

May 2004

New technology offers packaging solution

Date: Tue, 04 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New Zealand company Snap Pak has developed a new sachet that contains no air and flat cardboard on one side.

According to the developer, the single-use sachets are suitable for most viscous products, gels, liquids, creams, and pastes.

They have an easy opening mechanism which requires the use of just two fingers and a non-messy method of delivery due to the absence of air inside the sachets.

The product is hermetically preserved into the sachet to guarantee its sterilisation and non-oxidisation, allowing for minimal or no addition of preservatives.

In addition to being functional, the new packaging concept is also appealing to consumers.

"Brands need to find a way to make the consumer pay extra for their product, rather than buying a supermarket own-label product," former Coca-Cola director Larry Mucha told FoodProductionDaily.

He added: "This is where cutting edge packaging technology can give you the advantage - by packaging your product in a container that keeps food fresher, is resealable and is easier to open and close, you can justify charging a higher price and avoid your product becoming a commodity item."

Further information: www.webwire.com

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Local farmers sell direct

Date: Tue, 04 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Farmers are fighting the countryside crisis by removing the middlemen and offering their produce directly to consumers.

Southwark's Borough Market in London has become so trendy that there is a long waiting list for a pitch.

David Kitson, a beef and sheep farmer from Lancashire, drives for four hours and a half to reach the market, and does so gladly.

The Borough Market offers quality products to those who can afford them, including celebrity chef Jamie Oliver.

Mr Kitson also sells his meat directly to customers on the Internet through Farmhousedirect.com and over the telephone.

The demand is now so great his farm is expanding to be able to cope with the retail side of the business.

Selling directly to consumers not only increases the farmers' profit margins but also gives buyers the chance to get good quality food that's looked after properly.

Further information: www.farmhousedirect.com
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FSA issues Sainsbury's product warning

Date: Tue, 04 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency issued a warning today for Sainsbury's customers who bought potato wedges due to allergy concerns.

Some one kilo packages of Sainsbury's frozen Jacket Wedges were filled with hot and spicy potato wedges instead of plain ones because of a manufacturing problem.

The hot and spicy coating contains egg albumin and wheat, which will not be declared on the outer packaging.

Anyone with an allergy to egg or wheat is advised not to eat this product, with 'best before end' date of March 2005 and batch code NB4082S4.

Sainsbury's has withdrawn all affected products from its stores, and customers may return the packages for a refund.

Further information may be requested through Sainsbury's product recall careline at 0800 096 6202.

The Anaphylaxis Campaign has been made aware of the incident and the FSA has alerted local authorities.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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New technology boosts strawberry production

Date: Tue, 04 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new technology has been developed to boost strawberry production, with huge results.

With the use of new methods, value of the fruit has now increased by more than double over the last few years, according to Food Production Daily.

New production techniques created in Ireland allow fresh strawberries to be produced for up to eight months of the year in glasshouses and through polythene and tunnel systems.

Soft fruit adviser Eamonn Kehoe from Teagasc explained: "These new systems give much higher yields and more consistent quality than outdoor production.

"The new technology has led to greater flexibility and makes it possible to grow strawberries anywhere in the country."

Mr Kehoe also called on supermarkets to communicate more effectively with growers, since many are importing fresh strawberries from the US when many high quality fruit products are already available.

In addition biological control was highlighted as a potential new way to control pests and diseases instead of chemicals, helping to promote the strawberry as a natural product.

Further informaton: www.teagasc.ie

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Research highlights food health benefits for epilepsy sufferers

Date: Tue, 04 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New findings have suggested that foods containing omega-3 fatty acids could now be beneficial to epilepsy sufferers.

US research has now found that in particular docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) could help people with uncontrolled epilepsy since the fatty acid is particularly low in their systems.

By increasing intake of foods such as oily fish, researchers believe it could be possible to control potential seizures in patients, according to Food Navigator.

The demand for omega-3 acids has increased considerably over the last few months following the growing evidence for health benefits created by the nutrient.

Omega-3 fortified foods represent a €38 million opportunity for food manufacturers at present, something which is expected to increase by 10 per cent within the next three years.

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Walkers improves operations with IMI upgrade

Date: Tue, 04 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

British snack food leader Walkers has upgraded its IMI supply chain suite provided by Industri-Matematik International.

The upgrade includes the latest releases of the three IMI suite components: Order, Warehouse and Collaboration.

IMI Order enables the company to automate customer requirements, orders and changes, reducing the number of manual routines and improving invoice accuracy.

Walkers have also implemented IMI Warehouse's radio frequency capabilities for real-time picking tasks, speeding the warehouse processes.

