertising of junk food in a bid to tackle obesity.

Public health remains a top priority for ministers, who are looking at ways to improve the nation's diet and reduce demand on the National Health Service (NHS).

This morning it emerged that lobby group Sustain has secured the backing of more than 100 consumer bodies calling for an outright ban on junk food adverts.

"For the sake of children's health, statutory controls are urgently required," said Sustain project manager Charlie Powell.

Tessa Jowell, the culture secretary, will make a speech later today in which she is expected to stop short of announcing a ban.

She is widely tipped to back a voluntary code of conduct aimed at taking a more responsible approach to junk food adverts aimed at children.

Ofcom, the new super regulator responsible for regulating TV and radio advertising, is currently conducting its own investigation.

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Campaign calls for action against illegal meat imports

Date: Wed, 03 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The director of a campaign against illegal meat imports to the UK has urged the government to increase measures aimed at clamping down on offenders.

Adam Matthews, director of the Bushmeat Campaign said that recent international health scares, such as the Sars epidemic and bird flu, had raised public concern about potential links between illegal meat and disease contraction.

Speaking to BBC Radio Four's Farming Today, Mr Matthews said: "It may be a situation where there is no risk whatsoever - we simply don't know that - and the point we're trying to

get across is that the government needs to address this concern there is among the public and actually conduct a risk assessment."

Mr Matthews pointed out that the Food Standards Agency was best placed to undertake such an assessment, insisting: "It really is their responsibility to provide assurances that the public are wanting."

He added that he was not questioning efforts already made by the government to stop illegal imports, but was pointing out that current controls are "not sufficient".

Mr Matthews compared Australia's 48 sniffer dog detection teams, 1,000 extra staff on border operations and 28 machines for quarantine screening to the UK's "two dogs shortly to be increased to six" and called on the government to discuss the creation of a single agency aimed at tackling issues relating to illegal food imports.

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McDonalds goes healthy with smaller portions

Date: Wed, 03 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

In a bid to counter growing criticisms over health issues related to its food products, McDonalds has announced that it is to stop "going large" with servings of French fries and fizzy drinks.

By the end of the year McDonalds will not offer "super-size" portions in all of its 13,000 US outlets, in a move intended to improve the fast-food giant's unhealthy reputation.

Reports that similar measures will be taken in Britain are as yet unconfirmed, but experts predict that the eradication of the super-size in UK branches is likely as health awareness rises among consumers.

Plans to introduce a new healthier range of foods including fresh fruit, salads and yoghurts have also been confirmed.

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Farmers called to strengthen links with food industry

Date: Wed, 03 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A recent conference has urged Norfolk farmers to ensure they adopt good farm management and produce diversity in order to have long-term success.

The Norfolk Farming Conference 2004 was attended by around 300 farm industry members and offered advice from top UK food and farming experts.

Conference chairwoman, Anna Hill told EDP24: "This conference is about bringing people together - linking farmers, the food industry, the local authorities and the agricultural supply industry."

Among the suggestions for good farming profits were to bulk buy and to join forces with other parts of the food production chain.

Already area initiatives have been set up too improve farming in the region including Shaping the Future - an economic partnership with the council and Anglia Farmers - helping Norfolk farmers cut costs with bulk buying.

Clarke Willis of Anglia Farmers explained to EDP24: "The important point is that farms on their own cannot achieve those objectives. Collaboration and co-operation are the way forward."

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Highlands food and drink forum launched

Date: Wed, 03 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A group of food and drink industry representatives from across the Highlands region came together last night in order to launch the Highlands and Islands Food and Drink Forum.

With backing from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the organisation has been established in order to provide food producers, customers, suppliers and service providers with an opportunity to meet and network with others within the sector.

Businesses within the forum will be kept up to date with services offered by Scottish Food and Drink, while the forum itself will offer a range of speakers and discussion groups on subjects relevant to the food sector and the development of organisations within them.

Key speaker at the forum and director of the influential Soil Association, Patrick Holden, commented: "The best way that Highlands and Islands producers can prosper in an increasingly globalised marketplace is to focus on their unique assets and telling that good story - of sustainable production in a natural, beautiful landscape, of purity, of product integrity and of place of origin - right down to the croft or farm and the producer's name."

The potential benefits of the forum are reflected in the importance of the food and drink sector the economy of the Highlands and Islands, generating sales in excess of £600 million a year and supporting over 10,000 full-time equivalent jobs across the region.

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Quorn manufacturer signs deal with McDonalds

Date: Thu, 04 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Marlow Foods, the manufacturer of vegetarian meat substitute Quorn products, has signed a deal with McDonalds to supply meat-free products to the fast food chain on a trial basis.

A number of McDonalds outlets in parts of the UK will participate in the trial, which if successful will be extended to include branches throughout the country, and may lead to a permanent deal.

"If this does develop as we hope, then it will be a very exciting development for the company," Nick Hughes, Marlow Foods managing director, told the Evening Gazette.

"We are delighted to be working in co-operation with McDonald's, who are clearly looking at the options for their menu," he added.

The trial will involve 16 outlets to begin with, and the Quorn offerings will be in addition to existing vegetarian options on the McDonalds menu.

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Tesco to enter Chinese grocery market

Date: Thu, 04 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK supermarket giant Tesco has confirmed it is engaged in talks with a prospective partner in the Far East with a view to entering the Chinese grocery market.

A Citigroup Smith Barney report on grocery retailing in the Far East suggested that Tesco was now in a position to enter the Chinese market following a three-year search for a suitable partner.

Reports in the Chinese press suggest that Britain's biggest supermarket chain is viewing a possible 50 per cent stake in the Shanghai-based retailing arm of Taiwan-funded holding group Ting Hsin International.

Ting Hsin owns 25 hypermarkets in the mainland, and negotiations for the likely \$200 million deal could be concluded within the next few months, according to the South China Morning Post.

A Tesco spokesman declined to confirm that talks were taking place but said: "We make no secret of the fact that we've had a research team in China for a number of years looking for potential opportunities."

If Tesco is successful in its bid, it will be the first UK food retailer to establish a presence in the country.

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Yoghurt sales fuel dairy market growth

Date: Thu, 04 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Yoghurt continues to be the main engine for growth in the global dairy market, according to a new survey.

Research by market analysts Euromonitor found that consumers are increasingly calling for food that provides both healthy and functional benefits and sales of products such as probiotic drinking yoghurts have soared as such products become more available and easier to consume.

Euromonitor suggests that further development of health-orientated and functional products, such as reduced-fat and enriched milks, yoghurts and organic cheese, will be a driving force behind dairy products in future.

The report states that soy milk has seen a jump in profits in recent years, helped by surveys finding that soy isoflavones can reduce the risk of breast and prostate cancer, colon disorders, Alzheimer's disease and heart disease.

Dairy sales have also seen rapid expansion in developing markets in Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East, according to foodnavigator.com. Public health programmes have boosted consumption and manufacturers have been quick to adapt products to meet specific local needs.

The global reach of the world's leading dairy companies also means that sales have risen fast even in markets where dairy product consumption is traditionally low, while the continued expansion of the retail sector in more developed markets has also increased dairy product sales.

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DNA test to improve food traceability

Date: Thu, 04 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new test involving a DNA chip has been developed to improve the traceability of various food products.

The FoodExpert-ID chip developed by California-based Affymetrix allows food to be scanned for imperfections, contaminants and disease, and experts are stating that it will have widespread uses in different meat sectors.

The Food Standards Agency is currently evaluating the technology in comparison to existing alternatives, along with other food regulatory groups throughout Europe.

It has been said that supermarkets and food companies could use the chip to more effectively check on their suppliers.

"The beauty of this is that you can scan for so many things at once," Thomas Schlumberger, director of clinical genetics at Affymetrix, told New Scientist.

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ACNFP approves newly developed food ingredient

Date: Thu, 04 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The UK's Advisory Committee on Novel foods and Processes (ACNFP) has confirmed its approval of lycopene, a new food ingredient developed by Spanish manufacturer Vitatene.

The ingredient has been designed for use in nutritional foods and as a dietary supplement, synthesised from the fungus *Blakeslea trispora*.

If it receives full market approval lycopene could be added to a variety of products including soft drinks, cereal bars and energy tablets.

Forecasts made by market analysts Frost & Sullivan indicate that the European carotenoid market is forecast to reach over \$419 million by 2010, according to Food Navigator.

This growth will be driven by increased dietary health awareness among consumers and rising interest in preventative health measures.

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Glanbia targets nutritional ingredients sector

Date: Thu, 04 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Irish Dairy company Glanbia is reported to be focussing on the nutritional ingredients sector for future operations, perhaps including a number of acquisition opportunities.

The restructuring is at the expense of profit and turnover, but improved operating performance, reduced borrowings and higher interest cover increases the likelihood of acquisition.

According to Food Navigator Glanbia's new strategy is centred around cheese, nutritional ingredients and healthy consumer foods, bowing to increasing demands for healthier options from diet-conscious consumers.

The group has already begun work on a new Kilkenny-based R&D centre intended to develop innovative health foods and ingredients, in addition to the construction of a \$190 million cheese and whey production facility in New Mexico, USA.

International activities are being organised by a separate business unit that saw sales growth driven by new product introductions, such as the whey product Salibra, launched in 2002.

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Low-carb tortillas

Date: Fri, 05 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Following the ongoing uptake of low-carb diet regimes researchers in Florida have developed a new type of tortilla; all-meat, but low in carbohydrates.

The "Flaquita" replaces traditional breaded tortilla dough with a flattened paste made of either fish or chicken. The paste, though liquid when raw, thickens and hardens when baked.

According to WCJB the tortillas contain only two per cent of the level of carbohydrates found in traditional tortillas, and can be produced at identical costs, between ten and 20 cents.

Researchers say they can be flavoured and coloured just like any other food, and provisional tests have been positive.

They are hopeful that the new products will prove commercially successful, in light of the growing popularity of low-carb diets and existing popularity of Mexican food in the US.

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Asda sparks supermarket price war

Date: Fri, 05 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Asda has set off what retail analysts are predicting will be a price-cutting war by slicing £40 million off its food prices.

If Asda does start a supermarket price battle then households could see an approximate yearly saving of £40.

The move is expected to cause an average 1 per cent drop in prices in 2004 and reportedly the price action was a way to mark Asda's fifth anniversary of its Rollback promotion.

Commenting on the move, Tony DeNunzio, president and chief executive of Asda told The Herald: "Lowering the cost of living is at the heart of our business."

However, analysts are instead arguing the supermarket is taking competitive action in response to Morrisons' huge Safeway takeover deal. Industry experts are citing the move as the start of one of the most competitive price wars in the history of retail.

Asda and Morrisons have always had a reputation for fighting over price and Morrisons is now said to be planning a local store brand to compete against Sainsbury's Local and Tesco Metro too.

Included in the cuts are frozen foods and groceries and big names have particularly been focused on.

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New London health food initiative announced

Date: Fri, 05 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A conference is to be held tomorrow aiming to understand how to bring fresh food and vegetables at an affordable price to Londoners.

The "Food Access and Social Housing" conference will be hosted by the Deputy Mayor of London and Jenny Jones, Green Party Member for the London Assembly.

Some ideas suggested to help tackle bad diets and obesity problems by bringing healthy food to housing estates, include tuck shops, breakfast clubs and vegetable vans

Commenting on the conference, Ms Jones said: "We are bombarded with news stories about poor diets and obesity but hear very little about innovative ideas that tackle these problems.

"Obesity and food related illnesses are rising up the political agenda and I will be urging politicians to support the initiatives that will come out of this conference. As well as bringing fresh and health food, these initiatives will also to help regenerate deprived areas."

According to Ms Jones, figures show that up to 30 per cent of children in London's east end do not eat breakfast. In addition considerable numbers of London resident's in housing estates "cannot get to shops selling fresh produce and instead have to rely on unhealthy, processed and snack foods".

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Pesticides detected in common foods

Date: Fri, 05 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new study has found pesticides to be present in a range of common food products including cherries, apple juice, sweet peppers, spinach, pasta, tinned mandarins, white wine and bread.

Tests carried out by the Pesticide Residues Committee (PRC) found that though chemical traces were found in these products, none of the positive samples were above the maximum residue level (MRL), posing no threat to human health.

"These results are encouraging. I am pleased that none of the samples taken contained residues above maximum residue levels," Ian Brown, chairman of the committee told the Scotsman. "These tests are part of a rigorous ongoing monitoring programme aimed at accurately measuring pesticide residues and ensuring that the information is available to all.

"This latest batch of results shows consumers can continue to be reassured of the safety of their food," he added.

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Innovation driving food industry development

Date: Fri, 05 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Experts maintain that research and development of new food products is at the core of national food industries, as evidenced by Australia, where the government has earmarked millions for innovation and development.

A research partnership announced this week by government officials is intended to fuel industry growth, launched at a cost of \$20 million.

European functional food markets are already strong, recent reports showing the UK and Germany to spend the most on functional foods each year.

The Food Futures National Research Flagship will largely be concerned with ingredients and additives, looking to establish and meet consumer demands by way of preferences and health requirements.

According to Food Navigator the network will aim to design a "precise measurement of flavour to improve wine and food quality" and examine bioactive ingredients in meat and dairy products in particular.