Upgrading the IMI suite is part of the larger Darwin Project at Walkers, a three-year, phased initiative to modify its supply chain operations, reducing maintenance costs and improving processes.

The company has decided to use standard versions of software to minimise ongoing customization.

"By offering us an integrated order fulfilment solution, IMI has enabled Walkers to implement its software in a phased approach while gaining immediate benefits from consolidated operations, improved information management, and maximized visibility into our supply chain operations," said Jason Richards, Customer Development Director at Walkers Snack Foods.

Further information: www.walkers.co.uk

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BPC calls for fewer energy regulations

Date: Wed, 05 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Strict rules on energy consumption and pollution in the meat processing industry are damaging the UK's poultry production, claimed The British Poultry Council.

The sector is already facing the competition of cheaper imports and would be seriously hindered if greater regulations, charges and levies were imposed on the industry, declared retiring BPC chairman John Maunder.

According to Maunder, the government is making targets for reducing energy consumption and pollution even more severe due to environmental issues despite producers meeting the current targets.

He added that the 120,000 tons of poultry meat imported from other countries sold had no such requirements, which resulted in unfair competition.

"We are and have always been driven by the needs of the consumer," Maunder said at a recent BPC meeting.

"We operate in a market which is globally supplied and we have to be ever more efficient to stay in this market against less regulated competition from Thailand, Brazil and elsewhere."

Tighter profit margins have also been threatening the UK poultry sector, which has been facing problems since the Asian bird flu epidemic in 2003.

Further information: www.poultry.uk.com

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New carrot packing system streamlines production

Date: Wed, 05 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A processor of carrots for the British retail sector has implemented a new packing system to increase operational effectiveness.

Whitefields Produce selected Ulma Packaging's Etna Hi-Tec machine, which the provider claims operates at speeds of up to 80 packs a minute.

The company is responding to the growing pressure from retailers to cut costs and efficiency.

EU food regulations also mean that the production of vegetables and fruit has become strictly controlled within the coalition.

Whitefields chose the Etna machine because it has a compact footprint, easy maintenance and is fully servo driven.

"Initially we were a little bit apprehensive in making the change, but the pressure was on from within the industry," said managing director Rachel Wheble.

She added: "As with any new installation in a busy environment, we thought that there might be some initial teething problems, but the machine has been working with 100 per cent reliability."

Further information: www.ulmapackaging.com

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Revolutionary coffee holder to debut at London food show

Date: Wed, 05 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food packaging provider Tri-Star has produced a cost saving new coffee holder with the takeaway market in sight

Made of a lightweight material, the Lantern Coffee Holder allows branding to be seen whilst in transit, plus it eliminates the expensive use of 'double cupping' by the retailer.

The product will be unveiled at the upcoming Total Sandwich Show, to be held in London's Olympia National Hall on May 12 to 13.

Tri-Star will also introduce the Millennium Range of hinged salad containers during the event.

Available in three different sizes, the containers have a stacking rim feature to prevent sliding and an optional domed lid for a spoon or fork to be included.

"We pride ourselves on working closely with our customers making sure they get the right packaging developed for their specific food products," said managing director Kevin Curran.

He added: "With the UK sandwich and snack market growing at a phenomenal rate no food retailer can afford to make a mistake when it comes to choosing the right packaging."

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Texture probe unveiled by Stable Micro Systems

Date: Wed, 05 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new probe has been launched to investigate food texture and firmness.

Stable Micro Systems has created the new probe that enters food in a number of areas to ascertain an average reading on a number of foods including thick-cut marmalade, chocolate chip ice cream and fruit and vegetables.

Once a problem area for manufacturers, items varying in structure, size and shape can all be tested with innovative pins preventing misleading data, according to Bakery and Snacks.

Other benefits of the Multiple Puncture Probe include greater flexibility since the pins can be increased or moved for different testing areas and the innovative averaging effect which the company claims produces much more realistic measurements.

The firm claims that texture testing is more efficient than sensory analysis and has also launched a new strain inflation rate facility that allows dough bubble release to be controlled in production.

Further information: www.stablemicrosystems.com

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Probiotic drink launch prompts autism research

Date: Wed, 05 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The first probiotic fruit juice in Europe has been launched this week, prompting researchers to look into benefits for autistic children.

Researchers from the University of Reading have conducted studies on probiotic products and their potential benefit for children with autism and found a high level of clostridia in patients.

Studies are now underway to ascertain whether probiotics could be used against the bacteria to help the children who can appear emotionless and separate from the rest of the world.

Professor Glenn Gibson, Professor of Food Microbiology and head of the Food Microbiology Sciences Unit at the University of Reading explained: "We have good evidence to show that children with autism have a gut flora which produces toxins and that neurotoxins and bacteria in the gut are producing this metabolite.

"We are now screening several strains of probiotic bacteria to see which will intervene against these clostridia. Human trials will start later this year using the probiotic which performs best."

ProViva SHOT! is now on sale in Asda and Sainsbury stores and will be released at other supermarkets in the near future.

The new drink provides a daily health dose of probiotics with fibre rich and cholesterol lowering health benefits. SHOT! is non-dairy and comes in grape and apricot, or raspberry with blackcurrant and grape flavours.

Further information: www.rdg.ac.uk

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Researchers make breakthrough in acrylamide studies

Date: Wed, 05 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A division of Dutch chemicals firm DSM claimed it has developed a way of eliminating the potentially cancer-causing chemical acrylamide from bakery products.

Swedish scientists disclosed in April 2002 a study identifying higher levels of acrylamide in crisps, chips and some snacks.

Now, a multi-disciplinary team from DSM Baking Enzymes used genomics technology to degrade the free amino acid L-asparagine, the precursor to acrylamide.

Since acrylamide develops from L-asparagine when food is processed at high temperatures, experts believed that converting L-asparagine in dough prior to baking would prevent acrylamide formation.

The result was a reduction of up to 95 per cent in acrylamide levels in end-products such as bread and Dutch honey cake, according to the company.

DSM has filed a patent for the technology and is currently investigating its potential for application in other areas, including potato crisps.

The technology will be presented at the ICC Cereal and Bread Congress, in Harrogate, UK, on May 23-26.

Further information: www.dsm.com
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Stores overhaul helps Somerfield sales grow

Date: Thu, 06 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Supermarket chain Somerfield has announced that an extensive programme of store refits has helped boost sales growth.

The firm reported 1.1 per cent growth of like-for-like sales across the group for the year to April 24th. Sales at the group's Somerfield stores rose by two per cent over the year, while sales at Kwik Save shops were up by 0.1 per cent.

"The store renewal programme is benefiting our customers in both the Somerfield and Kwik Save fascias," executive chairman John von Spreckelsen said in a statement.

The trading update comes just a day after Somerfield announced plans to drop the Kwik Save brand in Scotland, with the loss of around 400 jobs. Under the proposals, 29 of the Kwik Save stores will be rebranded as Somerfield outlets and a further 22 will be closed.

Somerfield pledged in the trading update to continue its programme of renewal for both chains, having rejected a takeover approach last summer. Somerfield now plans to speed up investment in its stores, cut costs and fund price cuts.

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Allergy fears see nuts pushed off the menu

Date: Thu, 06 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Schools are banning peanuts from pupil's packed lunch boxes as fears over allergies increase, according to new reports.

The Anaphylaxis Campaign claims there has been a threefold increase in the number of people with nut allergies since 1990 and there are about six or seven allergy-related deaths a year.

This adds up to almost every school in the country having a pupil with a nut allergy. As a result of this many schools have banned foods containing nuts or requested parents do not give them to their children to eat at school.

It is the anxiety about the possibility of a pupil suffering a life-threatening allergic reaction that has led schools to take these steps.

However, the BBC reports that there have also been incidences when parents refuse to cooperate with the ban.

When this situation arises, Muriel Simmons of Allergy UK advises parents of allergic children to write to other parents explaining what will happen if their child is exposed.
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Brits feast on functional foods

Date: Thu, 06 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Functional food is continuing to rise in popularity in the UK, with Britons spending an estimated £835 million on 'healthy' food and drink.

Mintel says that the market is swelling, as probiotics products and ingredients such as guarana become more widespread.

The report claims that the rate of growth had been fuelled largely by a surge in the popularity of drinks such as fruit smoothies and yoghurts.

Mintel expects the market for health improving food and drink will more than double by 2007 as Brits seek easy solutions to improve their health

Amanda Lintott, a consumer analyst with Mintel, commented: "A greater proportion of the population paying attention to what they are eating and drinking suggests that they may be receptive to products that could have a beneficial impact on their health beyond the basic nutritional value. The real challenge facing suppliers of functional foods and drink is to develop products that address specific health concerns."

Mintel surveyed 1,000 people and also found that nearly one in ten adults purchase functional foods regularly.

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McDonald's fruit a welcome addition

Date: Thu, 06 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Customers have received well McDonald's UK fresh fruit addition to their menu, buying over 1.2 million bags since April.