"We know most people want healthier foods that will help reduce their risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, overweight and other chronic conditions, but at the same time they want food to be delicious, safe and easy to prepare," said Flagship director Dr Bruce Lee.

"We aim to develop and commercialise new high-quality wheats incorporating nutritional and functional improvements to meet emerging consumer demand."

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MPs to decide future of GM crops

Date: Fri, 05 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A report by the influential Environmental Audit Committee looks set to reject any plans to grow genetically modified crops commercially in Britain.

The all-party committee of MPs is likely to criticise GM technology as fundamentally flawed and urge the government to allow further trials before allowing commercial growing to go ahead.

Meanwhile, the government's long-awaited decision on whether to back commercial GM crops in the UK will be announced next week, when the environment secretary, Margaret Beckett, makes a wide-ranging policy statement on GM technology.

The decision follows three farm scale trials, a scientific review and a programme of public consultation. However, all applications for planting GM seeds must still be approved by the EU in Brussels.

Liberal Democrat food and rural affairs spokesman Andrew George, commenting on the Environmental Audit Committee's forthcoming report, said: "If these reports are true, the Government will have to realise that its policy on GM crops has finally been blown out of the water.

"It would be foolish to decide to grow GM maize in the UK following such strong cross-party criticism of the science on which the decision would be based."

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Wholegrain industry revises definition

Date: Mon, 08 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Members of the wholegrain sector are making new attempts to attract consumer demand in response to the growing popularity of low-carb diets such as the Atkins regime.

According to Food Navigator cereal chemists are making wholegrain foods more "user-friendly" with new easily understood definition.

Existing wholegrain definition was intended for use by industry bodies and regulatory agencies, using particular word and phrases that would be alien to the average consumer. Subsequently, revisions are aimed at making it easier for consumers to understand wholegrain goods.

The new definition is simpler in language and targeted more at a consumer audience, reading, in part: "Whole cereal grains and foods made from them consist of the entire grain seed usually referred to as the kernel.

" If the kernel has been cracked, crushed or flaked, then in order to be called whole grain, it must retain nearly the same relative proportions of bran, germ and endosperm as the original grain."

It is hoped that increase awareness of dietary health among consumers will lead to increase interest in wholegrain, research having found it to have benefits against cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain types of cancer.

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Parents urged to lead by example on children's diets

Date: Mon, 08 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new report carried out by Cancer Research UK has called upon parents to lead by example when encouraging their young children to eat a healthy diet after the study found that over a third of children under six fail to eat fruit and vegetables on a daily basis.

The survey of more than 550 nursery school pupils found a correlation between the amount of fruit and vegetable consumed by parents and that eaten by their young children, with children far more likely to eat the requisite intake of fruit and veg if their parents did so.

The study also claimed that better educated parents were likely to have children who ate more vegetables and fruit, while the earlier a child is introduced to this healthier diet the more frequent their intake becomes.

According to recommendations made by the World Health Organisation, adults should eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables per day, while children, and in particular smaller children, should eat the same number of portions but of a smaller size.

The report, which was conducted at Cancer Research UK's Health Behaviour Unit at University College, London and was led by Lucy Cooke, also revealed that children who had been breast fed as babies ate vegetables and fruit more often than bottle-fed babies.

Ms Cooke commented on the findings of the study: "Research has suggested that parents can influence their children's eating habits by controlling mealtime routines. Regular family meals are related to healthier dietary patterns and a higher intake of fruit and vegetables in older children."

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New food tray keeps cool during cooking

Date: Mon, 08 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new tray designed for the frozen and chilled ready meals sector has been developed to remain cool to the touch even after having spent time in either a microwave or traditional oven.

Danish packaging firm Hartmann has developed the product, called Dualpack Ovenware.

It consists of moulded fibre paper pulp with a thin coating on the inside, and is designed for maximum efficiency in ovens up to 220 c.

The product is also easily sealable, with even flanges and no corner creases, and retains strength and rigidity throughout the cooking process. It also has significantly less impact on the environment than similar trays on offer.

Dualpack Ovenware is one of a number of new innovations in the food packaging sector, as manufacturers look to produce packaging that protects food better, for longer and is more user friendly for consumers.

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EC investigates fish row

Date: Mon, 08 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The European Commission is investigating complaints from British and Irish officials that the mass import of Norwegian salmon is having negative effects upon the UK fishing industry, driving prices down and clipping demand.

The Scottish fishing industry alone employs some 7,000 individuals, and was recently the focus of controversy following the publication of a US study claiming that salmon farmed in the Highlands and Islands contains toxins linked to cancer.

Since the release of the study four Scottish farms are reported to have gone out of business and the price of farmed salmon has fallen by some 25 pence per kilo.

Now mass imports from Norway are threatening to see even greater reductions in price, with imports last year rising to 307,000 tonnes from 277,000 previously, according to Food Ingredients First.

"The Scottish farmed salmon industry is on its knees, they have been pressing the Government to take action to give them a breathing space," a spokesman for the Department of Trade and Industry commented.

The EC asserts that the case for inquiry into the issue brought by Britain and Ireland would take nine months to complete.

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Industry officials urge FSA to acknowledge benefits of organic milk

Date: Mon, 08 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Members of the organic food sector are calling on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to recognise the health benefits of organic milk, in light of reports that it contains a greater level of omega-3 essential fatty acids than its non-organic counterpart.

Omega-3 acids have been found to combat a range of health problems including heart disease, arthritis and Alzheimer's, as well as playing an important role in the development of young children.

It is hoped that industry officials will acknowledge organic milk as an important functional food on these grounds, in spite of the fact that in the past, the FSA has not endorsed the health benefits of organic foods.

New research led by Richard Dewhurst at IGER, found that samples of milk from organic cows contained at least 64 per cent more omega-3 than conventional milk, according to food Navigator.

"Organic dairy farmers feed much higher levels of clover because they use it as an alternative to using synthetic chemical fertilisers to ensure lush pastures," remarked Dr Dewhurst.

"Most people in the UK do not have an adequate intake of omega 3 fatty acids and need to increase the amount of omega 3 rich foods in the diet," he added.

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McDonald's announces salt reduction

Date: Mon, 08 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Popular global fast food chain McDonalds has confirmed plans to reduce salt levels in response to growing health concerns and in a bid to improve the nutritional value of its products.

Salt will be reduced in a variety of products, a spokesperson announcing that salt content in fries will fall by 24 per cent and that the chain is also testing a new 23 per cent reduced salt ketchup.

The announcements will come as good news to critics concerned that excess dietary salt levels significantly increase the risks of high blood pressure and even strokes.

The initiative is part of a wide scale health drive at McDonalds including the cancellation of the "supersize" portion and introduction of healthier products including salads, fresh fruit and yoghurts.

McDonalds states that they "will continue to research customer feedback once the changes have been made," according to The Herald.

"We have been researching these proposals for some time and have already informed the government about our intentions," said the spokesperson. "As part of a wider organisation we had to consult the US on our proposals, but we have over the year made a number of changes at this end."

The company maintains that it is the only fast food chain in the UK to provide nutritional information and guidance to its customers, including full ingredients lists.

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Child obesity debate gains pace

Date: Tue, 09 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A number of proposed methods for the tackling of obesity among children in the UK are to be discussed this week by government officials, in an attempt to prevent the problem from escalating further.

Proposals include the use of celebrities to promote healthy food and nutritional diets, clearer nutritional labelling on food products, and an expansion of healthy options in school vending machines.

The recommendations will go before the Food Standards Agency (FSA) this week, and one of the key topics is expected to be food advertising on television, according to the Scotsman.

In a paper due to be discussed by the board, the FSA asserts that "redressing the balance in advertising during children's TV slots would be likely to have some beneficial effect".

Sir John Krebs, FSA chairman adds: "We are all responsible for taking practical action that will improve our children's diet and health.

"While parents and children have personal responsibility and make their own choices, our aim is to help them help themselves."

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ABH agrees deal to purchase Mexican food oils brand

Date: Tue, 09 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Associated British Foods plc has announced an agreement to buy Unilever's food oils and fats brands in Mexico for \$110 million (£60 million) in cash.

Unilever, which has centres of its Bestfoods UK business in Manchester and Cheshire, has agreed to sell its Capullo canola oil brand, its Mazola corn oil brand and its Inca brand, which holds 50 per cent of the Mexican market for shortening fat.

John Bason, Associated British Foods, finance director commented: "We very successfully integrated Mazola in the US, and now Capullo and Mazola in Mexico provide us with an excellent opportunity to take our expertise into a new and growing market for ABF."

International food, ingredients and retail group ABF will manage the Mexican business through its US subsidiary ACH Food Companies (ACH).

The acquisition enables ABF to build on its core capabilities in the US food oils business and, in particular, its purchasing and marketing skills. ABF plans to introduce the Capullo brand to the US where the company already has a strong franchise with Hispanic consumers, as well as entering the growing Mexican market.

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Government expected to green-light GM crops

Date: Tue, 09 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The government is due to announce its policy on the growing of genetically modified crops in the UK, and commentators predict that it will allow for the commercial growth of one variety of GM maize.

The variety in question, Chardon LL, would then be placed on the UK Seed List, contingent upon the approval of the plans from devolved authorities in Scotland and South Wales.

According to the BBC the announcement is expected to spark protest from anti-GM campaigners lobbying for a complete ban on bio-engineered food products. The Soil Association has expressed concerns that any adverse effects of GM uptake would be irreversible.

Bob Fiddaman of Scimac, a GM crop support group, commented: "Never has a form of technology been so tested and checked by scientists before it has been allowed to be fully developed."

"There is nothing wrong per se with genetic technology because you're only moving genes within species," he added.

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McDonalds launches new Salads Plus range

Date: Tue, 09 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

In a continued bid to improve its image and cater to growing demands for healthier options, McDonalds has announced the launch of a new range of salads in 1,235 UK outlets.

Salads Plus comes in two varieties, Ranch and Caesar, with the option of cooked chicken or meat-free Quorn, at a price of £3.49. The range has been launched at cost of £10 million.

According to the Telegraph the new menu is available in 140 McDonalds branches as of today, with an emphasis on West End outlets.

Andrew Taylor, McDonalds UK chief, maintains that the new menu is the result of "listening to our customers and giving them what they want." He adds that the UK pre-packaged salad market is worth some £445 million annually.

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Food Lion pioneers new low-carb ice cream

Date: Tue, 09 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Following the growing popularity of low-carb eating regimes and development of reduced-carbohydrate food products, US dairy manufacturer Food Lion has expanded its range of low-carb ice creams.

Healthy Delight ice cream boasts a lower carbohydrate content and less sugar than conventional ice cream, available in chocolate, vanilla and butter pecan flavours.

The product is one of many new foods designed to satisfy demands for low-carb diets, recently including pasta, tortillas, bread and pasta.

"We are excited to be the first supermarket chain in the United States to introduce a private-label low-carb ice cream, sweetened with Splenda," commented Donna Smith, Food Lion brand manager.

"We created this product to meet the needs of people on restrictive diets; those watching their intake of carbohydrates and those who must control their sugar."

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Dairy industry could picket over farm-gate prices

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Dairy farmers have criticised the government's lack of effort against milk buyers concerning low farm-gate prices.

Both the Federation of Milk Groups and the Milk Development Council have urged the government to take further action.

Groups are now claiming picket line action may be needed since their suggestions and requests have been ignored by the government. Both groups referred to previous picket activity by Farmers For Action which prompted faster change and produced higher prices.

John Duncan, chairman of the Federation of Milk Groups told the Scotsman: "We would have hoped to find a better way forward than negotiating prices on a picket line and were looking for help in this."

The food minister Lord Whitty has reportedly argued that it is the industry's responsibility to deal with structure problems and reasons for low prices were too complex.

He also claimed that the government had taken some measures to help out such as the creation of the Dairy Supply Chain Forum and another strategy and grant.

Farm gate price is the average price received by producers, net of delivery charges, and prices stood at 18.83 pence per litre in January according to provisional figures by Defra.

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GM unlikely to see massive uptake

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK farmers are unlikely to take up the option of growing GM maize in any sizable number, according to a professor of plant sciences at Oxford University.

Professor Chris Leaver's comments follow the announcement yesterday by the Defra Secretary that the government has supported in principle the farming of one type of GM maize.

The decision comes after five years of arduous and often contentious consultations on the viability of GM crops.

Speaking on BBC Radio Four Professor Leaver commented: "I would imagine that in the short term the farmers would probably not be particularly inclined to take up GM maize.

"The first plantings under the present agreements would be in 2005 and the licence would be reviewed in 2006, so it would have to make economic and other sense."

However, the professor warned that yesterday's announcement represented only "a beginning".

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Tesco the first UK supermarket to label carb content

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Leading supermarket group Tesco has become the first UK chain to provide carbohydrate information on its own-brand foods, in response to the growing popularity of low-carb diets among consumers.

The glycemic index is designed to aid those on low-carb diets such as the Atkins regime and athletes who need to restore blood sugar after exercise. It will also be of benefit to diabetics needing to regulate blood sugar levels.

Last year Boots became the first retailer to sign a distribution deal with Atkins Nutritional, allowing for the distribution of its low-carb products in the UK.