The apple slices and grapes portion has been on sale as part of a range of new options for the restaurant's Happy Meal menu for children.

Costing 59 pence or replacing fries in a Happy Meal, the 80-gram Fruit Bag corresponds to one of the Department of Health's five-a-day suggested intake of fruit and vegetables.

According to the Food Standards Agency, the average daily intake for a British adult is only 2.8 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and for children as young as two.

Half of the general public still doesn't know how many portions they should be eating and what constitutes a portion.

McDonald's has worked with nutritionist and author Anita Bean to support the introduction of fruit in restaurants and help inform customers on five-a-day.

Ms Bean developed a leaflet to help give kids five fruit and vegetables a day containing facts and tips for parents.

"All parents want to give their children a healthy balanced diet, but putting the five-a-day target into practice is easier said than done," she said.

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New IT solution to improve food retail

Date: Thu, 06 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A Finnish project using interactive computing to communicate product information to consumers may benefit those with special dietary needs.

The trial stage of the TIVIK project is set to begin in October 2004 and will include 100 consumers who will test the prototype system.

Participants will receive Nokia mobile camera phones to take pictures of the products' barcodes when they go grocery shopping.

Information from the product will then appear on the phone's screen.

Running for three months, the trial will involve people that are either on a weight-loss diet or are lactose intolerant due to their higher motivation in using the technology.

According to TIVIK's research director Caj Sodergard, the software tested in the trial could also work with radio frequency identification codes using the same product database.

The Finnish government is funding the project, which is supported by well-known companies in the food,

telecommunications and research industries.
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Johnson calls for action at diet summit

Date: Thu, 06 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The government has hosted a diet and exercise summit today as part of ongoing efforts to combat obesity, poor diet and inactivity.

The Department of Health organised the diet and exercise summit, with a range of experts and government ministers attending the forum.

Public health minister Melanie Johnson said that changes to diet and nutrition could prove crucial in dealing with obesity.

Miss Johnson also called on the food industry to be more proactive in dealing with the level of salt, sugar and fat in products.

"We have got progress. They are producing further guidance on reducing salt. But we haven't got a clear sense of what they hope to achieve and by when," she commented.

The summit at the QEII conference centre in Westminster is designed to provide a "springboard" for proposals and actions on how to tackle key public health issues.

The government has increased its efforts to tackle the UK's growing public health crisis in recent months, with estimates suggesting more than half of Britons are currently either overweight or obese.

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Scottish health drive draws WHO support

Date: Fri, 07 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The World Health Organisation praised Scotland for setting an example on how to improve people's health through a better diet and more exercise.

With the country's youngsters among the fattest in Europe, the Scottish Executive adopted several measures to transform the eating habits of the population.

Free fruit for primary school pupils and improving routes to schools to stimulate children to walk or cycle rather than going in by bus or car were among the measures cited by the WHO.

Healthier menus were launched at schools, including lower fat foods and more fruit and vegetable.

Scottish Health Minister Gillian Kynoch believes the nation's health is improving: "I think that in many ways we are beginning to drive the whole of the UK forward by making it very clear to the food industry that we are serious," she told the Evening News.

"We have a broader policy that covers diet and physical activity," added the minister.

Forthcoming projects include training school staff to teach pupils quality outdoor play and the launch of the Scottish Catering Award for restaurants to make it easier for people to eat healthily when dining out.

Further information: www.who.int
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ABF completes Unilever acquisition

Date: Fri, 07 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Associated British Foods has announced the completion of its purchase of Unilever's food oils and fats brands in Mexico.

The company revealed on March 9th the plans to buy the Mexican arm of Anglo-Dutch consumer products giant Unilever for US\$110 million (£62 million) in cash.

This includes Unilever's Capullo bottled canola oil, the Mazola edible oil and the Inca white fat.

ABF will manage the Mexican business through its United States subsidiary ACH Food Companies.

Through the deal, the company will be able to enter the growing Mexican market and to introduce the Capullo brand to the US, where ACH already has a strong franchise with Hispanic consumers.

"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," said John Bason, Finance Director of Associated British Foods.

Further information: www.abf.co.uk
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Allergy concerns prompt labelling reform

Date: Fri, 07 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Latest UK research has revealed positive findings on food allergies for consumers and companies.

Scientists have discovered that a key role in the beginning of allergies is a fault in the immune system, providing additional help in the current decision over allergy labelling on food.

Leader of the Institute of Food Research (IFR) study, Dr Claudio Nicoletti explained: "There are two stages to food allergy. The first is sensitisation, when the immune system starts producing an antibody in response to eating a food. The second is when that food is eaten for a second time, triggering an allergic reaction."

At present there is no cure for food allergy and past research focused on T helper 2 cells, but the IFR work questioned this assumption and found dendritic cells are actually more of an influence.

"Dendritic cells are one of the most fascinating cell types in the immune system. It appears that in allergy they get out of control, and this malfunction could have a profound effect on the development of food allergies," Dr Nicoletti explained.

At present changes in the Labelling Directive 2003/13/EC are due to be enforced in November 2004 calling for foods including common allergy ingredients to be labelled.

Further information: www.ifr.bbsrc.ac.uk
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Brits snacking their way through the day

Date: Fri, 07 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK consumers are spending over £140 each on snack foods a year, according to a new report.

Datamonitor has revealed that the wide range of foods such as sweets and crisps are increasingly appealing to people with a busy lifestyle.

Consumer markets analyst at Datamonitor, Daniel Bone explained: "One important thing we are seeing at the moment is a snack/meal hybrid. Manufacturers are producing items to eat on-the-go such as pizza that is ready in 30 seconds.

"These type of products blur the line between snacks and meals."

According to figures, on average people eat at 4.45 times during the day and in 1.89 of these they are snacking between meals.

Total spending across the UK on yoghurts, bagged snacks, cakes, biscuits and confectionery reached £8.5 billion last year.

In four years time it is predicted that the snack market in the UK will be worth around £10.3 billion.

Further information: www.datamonitor.com
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Government to consult public on food issues

Date: Fri, 07 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New consultation papers published by the government are asking for people's views on how to improve diet and fitness.

"Choosing Health? Choosing a Better Diet" and "Choosing Health? Choosing activity" are part of a major public discussion on how to improve health in the UK.

The documents encourage employers in the public and private sectors to create active workplaces through incentives and support.

Food retailers are advised to reduce the salt, fat and sugar content of food and provide improved access to fruit, vegetables and higher fibre products.

The consultation, which goes until June 16th, also recommends more physical activity for those not in education or work such as older adolescents, the disabled and retired people.

Consumer groups, the food industry, health experts and the media were beckoned to work together in addressing the issues.

"Individuals also have to take responsibility for their diets or those of people in their charge," said Health Minister Melanie Johnson.

She added: "The Government and others can, and should, support consumers, providing them with easier access to a wider range of healthier foods and, crucially, the information and knowledge needed to make informed choices about their diets."

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AFC debuts new environmentally friendly packaging

Date: Mon, 10 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Authentic Food Company, the UK's leading supplier of international foods to the convenience and food service sectors has launched a new form of packaging.

Environmentally friendly, the innovative dual trays have replaced existing CPET packaging across the AFC's Mediterranean, Tex-Mex, Indian and Oriental ranges.

Packaging developer Hartmann has designed the dualpack ovenware, which remains cool to touch after heating.

They are resistant to freezing and transportation, and can be kept at temperatures as low as -40 C to ensure that products reach the consumer in perfect condition.

The board tray has an eco-friendly moulded-fibre paper pulp, which has a thin PET coating on the inside and is designed for maximum efficiency at temperatures of up to 220 C.

"By using the new CPET trays to store and transport our ready meals, we can be sure that we are once again at the forefront of innovation within the foodservice convenience industry and that we are fulfilling our customers' demands to be supplied with the best quality products in the best possible way," said AFC's Commercial Controller Mike Lavelle.

Further information: www.hartmann.dk
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Sainsbury's extends deal with celebrity chef

Date: Mon, 10 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Supermarket chain Sainsbury's has announced an extension of its deal with celebrity chef Jamie Oliver.

A new TV and radio campaign in which Mr Oliver will visit buyers and suppliers to check the quality of products is included in the one-year extension to his contract.

The Naked Chef will also work out of sight with a new product development team at Sainsbury's.

Mr Oliver has appeared in more than 65 adverts and helped develop several products for the retailers during the last four years.

Sainsbury's did not disclose the value of the contract, which is speculated to range between £500,000 and £1 million.

The TV star is credited for generating an extra £1.12 billion in turnover and £200 million in profits over 2000 and 2001, according to a report published in 2002.

"Jamie is enormously popular with our customers," said Dominic Rowell, national advertising manager at Sainsbury's.

He added: "Whether it's through adverts or product ranges, his passion for food and energy have managed to grab and maintain consumer attention.

Further information: www.sainsbury.co.uk
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Low calorie products leading the drinks market

Date: Mon, 10 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New figures have revealed that low calorie soft drinks are becoming increasingly popular.