According to Media Bulletin Tesco is currently in talks with Sir Steve Redgrave over promotion for the initiative.

The new labels featuring the glycemic index are expected to be in Tesco stores throughout the country before summer.

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Farmers' advice service extended to 2005

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Ministers have agreed to extend the Farm Business Advice Service (FBAS) until March 2005.

The scheme, established in 2000, has received almost £32 million in government funding and has helped around 15,000 farmers.

The extension, announced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), will provide around 3,000 more farmers with free advice and support, according to icNewcastle.co.uk.

Food and farming minister Larry Whitty commented: "I would encourage more farmers to take advantage of the service. FBAS can give farmers vital support to help them perform better - it could help boost profits and ensure a long-term future for their businesses.

"We are making FBAS more flexible and responsive to the needs of its customers."

FBAS offers farmers three days free consultancy including a business audit and help in drawing up business plans.

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One sixth of food budget 'spent on packaging'

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new report from the Liberal Democrats claims that the average UK family spends one sixth of their food budget on packaging.

The 'How Green is Your Supermarket?' report estimates that shoppers spend as much as £15 billion a year on food packaging.

The Liberal Democrats are urging consumers to cut down on packaging, which accounts for around £470 spent by each British shopper a year.

The party has spoken to the UK's nine biggest supermarket chains about packaging, waste, and energy use and found that delivery lorries travel the equivalent of two return trips to the moon every day, or around 670 million miles a year.

The Lib Dems are urging supermarkets to cut down on lorry trips, provide plastic bag recycling points at all supermarkets and use biodegradable bags.

"The Government must take action to encourage supermarkets to establish national standards, and reach national targets," Lib Dem shadow environment secretary, Norman Baker, argued. He added that supermarkets had a duty to "provide environmentally-friendly alternatives, support local producers and the British organic industry, and commit to saving energy".

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Packaging colour may dictate demand

Date: Wed, 10 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New research is suggesting that the colours on food packaging may be more important than previously thought in sparking consumer demand for different food products.

A study carried out by researchers at London Metropolitan University have found that the average consumer responds more readily to colours such as green, red and blue, as opposed to non-basic shades including turquoise, beige and peach.

In one test carried out in the study, subjects responded quickest to strongest to well known products displayed on a green stand.

However, according to The Herald, a further test found a red stand to be most prominent when displaying Kit Kat chocolate bars. Researchers attributed this to the existing strength of the brand and association to the colour red.

On this note the study also concluded that different products can be strengthened in market sectors by strong association to a colour, such as the crisps industry where different flavours usually come in particular coloured packets, across manufacturers.

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National health initiative to provide opportunities for UK growers

Date: Thu, 11 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The National School Fruit Scheme is now being rolled out nationwide as part of the Department of Health's 5-a-day programme.

The fruit scheme will offer many more growers the chance to supply fresh fruit and vegetables to schools.

The 5-a-day campaign aims to encourage children and adults to eat five portions of fruit or vegetables every day.

One million children between the ages of four and six have already received free fruit at school every day under the National School Fruit Scheme.

Launching the countywide rollout of the scheme, health secretary John Reid said that youngsters who ate more fruit in school also ate more at home. Dr Reid has pledged a further £77 million for the National School Fruit Scheme, set up to promote healthy eating.

Interested growers from each region are encouraged to put forward their tenders to supply apples, pears, cherry tomatoes or carrots. Applications to tender for the regional supply contracts must be received by the Department of Health by March 31st.

Michael Holmes, NFU spokesman for 5-a-day and public procurement, said: "These contracts are a crucial source of income, and mean a great deal to the industry. It is a great opportunity for local growers to supply their region's schools, and has been a very successful scheme in participating regions in previous years."

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Taste of a low-carb generation

Date: Thu, 11 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Soft drinks manufacturer PepsiCo Inc has announced plans to launch a new low-carb variety of Pepsi cola in a bid to capitalise on the popularity of low-carb dieting.

The new drink, dubbed Pepsi Edge, will have 50 per cent less sugar and carbohydrates than traditional cola, due for national US release this summer. It is been described as 'mid-calorie' by virtue of the fact that it has cut levels by half.

According to market research firm NPD Group over 3.5 per cent of the entire Us population are currently following low-carb diets, causing manufacturers, retailers and restaurants to offer low-carb products to meet demand.

"The time is right, the proposition is strong and everyone we've talked to is ready for this idea," said Dave Burwick, chief marketing officer for Pepsi-Cola North America told Reuters.

"This is a huge and major development for the U.S. beverage industry," added John Sicher, editor of industry journal Beverage Digest. "It represents functional innovation in carbonated drinks and responds to the key consumer issues of calories and carbohydrates."

It has been rumoured that Coca-Cola is also planning to release a mid-calorie drink, tested under the name Coke Ultra.

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Bioprogress to acquire US edible film group

Date: Thu, 11 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK-based coatings firm Biogress is making moves to acquire Aquafilm, a US company that specialises in the manufacture of soluble, edible film for use in nutritional and food products.

The technology developed by Aquafilm is already in use Warner Lambert and Wrigley's in the USA and Europe, and Boots in the UK, and the Florida-based company has recently developed a range of new dissolve "in the mouth" vitamin strips.

According to Food Production Daily Aquafilm is forecasting revenues of around \$50 million between 2004 and 2006 from in the mouth dissolving consumer products supplied to a number of food and nutritional product companies.

A Spiderman brand of vitamin strips is due to for launch in the US and UK to coincide with the release Spiderman 2 in May. Bioprogress is expected to be involved in the rollout of this product following the acquisition.

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Concerns raised over GM traces in organic foods

Date: Thu, 11 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Scientists at the University of Glamorgan found traces of GM soya in five out of 25 products described as organic or GM free.

The foods, sold in health food shops and supermarkets, included vegetarian sausage mix, soya burger mix, cheese substitute and soya flour. Some of the products contained as much as 0.7 per cent of GM material.

Professor Denis Murphy, head of the university's biotechnology unit who led the study, said: "We had a hunch that there would be GM material in these products, but it was still a surprise how much we found."

He added that he was angry that consumers are being misled by labelling. Companies are currently only obliged to declare GM contents over 0.9 per cent, though the Soil Association standard is 0.1 per cent for organic products.

The GM material was identified as soya from the US, Brazil and Argentina and the researchers' findings have now been sent to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The survey results are likely to add fuel to the heated debate about GM food and consumer choice.

Yesterday the Government gave qualified approval to the commercial growing of GM maize on a case by case basis, subject to EU approval.

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ABF acquires Unilever oils

Date: Thu, 11 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Associated British Foods has confirmed the expansion its portfolio of products with the purchase of Unilever's food oils brands this week.

As a result of the \$110 million agreement Capullo bottled canola oil, Mazola edible oil and Inca white fat will be introduced into the ABF stable of products. According to Food Navigator the oils achieved a combined sales revenue of \$124 million in 2003.

ABF will complete the acquisition through its US subsidiary, ACH, which in 2002 acquired Unilever's Mazola corn oil brand in the US. It is expected to apply knowledge and experience in the marketing of that product in the development of the new acquisitions.

ABF is under increasing pressure to make new acquisitions ahead of reform to the European sugar industry that will impact upon profits for the company's sugar group British Sugar: the UK's leading sugar group and a key revenue source for ABF.

Investment bank Goldman Sachs estimates that the upcoming reform could reduce cash flow at ABF by as much as 10 or 20 per cent over 2006, if the EU implements a 10 per cent price cut or 30 per cent reduction in quota.

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New research highlights danger of carbonated drinks for children's teeth

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Children of twelve who consume carbonated drinks are 59 per cent more likely to suffer tooth erosion, a new study reports.

New research published in the British Dental Journal also found that 12-year-olds who drink more than four glasses of fizzy drinks a day are 252 per cent more likely to suffer tooth erosion.

The researchers looked at erosion in 14-year-olds and found that drinking any fizzy drinks at all was found to increase the chance of tooth erosion by 220 per cent. Heavy consumption at this age was found to increase the chances of suffering erosion by 513 per cent.

Professor Liz Kay, Scientific Advisor to the British Dental Association (BDA), said: "Erosion is a growing problem among Britain's teenagers, yet many parents don't understand the difference between decay and erosion. This research highlights the growing problem of erosion, and identifies the increased risk of children suffering this condition if they drink fizzy drinks.

"Parents need to understand that while high levels of sugar cause decay, it is the acidity of certain products that causes erosion. While drinking 'diet' versions of fizzy drinks reduces sugar consumption, these products are very acidic and can still cause erosion."

Seventy six per cent of 12-year-olds surveyed reported drinking fizzy drinks, while a massive 92 per cent of 14-year-olds admitted to drinking carbonated drinks. For both age groups more than 40 per cent of those surveyed had three or more glasses of fizzy drinks every day. (C) DeHavilland Information Services plc, 1998-2003.

Dairy industry embrace daily dose concept

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The success of 'daily dose' varieties of probiotics has inspired food and drink companies to apply the idea to other products.

The 100ml bottles pioneered by Japanese company Yakult are sold in a weekly pack of seven and have been on the European market for almost ten years.

The idea has since been copied by Danone and Nestle and smaller dairy firms. However, the daily dose bottles are now starting to make an appearance in other dairy forms, according to NutraIngredients.com.

"For products that require regular consumption, the single shots are an ideal way of regulating the dose," David Jago, a Mintel analyst, said. "It is also more convenient if only one member of the family is consuming the drink."

Finnish dairy Valio is launching Evolus, a fermented milk containing bioactive peptides, B vitamins and seaweed-derived calcium, aimed at reducing blood pressure, in a daily dose multipack and is also adding the daily dose Benecol yoghurt drink to its range in Finland.

The daily dose format is also being used by Masterfoods, which is launching the Positively Healthy Cocoa Drink, a chilled milk drink said to be high in natural cocoa antioxidants and sold in a four-pack of 85 ml bottles.

The European probiotic drinks market was worth more than E1 billion in 2003 and is growing by around 30-40 per cent annually. However, the trend for daily dose portions is likely to remain within the dairy sector, as experts believe the format would not be welcomed with juice drinks.

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FSA to outline food advertising guidelines

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency has confirmed plans to develop and published guidelines intended to regulate the advertising of unhealthy foods targeted at children, as part of an ongoing effort to tackle obesity in the UK.

Reports state that obesity levels have grown significantly in the UK in recent years among both children and adults, largely attributed to the increased availability of junk foods.

The new FSA guidelines will focus primarily on food and drink products with high levels of fat, salt and sugar, particularly fast food and snacks.

"Children are bombarded with messages that promote food high in fat, salt and sugar,' FSA chairman Sir John Krebs said in a statement. "The Food Standards Agency wants healthier choices to be promoted to children.'

The FSA is calling for food companies to make active efforts to reduce fat, salt and sugar levels in foods targeted at children as well as curbing the promotion of these foods in advertising campaigns.

In addition, officials are suggesting that celebrities and popular advertising should be used to promote healthy eating among children. The Food and Drink Federation said its members, including PepsiCo Inc., Cadbury Schweppes Plc, Coca-Cola Co. and Nestle SA, will discuss the FSA proposals.

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GM companies 'liable'

Date: Fri, 12 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Following the government's approval for the cultivation of genetically modified maize crops it has been stated that GM companies are to be liable for any resulting harm that may come of bio-engineered food products, according to TizFood.

Ministers argue that non-GM farmers must be compensated for any loss of earnings resulting from any GM-related industry problems, specifically targeting biotech companies in this regard.

Margaret Beckett MP commented: "I must make it clear that any such compensation scheme would need to be funded by the GM sector itself, rather than by government or producers of non-GM crops."

If companies refuse this liability the planting of GM crops would be significantly hampered, due to that fact that the threat of financial liability would act as a strong deterrent.

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Low carb diets could help tackle child obesity, says expert

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Professor Julian Peto, from the Institute of Cancer Research, has suggested that high protein, low carbohydrate diets could help tackle soaring child obesity rates in the UK and reduce cases of life-threatening diseases.

Report state that obesity is now overtaking smoking as the number one UK killer and Professor Peto maintains that the Atkins diet could suppress appetites and help fat children lose weight.

"The levels of salt and fat are anything but healthy but the basis of the diet which is low carbohydrate and high protein, is ideal for losing weight," he added.

Prof Peto also explained that advice for children was not working and needed a "rethink", claiming that children should be weighed regularly in school.

Child obesity rates have almost doubled over the past decade and the World Health Organisation has warned that being overweight causes diabetes, heart disease and some forms of cancer.

However, opponents of the Atkins diet claim that, over the long term, it can cause kidney damage, thin bones and constipation, raise cholesterol levels and increase the risk of diabetes and an early heart attack.

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Researchers investigate benefits of choline

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New studies have discovered that choline, a nutrient found in egg yolks, milk, nuts, meat and other foods, may be able to boost memory and learning capabilities.

A decade ago, researchers found that pregnant animals that ate the nutrient gave birth to offspring with better memories.

Scientists at Duke University Duke University Medical Centre and the Durham VA Medical Centre in Durham, North Carolina have published a study in the April issue of the Journal of Neurophysiology.

"Previous studies at Duke have shown that choline-supplemented animals are smarter and have a greater learning capacity, but we hadn't known until now whether the cells that make up memory-relevant brain circuits are changed by choline," said researcher Qiang Li.

"Choline didn't just change the general environment of the brain, it changed the fundamental building blocks of brain circuits-the cells themselves."

Further tests on humans are needed to confirm that choline supplements can boost the brain power of babies.

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Rapeseed generates healthier milk

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New research suggests that feeding cows rapeseed in their regular diets can produce a healthier quality of milk than usual.

Scientists in Northern Ireland discovered that milk from cows fed with rapeseed had relatively low levels of high-cholesterol fat, and a higher level of healthy unsaturated fatty acids as well as up to 35 per cent extra oleic acid in some instances.

According to the Scotsman the discovery was made accidentally while investigating methods of making butter that spreads more easily.

Researcher Ann Fearon commented on the development, outlining the possible applications of the new milk throughout the dairy industry.

"It is used to make a spreadable, creamy butter, but this kind of tailored milk production could in future be applied to make any dairy product healthier, from cheese to ice-cream."

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Fruit under threat from climate changes

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A gardening expert has warned that changes in climate in the UK could have dramatic consequences on apple orchards in the south and the growth of summer fruits including pears, cherries and blackcurrants.

Simon Thornton-Wood of the Royal Horticultural Society states that the UK Climate Impacts Programme showed there would be some frost-free winters during this century, warmer winters being non-conducive to the growth of these varieties.

It has been suggested that peaches and other fruit from southern Europe could replace the apples in a warmer climate.

"We've lost a lot of orchards in the UK, but apples are still an important crop," he said according to the BBC. "I think the climate will mean it becomes harder to get a decent crop in the south of England, and apples may head north to find a cooler place to grow.

"Other fruit crops will be affected too, but I imagine it will be easier to grow crops like peaches instead. It'll be a matter of swings and roundabouts," he added.

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Europe suspends export of live poultry

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The European Union (EU) has decided to suspend the export of live poultry, effective as of immediately until April 6th this year, in light of concerns over the recent bird flu epidemic.

The suspension is the result of the EU's adoption of a proposal from European Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner, David Byrne, reports Farming Life. The proposal covered live poultry, poultry meat and products, eggs and pet birds.

Avian influenza is highly contagious among poultry and as well as being of limited potential risk to humans, can be of severe detriment to the poultry industry.

The EU imports hatching eggs from Canada, where the latest bird flu outbreak has been confirmed, with some 15 million eggs imported during 2003 at a value of €10.5 million (£7.1 million).

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have welcomed the suspension of imports.

"Avian influenza is a highly contagious poultry disease and we will do all we can to prevent the disease being introduced into UK poultry flocks via imports of birds, poultry products or eggs," commented Ben Bradshaw, animal health minister at DEFRA. "I therefore welcome the action taken by the Commission to suspend imports."

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Gene technologists look to develop 'super bread'

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Scientists in the US have identified an important gene in the type of wheat used in bread production, the discovery of which could lead to the development of crops with high nutritional value and resistance to adverse weather.

According to Food Navigator the vrn2 gene has been successfully cloned and inserted artificially into wheat plants, signalling a new future for the cultivation of wheat crops.

"Wheat's recalcitrance to accept new genes had greatly slowed the progress of research designed to give this grain crop new genes to boost tolerance to drought or to improve its nutritional value," reported the researchers.

Plant geneticist Ann Blechl is currently using the new finds to investigate methods of producing a less sticky variety of bread dough.

Experts maintain that new developments in bread production would be significant in the UK market, currently worth over £3 billion and one of the largest sectors in the food industry.

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FSA child obesity proposals win Parliamentary support

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Proposals from the Food Standards Agency to tackle child obesity in the UK by targeting the promotion of unhealthy foods have been backed by a Member of Parliament.

Debra Shipley MP, who has previously lobbied for a ban of junk food advertising, welcomes the FSA's proposals and urges the government to adopt a similar stance against the food and advertising industries.

"The FSA has stated clearly that the ruthless promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar is having a damaging impact on children's health and tighter regulation is needed," said Ms Shipley in a statement.

"I am deeply sceptical that the food and advertising industries will ever mend their ways without firm Government intervention. However, the pressure is mounting and it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Government to defend its lack of real action in this area," she added.

The FSA's proposals include clearer labelling of salt, fat and sugar content on food and drink products aimed at children, and regulations for the advertising of these products on television. Additionally, calls have been made for healthier foods to be more actively promoted.

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Cumbrian farmers impress at Excellence awards

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

North West farmers Tom and Sue Forrester, who own Howberry Farm, near Carlisle, have been named runners-up in the Great British Food Award at this year's National Farmers' Union Farming Excellence Awards.

The environmentally-friendly Cumbrian couple, who have their own brand of churned butter called Cream of Cumbria, will now receive £200.

The Forresters use surplus milk from their dairy farm to produce butter and use the buttermilk by-product to bake scones and cakes, The Journal reports. They sell their produce through farmers' markets, food fairs and shows.

Martin Baird, of Red Hall Farm, Wigton, Cumbria, was a runner-up in the English Nature Farming for Wildlife Award category in recognition of his conservation work, which includes restoring hedgerows and managing the fodder beet on his dairy farm.

Mr Baird owns a 157-acre intensive dairy unit with 97 cows and recently bought 22 acres which he plans to manage as a wetland habitat.

Mrs Forrester commented on the award: "We were like little fish in a very big pool but we flew the flag for Cumbria and we are both proud and honoured to have been at the awards ceremony."

Mr Baird added: "Winning the North-West regional award was a complete surprise, so getting through to the national final was an added bonus. Being at the awards ceremony was a great experience."

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KPMG welcomes food traceability laws

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Consultancy firm KPMG suggests that the food industry will benefit in the long term from improved traceability across sectors, ensuring that quality of product is maintained from producer to consumer and installing mechanisms to identify problems in the distribution chain.

By the end of 2004 manufacturers operating in the European Union will be under obligation to have effective tracing methods in place, a legislation which some are concerned will result in new complications for the food industry.

Higher costs will mean that some businesses may not be able to continue operations without merging with other firms.

However, KPMG asserts that the initiative will be ultimately beneficial. Analyst Mark Baillache told Food Production Daily: "This legislation is one aspect of a drive towards accountability, and, the people who will most welcome this will be the large food manufacturers who have always felt accountable.

"Now each individual link of the food chain will be accountable, and this accountability is the key issue."

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology has been highlighted as being particularly important in the implementation of traceability laws insofar as it allows manufactures to see exactly where their stock is distributed to and retailers to see where stock has come from.

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Added-value helps dairy innovator secure food award

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A UK dairy business has won the Great British Food Award for successes in the production of new and innovative cheese products designed to add value for consumers.

Shepard's Purse Cheeses, established by Judy Bell in 1987, has a history of developing innovative cheese products, one of the earliest being a product for consumers with allergies to conventional dairy.

Since then, according to Food Navigator, Ms Bell has produced buffalo milk and organic products as well as Shepard's Blue's first cow milk cheese; the Yorkshire Blue.

The success of the company's diverse cheese range can be linked to a recent Milk Development Council report calling for increased investigation into potential methods for adding value British milk.

Figures report that there are currently somewhere in the region of 350 specialist cheesemakers in Britain making an estimated range of 400 British cheeses, specialist cheeses having a 28 per cent share of the overall market.

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New alliance urges tighter supermarket trading regulations

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

An alliance urging stricter controls regarding supermarket trading will be launched today in Parliament, consisting of a number of food, environmental and pressure groups.

Requests for greater regulation over UK supermarkets stem from the fact that the sector continues to grow in size and market power, with a relatively small number of companies controlling the grocery market as a whole and effectively dictating prices for suppliers.

Figures indicate that Tesco alone controls over a quarter of the UK's grocery market, giving the group significant power in the food retail market.

Included among the new alliance are Friends of the Earth, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, and the Small and Family Farms Alliance.

Sandra Bell of friends of the Earth Food and Farming commented: "It is four years since competition authorities reported that the biggest supermarkets were bullying their suppliers and nothing has changed.

"How many more farmers and small shops does this government want to see go out of business before it wakes up to the fact that supermarkets will not trade fairly unless they are forced to?"

Andrew George MP added: "Greater transparency in the food supply chain would be good for farmers, processors, supermarkets and consumers. Supermarkets would benefit from having their trading independently endorsed and farmers would benefit from getting a decent return to the farmgate."

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New tests show benefits of organic milk

Date: Tue, 16 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Researchers in Wales have discovered that a pint of organic milk contains a significantly high level of essential nutrients necessary to combat health problems including heart disease and arthritis, confirming previous arguments of the benefits of organic produce.

The research, carried out by scientists at the Institute of Grassland Environmental Research found organic milk from cows fed with clover to be far more enriched with Omega-3 fatty acids than conventional milk, up to 240 per cent more than ordinary milk in some cases.

Richard Dewhurst, research leader, explained: "Our previous research has shown that milk from cows fed clover can contain up to 240 per cent more Omega-3 fatty acids than milk from cows fed grass and concentrates, according to the Western Mail.

"Organic dairy farmers feed much higher levels of clover because they use it as an alternative to using synthetic chemical fertilisers to ensure lush pastures."

Tests have also found that organic milk contains high levels of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA)², useful in boosting the immune system, and is less likely to contain pesticide and antibiotic residues.

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Local food brands continue to grow in popularity

Date: Wed, 17 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

This week's biennial Food and Drink Expo at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham has indicated that Britain is gradually evolving from the old stereotype of a nation of shopkeepers to a collection of local and regional food producers.

A number of local and regional companies, from Orkney, Cornwall and Wales to name but a few, were present alongside national and internationally recognised brands competing for a share in the domestic and foreign retail market.

A number of promotional groups, including the Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Welsh Development agency and Food from Britain have been promoting the trend with exhibits for Orkney wine, Welsh pasta and Staffordshire organic venison.

The trend reflects a growing interest in local and regional foods at all levels of the food sector as consumers have increased demand for "meal solutions" which embrace lifestyle ambitions.

Small and medium sized businesses have succeeded in providing consumers with what they want, at their convenience and at an affordable price.

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Expert urges increased food safety in European supermarkets

Date: Wed, 17 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Supermarkets in Europe need to take more responsibility for the quality of food on sale, according to an industry expert.

Spectral Fusion Technologies (SFT) chief operating officer Andrew Marshall told Food Production Daily that European retailers present a public face of doing everything for their customers, but average supermarket specifications present a different picture.

For example, he said, the average levels for chicken breast bone contamination "in a particular European market is not one bone in 100 kilos - it is more like 100 bones in 100 kilos".

Mr Marshall claimed that food safety in Europe is lagging behind the US because supermarkets do not care enough and manufacturers do not have enough money to implement adequate systems.

SFT specialises in x-ray equipment for the meat industry, and develops machines at the top end of the range, such as BoneScan systems capable of detecting bones smaller than a millimetre. Dozens of the systems have been installed in North America but only one system is presently installed in Europe.

Mr Marshall concluded that the fast food industry was the only sector in Europe adequately concerned with food safety.

"The thing about fast food is that there is no knife and fork in between you and the dining experience," he said. "The only detection system you have is your mouth. Therefore, it is the fast food industry that is pushing for greater food safety, not supermarkets, and this explains why the US is so far ahead of Europe in this respect."

Mr Marshall believes that if retailers were prepared to work for slightly reduced margins, then billions would be released to create safer products overnight.

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FSA reports fall in infant formula toxin levels

Date: Wed, 17 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Research carried out by the food Standards Agency has found that the levels of harmful toxins in infant formula products have fallen significantly over the past five years.

Though no product was found to contain a dangerous level of harmful chemicals concerns have arisen over potential health risks resulting from long-term consumption.

The FSA reports that although there are no specific limits for dioxins in infant formula all of the milk-based samples tested in 2003 were within existing European Union limits for dioxins in milk or milk-based products.

According to Food Navigator the same applies to soy-based foods for which there is no limit for dioxins.

"As dioxins and PCBs build up in the body over many years, and it is long-term levels in the diet that are of concern rather than small variations over a few months, parents are not advised to switch to another brand or type of infant formula," the FSA said in a statement.
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Expert proposes low-carb diets for obese children

Date: Wed, 17 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A specialist from the Institute of Cancer Research is arguing that obese children set to benefit from the adoption of low-carb eating regimes such as the Atkins diet.

Professor Julian Peto maintains that diets that are low in carbohydrates work to suppress the appetite, an effective tool in the fight against child obesity in the UK.

According to Professor Peto high carbohydrate intake result in an increase in insulin to excessive levels, which in turn compels the individual to eat more carbohydrate intensive food.

Medical News Today reports that Professor Peto does not advocate high salt and fat but recognises that the Atkins diet gives obese people a better chance of living a healthier life than any other current alternatives.

Child obesity in the UK continues to grow, an increasing cause for concern for the government, food industry groups, the National Health Service and consumers.
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Russian equipment manufacturers squeezed out of food processing industry

Date: Wed, 17 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Russian equipment manufacturers are losing market share in food and drinks processing and packaging sectors, unable to keep up with technology developments from western counterparts.