According to findings from sweetener firm Ajinomoto, low calorie carbonates increased by seven per cent last year to 4.8 billion litres in Europe.

In addition Diet Coke is reportedly selling much better than Coca-Cola in UK supermarkets and has become the top selling soft drinks product.

President of Ajinomoto, Hans Heezen, told Food Ingredients First: "In 2003, sales of low calorie carbonates in the UK grew by 86 million litres and now stand at 28 litres per capita."

Mr Heezen believes that the reason products are performing so well are that they use the low calorie sweeter aspartame made from two amino acids.

Reportedly 80 per cent of low calorie drinks products in the UK use this ingredient.

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EFFP granted £500k of government funding

Date: Mon, 10 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

English Farming and Food Partnerships will get this year £500,000 of a planned £2.5 million five-year grant to make farmers more competitive and profitable.

The organisation helps to promote alliances between farmers, retailers and consumers in order to increase their success.

This would be the first instalment of the grant, with the Government planning to provide the same amount in each of the next four years.

Defra's funding will finance several different activities to be decided between EFFP and ministers.

"EFFP is there to help farmers be more profitable," said Farming and Food Minister Larry Whitty. "The Government wants EFFP to succeed, and wants our farmers to succeed."

He added: "With the support of EFFP, Government and regional bodies England's farmers can be competitive at home and abroad, and deliver the economic, social and environmental benefits we all want to see."

Further information: www.effp.org.uk

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Nestle announces launch of "ethical" coffee product

Date: Mon, 10 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Nestle, the world's largest coffee producer, is preparing to launch an "ethical" coffee product in the UK in the "direct coffee" mould.

Major food groups have been observing the ethical consumer market and are reacting to their sensitivity to matters of sustainable production.

The Swiss food company does not intend to work with the Fairtrade Foundation, the association of non-governmental organisations in charge of verifying ethical foodstuffs.

Last month Nestle published a critical report attacking Fairtrade's policies, arguing that they contribute to the imbalance between supply and demand of coffee.

The foundation supports coffee and tea maker Cafe Direct, which is increasing its UK sales by about 20 per cent per year.

Nestle's competitor buys beans direct from farmers for prices above the market rates and recently issued shares which are close to reaching its target of raising £4.5 million.

The Fairtrade Foundation criticised Nestle's plans to launch ethical products: "This could undermine trust in the Fairtrade product," said Ian Bretman.

He added: "It seems rather dishonest to do something without the involvement of Fairtrade."

Further information: www.nestle.com
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Bread producers to move towards functional foods market

Date: Mon, 10 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK bread producers and millers are working together to develop new product ideas to attract increasingly nutrition conscious consumers.

The move is prompted by figures by the Federation of Bakers that show Brits have become more aware of health benefits and are looking more towards bread as part of a healthy diet.

Director general of the National Association of British and Irish Millers (NABIM), Alexander Waugh, told Food Navigator: "There is an opportunity for the food and farming industries to collude on future campaigns promoting British flour using positive messages concerning nutrition and education."

According to Euromonitor research the bread market has the most potential over other bakery items to perform well as a functional food.

The NFU and NABIM hope increased nutrition awareness will help to expand the current £3 billion UK bread and morning goods market and improve flour sales.

Last year British functional bread sales stood at \$12.1 million and already bread makers such as Allied Bakeries have begun offering healthier products including a soy-enriched bread to help cholesterol and heart health.

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Low-carb pizza crust continues Atkins trend

Date: Tue, 11 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Texas food company Gladder's Gourmet has launched a low-carb, ready-made personal pizza crust following the current dietary trends.

Gladder's PizzaSkinz belong to the new CarbTarget Foods range of reduced carbohydrate options.

The pre-baked 6.5-inches crusts are sold frozen and customers only need to thaw, add toppings and heat.

Each 3-ounce crust contains less than 8 net carbohydrates per serving.

The new product aims to increase sales opportunities for foodservice and convenience store customers.

"It's pretty clear that diets like the Atkins and South Beach aren't going away any time soon," said Gladder's VP sales & marketing David Foreman.

He added: "And there's strong evidence that consumers are spending dollars where their carb-avoidance is taken seriously."

Gladder's CarbTarget Foods and the all-natural Churn & Hearth lines join the company's already existing Classic and Elegance lines of kosher products.

Further information: www.gladders.com

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Better fed cows to improve dairy productivity

Date: Tue, 11 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Dairy nutrition was the main topic discussed in the one-day Volac International's conference in Newport, Shropshire.

Cows will need cost-effective diets rich in fibre to achieve potential 10,000 litre profitable yields and maintaining the herd's health.