Experts have identified key areas in which Russian companies are losing out to Western firms, one of which being in beverage processing equipment.

According to Analtoliy Sviridov, senior consultant at the Institute of Food Industry Engineering, 45,000 bottles are currently processed on domestic built machinery every hour compared to 60,000 bottles processed on foreign supplied equipment.

Food Production Daily reports significant growth in the dairy, confectionary and ice cream segments, driven largely by non-Russian manufacturers.

"In the earlier Soviet era there was no difference in packaging products. Bottles were used for filling beer and milk and cooking oil," explained Mr Sviridov. "Now variation has greatly increased, as have the requirements for the quality of the packaging.

"Potentially, Russian equipment suppliers can meet global standards of quality, but because of weaknesses in the area of electronics and a shortage of decent research and development facilities, this industry is 'stagnant'," he added.

The trend of increased use of foreign machinery in Russian food production is set to continue as long as Western firms continue to innovate new products.

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'Hidden' salt raises new concerns

Date: Wed, 17 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New reports suggest that significantly high levels of "hidden" salt in foods is cause for major health concern in the UK, nine out of ten individuals believed to consume excessive levels of salt in daily diets.

Experts maintain that around 35,000 people will die in the UK this year and a further 35,000 will suffer life-threatening heart attacks due to increased blood pressure from high salt intake.

The worry is that most consumers may be unaware of how much salt they are eating, 80 per cent of salt intake coming from processed foods such as ready meals, some cereals, bread and meat products.

In an attempt to combat the problem many food producers are innovating lower salt options such as reduced salt bacon, low sodium bread, low salt alternatives in sauces, and unsalted or reduced salt butter and spreads.

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Supermarket chiefs detail new trading plans following Safeway merger

Date: Thu, 18 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Sir Kenneth Morrison CBE, executive chairman of Morrisons, has outlined changes to trading operations resulting from the recent merger with Safeway, including new plans for integrated sales increases.

Joint managing director Bob Scott maintains that the main focus of the enlarged group is to ramp up checkout sales, keeping "sensible" margins and "tight control over costs".

"Morrisons' like for like sales growth is very strong. We need to make Safeway's similar which will be down to hard graft and retail skills," he said according to the Buchan Observer.

Marie Melnyk, joint managing director, added: "A key benefit of integration is that we can achieve powerful synergies comprising significant cost savings from increased scale and trading benefits."

Clear pricing and consistent product availability have also been identified as important in securing high consumer interest and sales, as well as in-store revamps at a number of outlets throughout the country, with larger stores treated as priority.

In total, £260 million will be spent on extending, upgrading and converting larger Safeway stores to Morrisons format, £300 million will be spent per year on new stores and major refurbishments per year and £140 million on infrastructure each year.

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Saxby's looks to expand range with new product development

Date: Thu, 18 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Chilled pastry products company Saxby's has announced plans to develop new products in a bid to expand its foodservice offering.

The UK based group reports that its foodservice controller Kevin Botting and foodservice developer Neil Edwards have focussed the company's attention on the development of individual premium baked pies.

It is hoped that concentrating on this slice of the market will raise the company's profile and allow it to exploit a niche in the future.

"We are the largest supplier of retail cold cutting pies in the UK and are also broadening our cold cutting pie range," Mr Botting told Aroq.

He went on to affirm that Saxby's is primarily "targeting foodservice outlets and the travel & leisure sectors".

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Unilever Bestfoods to extend low-carb range

Date: Thu, 18 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Unilever Bestfoods, subsidiary to Anglo-Dutch food group Unilever, has announced plans to expand its existing range of low-carb products.

The decision follows the growing popularity of low-carb diets in Europe and the US, many food manufacturers having developed low-carb varieties of existing products in order to meet consumer demand.

Products that have recently been given the low-carb treatment include bread, pasta, ketchup, ice cream and tortillas.

According to AROQ Unilever Bestfoods plans to roll out another 14 products in its Carb Options range this year.

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Krispy Kreme UK expansion raises obesity fears

Date: Thu, 18 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The imminent UK expansion of US doughnut company Krispy Kreme is raising concern among dietary experts and health officials that increased availability of baked goods could contribute to the obesity epidemic.

Krispy Kreme currently operates one UK store in Harrods, London, and the second is to be opened in Enfield with a further 25 due for opening over the next five years.

In the USA, where one in three adults are obese, 10 billion doughnuts are consumed every year in a business with an estimated turnover of \$5 billion, according to the BBC.

Critics are worried that similar problems could emerge in the UK if doughnuts become a breakfast and snack staple.

"I would like to think everybody at some stage during their working week or their weekend would have a cup of coffee and a doughnut," Managing Director Don Henshall commented.

Despite fears, even health experts agree that Krispy Kreme is likely to become a popular brand in the UK. Marion Nestle, professor of nutrition at New York University admits that "Coca Cola is an icon, McDonald's is an icon and Krispy Kreme is about to become one".

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Coca Cola withdraws Dasani range in the UK

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The complete range of Dasani bottled water has been removed from the British market by Coca Cola.

Approximately 500,000 bottles are being withdrawn after above illegal amounts of potentially harmful bromate were found in the product.

An FSA spokeswoman said: "Coca-Cola, the makers of Dasani, informed the Food Standards Agency yesterday that some samples of their bottled water product, Dasani, have been found to contain bromate at higher levels than are legally permitted in the UK for either bottled or tap water."

The FSA have commended the decision claiming long-term exposure to the chemical could cause an increased risk of cancer.

However, the announcement could cause serious problems for the company's move into the UK bottled water market.

Bromate reportedly entered the product through the necessary procedures involved with meeting calcium requirement levels in such items.

Dasani has already been criticised in the UK for misleading labelling after it was found to be simply purified tap water. Other countries will still be able to sell the water.

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Heinz removing health logo in bid to meet new government limits

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Heinz is removing the 'healthy eating' logo from some of its product in line with new government health targets.

Limits on salt, sugar and fat by the Department of Health are to be introduced and because Heinz feels they will be particularly strict it is taking its logo off of baked beans, soup and spaghetti cans.

Corporate affairs general manager at Heinz, Michael Mullen was critical of the new limits, he told Food Ingredients First: "We think the proposed new guidelines may send mixed messages to consumers since many familiar foods that have previously counted will no longer contribute.

"Heinz believes that food companies have an important role to play in promoting healthy eating but the new guidelines will disqualify many nourishing and nutritious foods from counting towards 5-a-day."

The company was criticised last year by the Advertising Standards Authority when it developed its own label following the official '5-a-day' scheme which marked certain products as part of a move to promote fruit and vegetables.

Food campaigners have welcomed Heinz's decision. Kath Dalmeny from the Food Commission claimed: "This is recognition by Heinz that its products are too salty to be a healthy contribution to 5-a-day."

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GM labelling debate continues

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Global food labelling body Codex Alimentarius has entered the debate on genetically modified foodstuffs with the news that it is tabling the issue at an upcoming meeting in Montreal.

The UN-backed organisation, the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) plans to draft recommendations for the labelling of food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification.

Developing a globally recognised system of labelling for genetically modified ingredients and foodstuffs will be a challenge for the Codex Alimentarius Commission meeting in May this year, as the GM debate continues to rage between governments, corporations and environmentalists.

The European Union recently caused a storm when it recently cleared the world's toughest legislation on GM labelling, which requires all ingredients that contain or consist of genetically modified organisms, or contain ingredients produced from GMOs, to be labelled as such.

The US perceives the new European Commission rules as an unnecessary barrier to GM production and is disputing the EU legislation through the World Trade Organisation, according to foodanddrinkeurope.com.

The European Commission is keen to allow consumers to make the decision on GM food and many retailers and manufacturers have avoided inclusion of GM ingredients because of strong resistance to GM food among European consumers.

Last year, the Co-op supermarket group found that 55 per cent of shoppers surveyed were against GM, with a further 38 per cent yet to be convinced of its benefits.

The UK recently approved the cultivation of certain types of GM maize in national industry. (C) DeHavilland Information Services plc, 1998-2003.

School fruit programme launched

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

From Thursday more than 700 primary schools across the region will be providing free fruit for their pupils every day.

Around 100,000 school children between the ages of four and six in the North East will benefit from the initiative to improve fruit consumption.

At present the region is attaining the country's lowest consumption levels of fruit and vegetables and recent studies found the North East to have the highest obesity rate in the country. Dr Bill Kirkup, regional director for public health for the North East, said: "The more children we can encourage to embrace a healthy diet the better."

Following the initial phase, the scheme will be extended to a further 100 schools.

The National School Fruit Scheme is being funded by a £40 million grant from the New Opportunities Fund, is part of the Five A Day programme of the Department of Health, and is the biggest nutritional drive aimed at children since the introduction of milk in schools in 1946.

"In trials parents reported children coming home from school and asking to have more fruit, whereas before they would have turned their noses up," the fund's North East manager, Lin O'Hara, told the Evening Chronicle.

"The scheme is particularly aimed at children in less advantaged areas, where health problems can be greater and there is less access to fresh fruit and vegetables."

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Irish crisp manufacturer expands UK operations

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Northern Ireland potato crisp manufacturer Tayto has purchased snack manufacturing facility in Skelmersdale, Lancashire.

Tayto, based in Tandragee, Co Armagh has also acquired a 32-acre former Courtaulds textile site in Lurgan, Co Armagh, which it plans to use as a central distribution depot for the whole of the UK.

The Skelmersdale factory currently employs 25 people, while Tayto employs around 350 at its Tandragee base.

John McQuaid, Tayto group sales manager, said the acquisitions represented a significant investment for the family-owned business.

Explaining why the company was targeting the British market, he said: "In Northern Ireland the crisps and snack market alone is worth £72.8 million and is growing by 2.4 per cent year on year, while the GB market is worth over £2 billion.

"Tayto has not only met national competition head on in our own market but we are now making real inroads into the GB market."

Tayto also plans to launch a new "luxury crisp" onto the snack market.

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Research hails anti-cancer benefits of pies and chocolate

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New studies are suggesting that certain foods, including chocolate muffins, burgers, biscuits and scotch pies, could have definite counter effects against cancer.

Dr Margaret Ritchie of St Andrews University, following four years of research into the chemical components of various foods, has published an index of foods containing phyto-oestrogen, which can help ward off the onset of the disease.

It has been found that teenage girls and young women who consume high levels of phyto-oestrogens are less likely to develop certain forms of breast cancer in middle age, and links

have also been drawn between phyto-oestrogens and the reduction of the risks of prostate cancer in young men.

"In Indonesia, they can consume up to 200mg of phyto-oestrogens a day and they have the lowest rates of breast cancer in the world," Dr Ritchie told the Herald.

"It is rather nice that someone can say I have had a Scotch pie and there is something in it that is good for me," she added.

Among the foods found to have the highest levels of phyto-oestrogen were choc-ices with 85 micrograms per 100 grams, jam doughnuts with 200mcg, and grilled beef sausages with 580mcg. The highest levels were recorded in the somewhat healthier options wholemeal bread, soya and raisins.

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UK accepts quality of Basmati rice

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Following a one-day meeting between representatives of the UK's Food Standards Agency and exporters from Pakistan, India and Basmati on Wednesday, Britain has accepted the quality of five varieties of Pakistan's Basmati rice.

The meeting was the fourth in a series convened by the FSA with the view of establishing a Code of Practice in order to protect the rights of British Basmati consumers against those seeking to mis-sell the name to sell other varieties of rice.

Representing Pakistan at the meeting was the vice chairman of Export Promotion Bureau Tariq Puri who told APP: "We were able to get our Basmati accepted as it is grown and exported from Pakistan."

The FSA rejected three varieties of Indian Basmati rice with New Delhi having failed to submit its samples in time for a quality check. However, 11 varieties of rice from India were accepted.

Pakistan currently exports over US\$50 million worth of Basmati to the UK.

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Salmonella down two thirds

Date: Fri, 19 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Reports indicate the level of salmonella egg poisoning is currently a third of that it was eight years ago.

According to a new survey from the Food Standards Agency only one out of every 290 half dozen eggs contains the bacteria, comparing favourably to figures for 1995/96.

The FSA survey found no differences in average contamination levels between free range and other eggs, sampling UK produced eggs across the country.

"The survey clearly shows that if you buy UK-produced eggs from shops and markets the possibility of any salmonella contamination is very low indeed," Lydia Wilkie, assistant director of science and enforcement, Food Standards Agency (FSA) Scotland told the BBC.

This year sees the enforcement of new European Union regulations in the UK requiring the printing of "UK" on each egg.

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Food manufacturers seek to capitalise on Atkins

Date: Mon, 22 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

As low carb diets such as Atkins become more popular it seems manufacturers are looking to cash in on their popularity.

Atkins encourages people to consume fewer carbohydrates and more protein foods.

However, rather dismiss Atkins as a fad, companies like American Italian pasta are trying to capitalise on their success.

Discussing the firm's success in the market chief executive Tim Webster explained to News Tribune: "This is a chance, in a bigger more mainstream way, to offer a product that is nutritionally different than regular pasta that seems to be right in line with what consumers are looking for."

American Italian Pasta reached a deal to launch reduced carb pasta under the Atkins label and by June this year says it will extend this range under regional brands to supply low carb pasta.

Whilst they have has yet to see any sales results, Dan Trott, executive vice president of sales and marketing points out that they are not just trying to cash in on the Atkins diet.

"There's actually a broad swathe of the audience, that's interested in reducing carbs that are not on low-carb diets. It's a relatively small portion of the population that's actually on the low-carb diet."

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EU food trade export mission to China

Date: Mon, 22 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, Franz Fischler, is to visit China to help encourage greater food trade with the EU.

The visit will focus on the promotion of European Union food products to China, which is increasingly becoming a vital export market, second only to the US.

Mr Fischler will be meeting with Chinese ministers and officials to discuss the possibility of business between the two parties.

"Europe is tasty! This is the message I will carry to China. Be it wine, cheese, ham or olive oil, the EU has a longstanding tradition of quality food. China and the EU have great food trade potential which has to be further developed. My visit to China will contribute to further strengthening our trade ties. It will also enable the EU business delegation to explore new business opportunities for their outstanding food and drink products," said Mr Fischler.

The EU Commissioner will also attend the opening of SIAL China, the leading trade fair for food, beverages, wines and spirits in Shanghai.

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Tesco details expansion plans

Date: Mon, 22 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Tesco is planning to realise about £650 million from its UK property portfolio to release more capital for expansion.

The company announced today that it will be teaming up with property group Topland in a 50:50 joint venture over the next 25 years.

Tesco will pour 33 stores and two distribution centres, about five per cent of the company's assets, into the venture.

The UK's largest supermarket group will continue to operate the stores and decide on layout.

Tesco said the partnership would afford the group the "flexibility and firepower to expand and take full advantage of the further growth opportunities available in all areas of the Tesco's business". Details of the share placing, which raised £773 million, were announced in January.

Tesco plans to increase its market share in four areas by opening more convenience stores in Britain, growing services such as banking, adding overseas stores and pushing deeper into non-food areas such as clothes and music.

Tesco said joint venture with privately held Topland covered about five per cent of its total property assets and had an option for review in 2011. Rent levels had been pre-agreed for the full 25 years, the company said in a statement.

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Waitrose set to snap up excess Safeway stores

Date: Mon, 22 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Supermarket group Waitrose is being tipped as the firm favourite to land the biggest bundle of Safeway stores being sold off as part of the Morrisons takeover.

Waitrose is reportedly planning to purchase 25 stores from Morrisons for between £250 million and £300 million.

Morrisons must sell 52 supermarkets to fulfil Competition Commission conditions on its acquisition of Safeway and legally binding agreements on all the stores must be reached by September 8th.

Senior sources claim that chairman Sir Ken Morrison favours a large-scale deal with Waitrose because it would limit his more comparable rivals, Tesco PLC and Asda, from increasing their presence in the North, according to The Observer.

Waitrose has no store north of Newark in Nottinghamshire. The company has built a reputation based on quality food rather than low pricing.

So far both firms have declined to comment on the sale rumours.

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Experts say bacteria may survive pasteurisation

Date: Mon, 22 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The bacteria involved in ripening cheese may survive pasteurisation according to a new study from Italian, French and Irish researchers.

The study looked at strains of *Lactobacillus plantarum*, which is essential to the ripening process and flavour in a wide variety of cheeses.

This group of bacteria known as nonstarter lactic acid bacteria (NSLAB) is used in the making of cheeses such as feta, cheddar and pecorino.

The findings of the study conducted by researchers at the University of Bari, the INRA in France and the University College Ireland, discovered that not all bacteria was destroyed by using heat treatments. Therefore pasteurisation could fail to remove harmful bacteria.

The report said: "Since more hygienic cheese-making practices have negligible effects on NSLAB contamination, survival during pasteurization is the most probably entry route for the few NSLAB cells found in cheese during early ripening."

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Government keen to roll out fruit and veg scheme

Date: Mon, 22 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Public Health Minister has backed the fruit and vegetable logo scheme, and insisted that the strategy is on course to deliver results.

Melanie Johnson claims the 'five a day' logo can cope with the expansion of its role, telling BBC Radio Four's 'You and Yours':

“I'd entirely defend both the process and the way we're going about this, and also what we're trying to achieve.”

Ms Johnson added: “I've just asked the industry to come in with some plans for reducing salt across the board on all foods. What I suggested to them was that over a three-year period they would plan the reduction in salt.

“I think that there is a great reluctance apparently in some parts of the food industry to actually supply what the consumer wants which is namely foods that can be as healthy as possible while remaining attractive.”

The campaign for regular servings of food and vegetables is gaining strength, although industry heavyweight Heinz announced recently that it is to drop the logo from its baked beans offerings.

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Curry could be carrying too much colour

Date: Tue, 23 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Illegal levels of food colourants in curry dishes could be a problem across the UK, according to trading standards officers.

In a host of tests in Surrey, more than 50 per cent of Tikka Masalas were found to cover "illegal and potentially dangerous" levels of colourants and officers claimed they do not feel the problem is just based in Surrey Indian eateries.

Phil Thomas from the Trading Standards Institute claimed: "We have evidence to suggest this is a national problem, not just specific to Surrey and we are urging trading standards services across the UK to work with Indian restaurants in their area to ensure the amount of colorants used is within the legal limits."

Among the colourings are tartrazine, sunset yellow and ponceau - which past tests have shown links to health problems such as migraines, allergies and child hyperactivity.

Reportedly restaurants add such high amounts as British diners do not think they are eating a 'real' Tikka Masala if it is not coloured bright red and owners worry they will lose trade if their food is pale.

Officers argued that restaurants could use natural ingredients such as saffron to colour foods instead. A country-wide investigation into curry houses is now planned to be conducted across the UK.

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MP calls for clearer food labeling

Date: Tue, 23 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food needs to be labeled more clearly according to Richard Bacon, the Conservative MP for South Norfolk.

He claims it is vital so that consumers can be aware of the true origins of a product and therefore the standards of its production. Under current legislation food is often labeled as being a product of Britain despite ingredients coming from overseas.

The Norfolk MP has introduced a Food Labeling Bill to the Commons, which aims to make sure that food labeled as British has been produced to a UK standard. It is hoped this will lead to consumers being able to make informed choices about the food they buy.

Mr Bacon said: "British farmers who adhere to these high standards often face unfair competition from imported food which is produced to inferior animal welfare standards and is thus cheaper to produce."

The Bill has won backing from the Food Standards Agency and as well as cross-party backbenchers.

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New EU rules on sweeteners

Date: Tue, 23 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New European rules are being introduced that will restrict the use of the sweetener cyclamate. The man-made sweetener has already been banned in US foods since 1970 after concerns that large amounts caused bladder cancer in rats.

A German company, Nutrinova, has already come up with an alternative formulation that could replace cyclamate yet still provide the same non-caloric taste.

The company recently announced that: "Nutrinova has conducted extensive tests to reduce cyclamate levels in beverages to the required level of 250mg/l, without incurring additional costs or changing the taste of products from that of current blends containing higher cyclamate levels."

The EU Sweeteners Directive, issued last November, will affect products such as milk and fruit juices as well as sugar-free confectionary and chewing gum. However existing products with previously accepted cyclamate levels will continue to be sold until the end of January 2006.

The new rules are unlikely to affect UK food manufacturers directly as most products using cyclamates are imported.

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Low fat ice cream arrives in UK

Date: Tue, 23 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new low fat ice cream range has been launched amid the continuing drive among UK consumers to lose weight and eat healthily.

The UK's largest ice cream maker, Richmond Ice Cream, and US frozen food company, Silhouette Brands, hasay their 'Skinny Cow' low fat ice cream will be a hit in the UK.

Through a license agreement the products were launched exclusively in Asda Wal-Mart in January 2004 for a nine-month period and proved a hit with consumers, exceeding all sales expectations.

During the two months since its introduction at Asda, sales of Skinny Cow products have outsold other leading brands such as Magnum light and Slim Fast.

"We are really excited by the opportunity working with Silhouette presents for us to develop the healthy ice cream category," said Kate Needham, marketing Director of Richmond Ice Cream. "The Skinny Cow success was built upon great tasting products -- this is what the UK needs as consumers here view many low fat ice cream products to be poor in taste and texture."

Marc Wexler, Chief Executive Officer of Silhouette Brands added: "The relationship with Richmond is really working out well and we are pleased with the exceptional support we have had from Asda Wal-Mart in the UK also."

The licensing agreement enables Richmond to manufacture and market a range of frozen novelty products under The Skinny Cow name, building upon the success of the brand in the USA.

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Nut oil the secret to low carb dieting

Date: Tue, 23 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

An expensive nut oil is the key to weight loss, according to one of Dr Atkins' colleagues.

Dr Fred Pescatore is the creator of 'The Hampton Diet' which follows the same low carb principles of the controversial Atkins diet.

Named after the exclusive Long Island resort, Dr Pescatore claims the diet has a Mediterranean twist as well as more glamorous feel. Central to the plan is the secret ingredient of macadamia nut oil which allegedly is the most monounsaturated oil available.

However, the oil is expensive and exclusive, priced at around £5 pounds for just 13 oz, and the nut oil is only available in specialty shops or over the Internet.

Dr Pescatore worked with Dr Atkins as a medical director of the Atkins Centre in New York from 1994 to 1999.

The Hamptons Diet book is due to be realised in the US in May and is the latest in a long list of eating plans that stress the low carb approach to weight loss.

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Tesco exploits online shopping boom

Date: Tue, 23 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new report on the growth of e-commerce in the UK suggests that over 20 million consumers will shop online this year, with the grocery sector a strong favourite for surfing shoppers.

Trade body IMRG predicts that a total of £17 billion will be spent by shoppers in the UK over the internet this year, rising to £80 billion in 2009, BBC News Online reports.

Laura Wade-Gery, chief executive of Tesco.com, commented: "You only have to look at the business we did last December to see how fast we're growing. We did as many sales in December as we did in the whole of 1998."

IMRG explained that its members, which include high street heavy-weights Tesco and Argos, as well as Ikea and Lastminute.com, now regard customer retention as their number one priority.

The report also revealed that British consumers have taken to the internet quicker than their European peers - 27 per cent of Britons have purchased something online compared to only 16 per cent of continental Europeans.

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Conference outlines new food packaging plans

Date: Wed, 24 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A range of new food packaging solutions have been revealed at Cryovac's Packforum conference. It is hoped the new initiatives will meet concern that packaging of fish is failing to achieve customer's expectations of quality and hygiene.

Jeremy Hooper from UK supermarket Tesco said that the packaging industry needed to be more responsive: "There is only one way to get it right in the future, and that is to listen to the customer, listen to the customer and listen to the customer again."

Cryovac released details of its new sealed pack systems that would allow fresh fish to be sold in more attractive packages. It is hoped that advances in food packaging will result in a better product for the consumer as they help preserve food's taste, vitamins and nutritional qualities.

The Belgium company, De Graaf Food services, also unveiled the latest steam cooking concept that would allow the microwave cooking of fresh ready meals.

Thomas Hassing from De Graaf said: "Fish is particularly well adapted to this concept, adding to the healthy, low-fat and high quality image of the meal."

Over 80 participants attended the conference in Paris representing 53 companies.

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Kids snap up snack foods

Date: Wed, 24 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Young children are increasingly turning to snack food when they are hungry, according to a new study.

Research by children's food company Organix found that 99 per cent of children aged four to 11 are regularly consuming snacks, with some eating 50 different additives a day from the products.

Lizzie Vann of Organix explained to ic Teeside: "There is a big increase in children's health problems, not just obesity. I strongly suspect there is a link there. Children are not getting the nutrients they need to develop."

Snack foods appear to be replacing meals in children's diets and Ms Vann warned "a real time bomb of children's health problems" would occur if the situation continues.

Experts say snack foods should be eaten in moderation and contain high levels of salt, sugar and fat, but findings from the 'Carrot to Chemistry' report suggest that half of children's daily food consumption comes from them.

Of the 206 children surveyed, many admitted to eating snack foods around two or three times a day, whilst some had as many as six or more.

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Scientist re-affirms need for realism in diet solutions

Date: Wed, 24 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A report published by Herbalife, the 'weight management' food producer, has once again challenged the optimism of those seeking to put their faith in quick fix dieting programmes.

In a statement which will reinforce the view of many industry insiders, Dr David Heber, founding director of the Centre for Human Nutrition at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and chairman of Herbalife's Scientific Advisory Board said traditional weight loss methods remained the best solution for cutting obesity rates.

"People are not putting into practice what it really takes to lose weight. Many dieters are caught in a cycle of trying on various ad-hoc dieting approaches that have nothing to do with their specific needs - and they do so without making lasting changes," he commented.

The report, which incorporated research conducted across Europe on attitudes to the prospects of dieting, also suggested that much of the current obesity crisis is a product of misleading information provided by food suppliers and the difficulties individuals face in 'navigating' an increasingly diverse and complex food supply.

The report itself comes at a time of intense efforts in the UK to tackle the issue of obesity - an estimated 30,000 deaths were attributable to obesity in 1998, and amid fears of the potentially damaging side effects of so-called quick fix diets - such as the now renowned Atkins diet, which with its unconventional diet has caused controversy amongst health experts.