According to Dai Grove-White of the University of Liverpool, the UK's Holstein herds are currently producing an average of 7,000 litres of milk due to the animals' poor diets.

The lack of sufficient energy and fibre causes major nutritional problems which limit production, such as subacute ruminal acidosis (SARA).

"SARA is a group problem and affects cows when their rumen pH falls below pH 5.7," Grove-White explained to The Journal.

"As the pH falls, a range of problems kick in, including reduced milk yield and butterfat, excessive weight loss in early lactation, poor fertility and increased digestive upsets, incidences of ketosis and environmental mastitis," he added.

The condition can be prevented through cow diets containing sufficient long fibre of at least one inch chop length.

Further information: www.volac.com
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New findings suggest vegetables can help combat cancer

Date: Tue, 11 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Latest research has shown that eating green vegetables may help to prevent cancer.

Scientists from the Institute of Food Research (IFR) have claimed that natural chemicals released during the preparation and digestion of brassica vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and brussels sprouts, can work in a similar way to medicine to kill cancer cells.

Head of the research group, Professor Ian Johnson explained: "This is not a miracle cure, but it does show that preventative dietary measures can be discovered and exploited in the same way as drugs.

"But by uncovering a previously unknown part of the process working in a similar way to some anticancer drugs, we hope to show how important diet can be in your personal anticancer armoury."

According to the IFR researchers green brassica vegetables should be consumed around two to three times a week and are most beneficial when raw, steamed or lightly microwaved.

Research was conducted as part of a project by the World Cancer Research Fund which revealed it is to complete a worldwide review of over 10,000 studies into diet, nutrition and cancer.

Further information: www.ifr.bbsrc.ac.uk
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Pizza vending machines launched in Scotland

Date: Tue, 11 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Scottish retailer Heavenly Pizzas has launched the country's first pizza vending machine in Aberdeen.

The machine, called Heavenly Vending System, was installed in one of the chain's shop fronts and stores up to 40 pizzas.

Customers have the option of purchasing hot, pre-sliced pizzas or cold ones to take away and prepare at home.

A thin base margharita pizza, priced at £7, or a pepperoni topped pizza, priced at £8, are the two available options.

Pizzas are cooked in four minutes using a specially developed induction technology before being sliced and accommodated in cardboard boxes.

The coin-operated machines are similar to drinks or snacks vending devices, and will be modified to accept credit cards.

"Pizza vending machines are already huge in the US and in Amsterdam," said managing director James Cummings.

He added: "We are already in talks with hospitals, university halls of residences and budget hotels who have expressed an interest in having our machine installed in their premises."

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Glanbia to launch dairy health product

Date: Tue, 11 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Ireland-based Glanbia Nutritional Products is set to launch a new ingredient designed specifically to add the beneficial aspects of dairy products to other foods.

The company claims to have combined calcium, whey protein and bioactive whey peptides to create its patent-pending Prolibra Whey Mineral Protein.

Glanbia will launch the protein this week in Geneva hoping to cash in on the increasing consumer awareness of the connection between milk products and weight loss.

A placebo-controlled study of 42 participants corroborated the fat loss effect of using Prolibra as a dietary supplement.

According to the firm, subjects who didn't manage to reduce their caloric consumption by the requested 600-700 calories still managed to lose 6 per cent of body fat in 16 weeks.

Participants taking Prolibra also lost more fat relatively to weight loss.

"We ended up with people on their normal diet reducing body fat," Kevin Thomson, technical sales manager at the firm, told NutraIngredients.com.

He added: "This means that the product worked, independently of a low-calorie regime."

Further information: www.glanbia.com
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Dairy firm reveals record profits and acquisition plans

Date: Tue, 11 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Robert Wiseman Dairies has announced record profits of £28.9 million this week.

Figures revealed a 21 per cent growth in revenues to £474.5 million in the 53 weeks to April 3rd and a 27 per cent jump in profits.

Chairman Alan Wiseman told the Scotsman: "Our performance has been excellent and the board firmly believes that we can continue to grow and develop the business in the period ahead."

Milk sales boomed as levels reached 1.18 billion litres compared to ten years ago when milk stood at 138 million litres.

The dairy company also revealed plans to obtain Morrisons supermarket chain as a new customer following the results and reportedly meetings have already occurred between the two.

New business with major retailers was seen as a key factor in increased revenues and additional agreements with Netto and Tesco are likely to boost sales in the new financial year.

Further information: www.wiseman-dairies.co.uk
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Disagreements between France and Europe over farm subsidies

Date: Wed, 12 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

France has criticised the European Commission's decision to cut off its agricultural export subsidies to appease global trade partners.