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Low-carb diets linked to birth defects

Date: Wed, 24 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Low-carb diets could lead to a rise in birth defects as well as childhood cancer, according to scientists at the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children.

Research has revealed that diets such as Atkins and the South Beach Plan could be putting foetuses at risk.

Foods including bread, pasta, breakfast cereals and orange juice are largely shunned under these low-carb regimes.

However, these products are key sources of folic acid, an essential vitamin that prevents neural tube defects.

Since 1998, all white flour, white pasta and cornmeal in Canada have been fortified with folic acid, which has led to a fall in birth defects by 50 per cent.

Researchers are worried that the growing popularity of low-carb eating will reverse this trend.

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Pakistani Basmati rice accepted by UK Food Standard Agency

Date: Wed, 24 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The FSA has accepted the quality of five different varieties of Pakistani Basmati rice.

The agency reached its decision following a series of meetings to establish the superiority of rice labeled as Basmati.

The event was attended by representatives of Pakistan and Indian Basmati exporters as well as EU rice millers and UK-based consumer associations. The FSA also accepted 11 varieties of Indian Basmati rice.

Tari Puri, the vice chairman of Export Promotion Bureau from Pakistan said: "We were able to get our Basmati accepted as is grown and exported from Pakistan because of our principled stand."

A recent FSA survey of Basmati rice has found that more than one sample in six of the rice sold in the UK contained high levels of other non-Basmati varieties.

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Scientists identify cancer benefits of Vitamin D

Date: Wed, 24 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New research from scientists in the UK suggests that vitamin D could be crucial in helping to prevent breast cancer

London's St George's Hospital and Birmingham University conducted the study, which found tissue in the breast contains an enzyme that triggers Vitamin D as a natural way to combat tumours.

Lead researcher Dr Martin Hewison explained to Food Ingredients First: "Perhaps now it's time to look at improving our dietary intake through fortification of more foods with Vitamin D."

Food items such as fish oils, breakfast cereals and dairy products all contain sources of the vitamin.

Changes in diet are a key way to increase levels of vitamin D in the UK, particularly as sunlight - a strong source of the vitamin - is relatively scarce.

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Atkins dieters allowed to snack on chocolate

Date: Thu, 25 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A range of chocolate bars, aimed at those following the Atkins diet, are to be launched in the UK.

Available in branches of Boots at the end of April, the bars will come in six flavours, costing 99p each.

Atkins Nutritionals have designed the bars to complement the range of milkshake mixtures, breakfast bars and bake mixes that were launched earlier in the year. Flavours are to include chocolate and caramel wafer as well as chocolate crisp.

The low carb, high protein diet has proved controversial since its launch and there are concerns that it could have long-term health effects.

However, high profile celebrities have helped contribute to the popularity of the eating plan.

A spokeswoman for the British Dietetic Association, Amanda Wynne said: "They would be far better off eating pieces of fruit than an Atkins chocolate bar and would maybe save themselves a bit of money in the bargain."

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Smarties fruity makeover

Date: Thu, 25 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The popular Nestle Rowntree Smarties are to be complemented by a new fruity version.

Due to be launched in time for summer, the Fruity Smarties will be an attempt by Nestle to increase their share of the snack market.

The new sweets will be chocolate-free and follow on from the Smarties chocolate bar and ice cream versions.

Fruity Smarties are expected to become a rival to the Masterfoods-owned Skittles sweets.

Nestle Rowntree's recently revealed that sales of its KitKat bar had fallen and it is hoped by developing new products such as the Double Cream bar they can revive their fortunes.

Smarties were originally launched as Chocolate Beans in 1937 and according to Nestle Rowntree around 16,000 smarties are eaten every minute in the UK.

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Waitrose announces Safeway stores deal

Date: Thu, 25 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

American supermarket chain Waitrose has announced plans to buy 19 Safeway stores being sold off as part of the Morrisons takeover.

Morrisons must sell 52 supermarkets to fulfil Competition Commission conditions on its acquisition of Safeway and legally binding agreements on all the stores must be reached by September 8th.

Waitrose recently announced like-for-like sales growth of five per cent over the past year, which has taken sales to £2.7 billion. In 2000, the supermarket group bought 11 former Somerfield stores. Waitrose currently has a 3.5 per cent share of the national food retail market.

Waitrose has no store north of Newark in Nottinghamshire. The 19 stores in question include outlets in Yorkshire, Merseyside and Cheshire and will allow the company to expand into the North. 18 of the stores are Safeway sites and one is a Morrisons supermarket.

The buy boosts Waitrose's selling space by 20 per cent. The company, owned by the John Lewis Partnership, has built a reputation based on quality food rather than low pricing.

Bradford-based Wm Morrison said the value of the net assets of the 19 stores was £158 million, but refused to say how much the deal was worth.

Waitrose managing director Steven Esom said: "This acquisition represents a major step change in our expansion programme. We look forward to the challenge of competing in different parts of the country."

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M&S identifies IT as key issue

Date: Thu, 25 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New technology innovations are helping Marks & Spencer improve efficiency and productivity in its food retail sector.

Having already introduced a Chip & PIN anti-fraud payment system, the firm is now keen on exploiting wireless technology to help improve its operations.

Alastair Tipple, head of IT delivery at Marks and Spencer, explained to vnunet: "M&S is an early adopter of a lot of technologies, especially if it helps customers."

"In addition to all this, we're moving 2,000 staff from our head office in Baker Street to new state-of-the-art offices in Paddington Basin and IT is driving the way."

The firm is seeking to use a network of five connected stores as its headquarters, using the latest in wireless technology to hook up the locations.

M&S is installing fast local area networks (LAN), wireless connectivity, a virtual private network and voice over IP (VoIP).

"We have seen that people start grouping in the teams they find most useful, creating more flexible working," said Tipple.

The company has also increased remote working devices, the use of public hotspots and GPRS, to improve productivity of home-based staff and those out in the field.

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US 'Cheeseburger Bill' defended

Date: Thu, 25 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A spokesman for Republican Congressman Ric Keller, who promoted the so-called 'cheeseburger bill', has sought to defend the reasons behind the controversial piece of legislation.

The Personal Responsibility in Food Consumption Bill has been nicknamed the "cheeseburger bill," because of its emphasis on protecting fast-food companies from obesity-related lawsuits. It aims to put personal responsibility back into the dietary choices that individuals make.

Talking on Radio Four, the spokesman for Congressman Keller, Bran Malenius said: "Where we're from here in Orlando, Florida, the vacation capital of the world, we depend very heavily on investment from the restaurant industry and we just didn't want to see fast food outlets and other restaurants sued just because some people made some bad choices when they went to the lunch counter."

Critics of the bill are worried that it has shifted responsibility from the food industry on to the consumers and instead say more should be done to make people aware of junk food dangers.

Obesity is expected to overtake smoking as the largest cause of preventable death in the US. Around 400,000 deaths are thought to be a result of poor diet and lack of exercise.

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Coca Cola pulls Dasani range

Date: Thu, 25 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Coca Cola has confirmed it is to permanently pull its new Dasani bottled water product from the European market.

Disastrous publicity in the UK arising from revelations that the product derives from tap water from Sidcup, and that there were some health risks associated with it, have led executives to indefinitely postpone launches across the continent.

"The timing is no longer considered optimal," a spokesman confirmed.

Last week the firm announced that approximately 500,000 bottles were to be withdrawn after above illegal amounts of potentially harmful bromate were found in the product.

The FSA commended the decision, claiming long-term exposure to the chemical could cause an increased risk of cancer.

Bromate reportedly entered the product through the necessary procedures involved with meeting calcium requirement levels in such items.

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Free sugar fuelling obesity problem

Date: Fri, 26 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Added sugars are significant contributors to the obesity epidemic, an article in The Lancet concludes.

This week's issue of the publication features a Viewpoint article, weighing up the evidence contained in a report commissioned by the World Health Organisation and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation, analysing the link between free [added] sugars and obesity.

The report, published in 2003, suggested that free sugars should be restricted to less than 10 per cent of total energy, and its findings now underpin much of the scientific justification for the proposed WHO global strategy on diet, physical activity, and health.

Jim Mann, from the University of Otago, New Zealand, responding to the report, finds:

"Although

none of the individual studies might be definitive, when considered in aggregate they provide considerable evidence to suggest that sucrose and other free sugars contribute to the global epidemic of obesity.

"Reduction of the intake of sugars can make a useful contribution-along with other measures-to lessening of the risk of obesity and its clinical outcomes".

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Parmalat meeting set to determine future

Date: Fri, 26 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Parmalat chiefs are to hold a crucial meeting today with representatives of banks, bondholders and small investors' representatives in order to discuss the firm's future.

With company debts estimated at as much as €14 billion, the government-appointed administrator in charge of the company's finances, Enrico Bondi is believed to be planning to sell-off non-core assets and reduce the line of products offered by the firm.

According to the BBC, sources close to Mr Bondi are thought to be in favour of supporting moves to swap the debt for shares in the firm which would enable a slimmed-down Parmalat to stay afloat.

Such a move would allow creditors to receive between a quarter and a third of what they are owed, producing rather more capitol than the sell-off, which is unlikely to raise more than €1billion.

However, in an increasingly protracted and controversial affair, some of the creditor banks and financial institutions are at risk of legal action, having knowingly ignored the scale of the problems Parmalat had found itself in.

The debacle began in December 2003 when the food giant was forced admit it had a €4 billion hole in its accounts.

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McDonald's to introduce McKids clothing

Date: Fri, 26 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The fast food chain McDonald's is preparing to launch a range of children's clothing to Europe and North America.

The McKids products will be designed and manufactured by Chinese company, Shanghai Longtrust Trade.

McDonald's is expected to eventually introduce toys, videos and books under the new McKids branding. It is a strategic move by the company to help revitalise its image.

Larry Light, McDonald's global chief marketing officer, said: "It exemplifies the kind of new thinking, focus and bold action that is redefining McDonald's. It's all about connecting with consumers in fresh, relevant ways both inside and outside our restaurants."

However fast food giants such as McDonald's have recently been criticised by consumer groups who believe they are promoting unhealthy lifestyles.

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Consumers demanding healthy soft drinks

Date: Fri, 26 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new report on the soft drinks market has shown that consumers want more healthy options.

The Euromonitor report reveals that bottled water, fruit juice and functional drinks are competing against the traditional carbonates.

Despite a launch of new flavoured colas including lemon and vanilla, it seems consumers are appearing more health conscious preferring brands which are seen as 'good-for-you'.

The report also looked at the global market for soft drinks. It discovered that marketing initiatives in developing countries are using strong local flavours to promote their product better.

Experts say they expect that countries such as Mexico, China and Indonesia will be key developing markets.

The total global volume sales of soft drinks reached 327 billion litres in 2003, which is a rise of 5.7 per cent on the previous year.

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MP calls for free primary school meals

Date: Fri, 26 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Steve McCabe, the MP for Hall Green in Birmingham, has called for the introduction of free meals for all primary children in the UK.

The Labour MP believes that the introduction of 26 million free meals could tackle the growing problem of childhood obesity and poor behaviour in schools.

Mr McCabe said: "We seem to have a culture where simple changes are dismissed in favour of dramatic re-organisations and inventive new initiatives. This is madness. We need a simple, common sense method of overcoming child obesity and poor behaviour in schools. That's why I am asking the Government to pool its resources and bring back free, healthy school meals for every primary child."

A spokesman for the Department for Education and Skills said: "We are working really closely with the Department for Health to ensure that we have a joined-up approach to healthier eating in schools. We know Hull Local Education Authority will shortly be providing free school meals for all of its primary school pupils, and will be interested to see how this works."

According to report by the Soil Association school meals cost just 35 pence per child.

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Garlic could offer diabetes protection

Date: Fri, 26 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Garlic could be used as a potential counter to diabetes according to new research.

Scientists in Manchester are to conduct four-month clinical trials at a hospital in Saudi Arabia, giving 50 diabetic sufferers doses of garlic for three months.

The health benefits of garlic have been acknowledged for centuries, but scientists believe it could now be used to treat a specific illness.

The eyes, kidneys, blood vessels and skin of diabetes patients are damaged by high sugar levels in a process known as glycation. However, the researchers believe liquid garlic could prevent that damage taking place, manchesteronline.co.uk reports.

"Garlic in its liquid form has proved a potent block on glycation in a series of in-vitro tests we have conducted," said Dr Nessar Ahmed, molecular biologist at the university's department of biological sciences.

"We are trying to understand why sugars destroy the body from the inside and have a particular interest in natural products and their therapeutic benefits."

Dr Ahmed has been looking at the complications caused by diabetes and the development of drugs to protect against them. He explained that using garlic as an anti-oxidant to protect against free radicals and lower cholesterol levels could help patients with diabetes.

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New grease aids food production process

Date: Mon, 29 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new standard of lubrication has been developed for food production machinery that I said to deliver significantly improved productivity.

Manufacturing experts Molykote have formulated bearing grease that reduces wear and tear, and prevents metal-to-metal contact.

The solution is formed from a mix of aluminium complex thickener, white lubricating solids and other additives, which provide maximum lubrication without tainting the produce.

The white bearing grease can be used as lubrication in process machinery, canneries, dairies, beverage plants, meat processing plants and pharmaceutical plants.

Experts say that the efficiencies in the process help to prevent against costly problems such as machine break down or contaminated food.

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Starbucks to double Wi-Fi network

Date: Mon, 29 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Global coffee chain Starbucks is planning to more than double the size of its Wi-Fi network.

Wireless broadband networks are currently being installed in a further 98 Starbucks outlets, following a "strong customer response" to the existing network.

The Starbucks Wi-Fi network operates in partnership with T-Mobile, under the T-Mobile HotSpot brand, and already boasts several thousand Wi-Fi hot spots in the UK.

At present, Starbucks will not disclose exactly many people have taken advantage of its Wi-Fi network, although the firm insists that it has been a success.

"While we have not disclosed specific numbers we can say that there has been a strong customer response to the T-Mobile HotSpot service in our stores," said Cathy Heseltine, marketing director of Starbucks UK.

"Our customers appreciate the flexibility that the service gives them, whether they are using it to download corporate files and presentations, or surfing the internet for fun," she added.
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Nottinghamshire brewery wins top award

Date: Mon, 29 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A Nottinghamshire brewery has been confirmed as the finest in the country at a top awards ceremony.

Hardys and Hansons has secured the Regional Brewer of the Year title at the annual Publican Awards.

The company is the East Midland's oldest brewer, runs over 250 pubs and was last year named Nottinghamshire company of the year.

Managers have expressed delight at the award, which they see as being the result of much hard work.

Managing Director Tim Bonham, said: "It is obviously absolutely thrilling, it's a great testament to our workforce both at the brewery and the head office and the vast number of people who work in the public houses.

"We spent a lot of time and effort rebranding the company and we are finally getting the recognition as the main brewer in the East Midlands."

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UK bakery firm notes new industry trends

Date: Mon, 29 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Cookies and muffins are becoming as popular as bread based products in the bakery market according to the findings of a new UK bakery ingredients and finished foods firm.

Despite a previous 80/20 split between the two bakery sectors, Bakemark UK claims product demand has become much more evenly shared.

"Cookies is a dynamic area, muffins continue to grow as well as doughnuts, cake-bars, shortbread. On the ingredients side we are seeing a lot of innovation going on at our industrial customers and high street clients," Kate Hampson, marketing manager at Bakemark UK explained to Food Navigator.

The company claims the way forward in the sector is to use innovation and added-value products including dough conditioners and bakery fats.

In addition low-fat items and those which contain fibre and vitamins are growing well due to current trends in healthy eating.

Bakemark UK is the result of a merger between Arkady Craigmillar, Read-Bake and Caravan Brill which provided the previous companies with a bigger share of the American-style cookies and sweet treats market in Britain.

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Vimto prepares for new India assault

Date: Mon, 29 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The maker of the iconic British soft drink Vimto, Nichols, is planning to launch a fresh assault on the Indian market following a 50-year absence.

The Merseyside-based firm has relaunched the Vimto brand in India, and is now aiming to begin retailing the fruit-flavoured drink there later in the year.

Vimto enjoyed strong popularity in India during the British colonial era. However, the drink was withdrawn from the region in the 1950s.

Nichols chairman John Nichols now believes that the time is ripe to make a fresh start.

"India is a good market - there are lots of people, a growing economy, and an awareness of our product from many, many years ago," he told the BBC's World Business Report. .

"There are some great British brands still being sold in India, such as Ovaltine," he added. "Where there is awareness, I think there is still appreciation of a great British product."

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UK organics company criticises EU yoghurt

Date: Mon, 29 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A trial version of a new yoghurt produced to EU standards has been attacked by the UK's foremost organic producer.

Yeo Valley has been critical of the European Commission's plans to develop yoghurt since they were first announced in November, and following recent taste tests their opinions appears only to have worsened.

Managing director Graham Keating explained to the Western Morning News: "We think it tastes terrible. It failed all of our own quality standards dismally. It's bitter, thin and watery. Put it in a dish and it spreads like a liquid."

The European Commission wanted to remake yoghurt according to old recipes and suggests yoghurt be made with a "lower level of milk solids" than is currently used by UK manufacturers, leading to a thinner version.

Mr Keating claimed although non-organic producers would probably get around the issue by adding non-dairy artificial flavourings and thickeners, organic producers such as Yeo Valley could not.

However a EU spokeswoman argued that companies would not be forced to change their recipes and there was "no question of removing traditional British-style yoghurt"

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Robert Wiseman's sales confirm forecasts

Date: Tue, 30 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Robert Wiseman Dairies confirmed today that it expected to meet market forecasts for its sales volumes and turnover for the full year to April 3 - despite the cost of the £1 million offer of shares on its balance sheet.

The UK dairy group completed last October the expansion of its Droitwich Spa facility, increasing capacity from 350 million to 500 million litres per year.

Production levels at the factory are currently over 7.5 million litres per week and will be further increased from 1 April when the company starts delivering to an additional 44 Tesco stores in the south of England.

The deal marks a significant expansion into territory controlled by rivals Dairy Crest and Arla Foods.

"This new contract with Tesco, along with new store allocations from Netto that started in January, means that we are optimistic our track record of volume growth is likely to be maintained for the new financial year," declared Robert Wiseman's finance director Billy Keane.

The group operates around 13 distribution depots in the UK and five dairies, including sites at Aberdeen and Birmingham.

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Experts assert benefits of 'friendly bacteria'

Date: Tue, 30 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Various health experts are advocating the benefits of food products containing probiotics, the "friendly bacteria" said to aid good health and reverse bacterial imbalances.

Dairy products from manufacturers such as Yakult, Danone and Actimel have secured a strong position in markets worldwide, set to stand at an annual £3.3 billion in worth.

Historically, probiotics have been attributed to helping combat a variety of ailments including constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease, as well as being used in the treatment of various infections.

A study in Finland found that a daily dose of probiotics reduced the risks of eczema in pregnant women and their babies. Furthermore, a number of UK-based researchers are considering the benefits of regularly taking probiotics, claiming positive results in the early stages of trials.

"We carried out a study of healthy individuals in the Netherlands, and that showed that there were increased levels of the actual probiotic strain," professor Colette Shortt, director of science at Yakult, told the Scotsman. "The probiotics have to be ingested regularly to maintain levels," she added.

"They certainly don't do any harm," said Professor Tom MacDonald, a gut immunologist at Southampton University. "And compared with other things we put in our mouths, probiotics are not so bad."

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Professor argues in favour of GM crops

Date: Tue, 30 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

There needs to be a more broad-minded approach to GM crops, according to Professor John Hillman, director of the Scottish Crop Research Institute.

Mr Hillman, in his annual report, argues that farmers and the general public need to be willing to accept new production methods, believing that GM crops could be the solution for feeding expanding populations.

The report is also critical of those opposing the introduction of GM crops because of fears of cross-contamination.

Mr Hillman points out: "That most types of agriculture and horticulture in the developed countries, and 60 per cent in the developing world, use species that are alien to the region under cultivation, and despite billions of meal events in which GM foods have been consumed without any detectable harm to humans or livestock, is of little consequence to organic agriculture."

GM crops could also be vital in providing bio-fuels as renewable sources of energy as well as producing vaccines and antibiotics.

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Obesity to be tackled without legislation

Date: Tue, 30 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

According to Tessa Jowell, the culture and sport secretary, it is unlikely that the UK will need official legislation to combat the growing problem of obesity.

Instead food companies should self-regulate by providing more positive messages about healthy eating.

Ms Jowell's comments were part of the evidence given to a Commons select committee on obesity.

She also pointed out that obesity was caused not just by over eating but also a lack of physical exercise and therefore refused to criticise Cadbury's latest Get Active campaign.

Under the scheme, one set of posts and nets for volleyball would require tokens from 5,440 chocolate bars.

The culture secretary argued that: "Sport in this country is not in a position to turn away sponsorship that can provide facilities and equip teachers to be better at encouraging people to be physically active."

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FSA launches chicken freshness inquiry

Date: Tue, 30 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards agency has announced the launch of an inquiry into the freshness of chicken in UK supermarkets following reports that use by dates are often inaccurate or meaningless.

The report, carried out by Which? magazine claims that supermarket chickens are often relabelled several times at processing plants before that reach store shelves.

"The trade union Unison has warned that staff in some poultry slaughterhouses commonly repackage and re-date raw chicken several times, passing it off as fresh meat," stated the report, according to the Telegraph.

In response the FSA asserts that manufacturers are required by law to mark food products with accurate expiration dates.

"Manufacturers have a legal duty to produce chicken that is safe to eat, and this includes applying accurate use-by dates," said an FSA spokesperson. "Chicken at processing plants is inspected by inspectors from our Meat Hygiene Service, and at retail outlets by local authorities to ensure it is fit for consumption.

"Any producer who extended the use-by date so that it was unfit by the time it reached the consumer, would be liable to prosecution under the Food Safety Act," it was added.

The British Retail Consortium has stated that none of its members are guilty of selling unfresh chicken, highlighting initiatives such as the BRC global food standard.

Government scientist re-issues climate change warning

Date: Wed, 31 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Government's chief scientist, Sir David King, has today re-issued his warning that climate change is a bigger problem than terrorism.

Sir David told a House of Commons committee yesterday that a major disaster may be necessary for the world to consider climate change as a serious threat.

Speaking this morning on the Today programme, the professor exemplified this danger with an event from 1953, when London had suffered from such severe smog that approximately 10,000 people died.

As a result of that, the city introduced coal burning regulations to clean up the skies.

"Unfortunately before political action was taken it required a disaster," he said.

Sir David did not believe scientists were being alarmist when they talked of such things as the possibility of losing the Gulf Stream.

He insisted that his global warming predictions represented the "consensus opinion of scientists".

"In the worst case scenario, we're talking about increases in risk to property which run into £20 billion per annum at current levels in the UK alone," Sir David added.

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GM crop growing unlikely following biotech decision

Date: Wed, 31 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

GM crop growing in Britain appears unlikely to proceed for the "foreseeable future" following a biotechnology company's announcement that it has decided not to cultivate herbicide resistant maize, the Government has suggested.

German company Bayer CropScience has blamed Government constraints for its decision which, it believes, would effectively serve to render the GM maize crop "economically non-viable".

The company is currently the only one eligible to grow the genetically modified maize Chardon LL in the UK.

The move is likely to put an end to GM crop growing in this country for "the foreseeable future", a spokesman for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs confirmed.

“The specific details of these conditions are still not available and thus will result in yet another 'open-ended' period of delay,” said a statement from Bayer CropScience. “These uncertainties and undefined timelines will make this five-year old variety economically non-viable.”

Defending the Government's stance on GM maize, environment minister Elliot Morley said: “We do not apologise for the fact there is a tough EU-wide regulatory regime on GMs. It applies to the whole of the EU not just the UK.”

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Convenience food on the rise

Date: Wed, 31 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Ready-to-go food products are proving increasingly popular in meeting the needs of the UK consumer, according to market analysts Mintel.

A new Mintel report has found that the convenience foods sector is the 'clear star' of the foods industry, growing by an impressive 70 per cent over the past 10 years and outstripping staple foods such as dairy, bread, meat and fruit and vegetables.

"Not only has the convenience food sector grown the fastest over these years, it is also the largest sector, with almost £17 billion spent on convenience food in 2003," the report says.

This figure represents a billion pounds more than in 2002, and almost a third of the total spending on food.

"This clearly shows that the British today have money in their pockets and are choosing to spend it on enjoying themselves," said Mintel.

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Specialist warns against diet books

Date: Wed, 31 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Readers should be careful when buying weight-loss books and guides, a nutrition specialist from Wayne State University has warned.

The first thing to check should be whether the writer has some kind of formal education in nutrition.

Although many of the most renowned diet books have been authored by medical doctors, not all of them have proper training in the field.

"The fact that they have a bunch of initials after their name doesn't tell you whether they know anything about diet or nutrition," David Klurfeld, professor of nutrition and food science at WSU, told The Detroit News.

If a particular diet restricts an entire food group forever, Professor Klurfeld advised readers to back away from the book.

Additionally, if the diet isn't one that can be followed in the long term, it probably won't be effective or healthy.

Consumers should also be wary of guides that advertise themselves as unique and simple solutions to weight loss.

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Low-carb dieters want low-fat foods

Date: Wed, 31 Mar 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The recent controversy over the amount of saturated fat in low-carb diets such as Atkins has led consumers to look for ways to reduce fat intake without compromising their diet.

A survey by Morningstar Farms reported that the combination of low-carb foods and reduced fat was important to 56 per cent of low-carb dieters.

Women dieters were more likely than their male counterparts to note that food that is both low-fat and low-carb would help them follow a diet like Atkins, South Beach or The Zone.

The survey also revealed that most people consider important to have more low-carb food options, including ready-made meals.

Learning more convenient food preparation methods was cited as a factor in maintaining eating habits by 37 per cent of the interviewees.

"There's mounting evidence that consumers following many of today's popular low-carb diets often fail due to a lack of varied options," said Ruth Lahmayer, nutrition expert and former national spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association.

The Morningstar Farms brand is part of Worthington Foods, acquired by Kellogg Company in 1999.

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