The EC has offered to eliminate the €2.8 billion (£1.9 billion) it pays to European farmers in export subsidies if developed countries like the United States do the same.

A letter sent to the trade ministers of the 148 members of the World Trade Organisation by EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy contained the proposal.

French agriculture minister Hervé Gaymard said the commission had "exceeded its negotiating mandate" in making the offer.

The country is the biggest recipient of the controversial subsidies in the European Union.

US trade representative Robert B. Zoellick approved of the EC's proposal and said his nation would accept it.

"The United States has noted it will support the EC's move by agreeing to negotiate a parallel elimination of the subsidy element within export credits, and to negotiate disciplines on food aid to preclude displacement of commercial sales," Mr Zoellick said in a statement.

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Experts tout benefits of Omega-3

Date: Wed, 12 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new research from Frost and Sullivan has exalted the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids and explored alternative sources of the substance.

Shark liver oil has been depicted by specialists as "an excellent source of alkylglycerols, squalamine and omega-3 PUFAs providing a multitude of health benefits".

It has been used by people in Sweden, Norway and Japan for hundreds of years, boosting immune defence, promoting wound healing and treating digestive and respiratory conditions.

According to Frost, the substances present in shark liver oils have been shown to fight cancer but there is little scientific proof to support this.

Nutritional oil Lyprinol is described by manufacturers as a more potent source of omega-3, requiring a smaller daily intake and having no side effects.

The compound is extracted from mussels cultivated and harvested in New Zealand farms and is sold as treatment for the inflammation of joints.

Emu and seal oils have also been cited in the research as good sources of omega-3, used respectively by Australian aborigines and Eskimos.

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FSA investigates food health benefits

Date: Wed, 12 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new FSA study has been launched today into the best foods to consume to prevent type-2 diabetes and heart disease.

The report is being led by the Medical Research Council and is expected to last four years.

Researchers are to look into fat and carbohydrate quantity and type as part of the £2.7 million study.

Around 650 volunteers will be used in the study and findings are planned for use in issuing diet advice for helping reduce the likelihood of such health problems.

The findings may also help food manufacturers to market particular products, with the popularity of health boosting and nutritional products constantly growing.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk

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Sundora opts for Amcor packaging

Date: Wed, 12 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

British snack firm Sundora Foods has adopted a new form of packaging for its dried fruit range.

Amcor Flexible's patented FlexCan was chosen because it is easy to open, re-closable, stands up and has a wide opening.

The FlexCan packs are metallic and can be stacked two or more high, with a shape that provides a more efficient storage.

Sundora believes the new packaging will help its products achieve better on-shelf impact with customers.

The company intends to package its range of prunes, apricots and other dried fruits in 250g and 500g containers.

"Amcor FlexCan is the perfect consumer-friendly solution for this kind of product since it is easy to dispense the dried fruit directly from the pack, it can be re sealed to keep the product fresh and it stands up in the fridge for easy storage after opening," said Sundora's purchasing director Eric Scott.

Cheese producer Dairy Crest has also adopted the FlexCan solution for its Cathedral City Mature yet Mellow 200g Diced Cheddar Cheese.

Amcor Flexibles developed the new concept together with German packaging machine manufacturer Rovema.

Further information: www.amcor.com.au
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Industry clamps down on TFAs

Date: Wed, 12 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food makers are starting to remove trans fatty acids (TFAs) from their products in response to pressure from consumer groups.

TFAs are produced when liquid vegetable oils go through hydrogenation and are common in biscuits, chips, crackers and donuts.

Studies suggest that this type of fat boosts LDL cholesterol levels, clogging the arteries and making them more rigid.

The United States are implementing in 2006 new labeling rules to indicate the trans fat content to consumers.

Companies such as Nestle , Kraft, Campbells and Frito-Lay, a division of PepsiCo, are already removing TFAs from popular products.

"Kraft has an aggressive plan in place to reduce or eliminate trans fat levels in our cookie and cracker products by 2004-2005," said vice president Kevin McGahren-Clemens last month.

Denmark was the first country in the world to adopt restrictions on the use of industrially manufactured trans fatty acids.

The Food Standards Agency has also indicated that the labeling of TFAs can be soon discussed in the European Union.

Further informaton: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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European meat processors enter joint venture

Date: Wed, 12 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

One of the largest meat groups in the UK has been created as two European meat processors have announced a new joint venture.

Flagships foods and the UK subsidiary of Danish Crown, Tulip, have formed a new food group Tulip Ltd

The new merger will include pig production, fresh meat operations and bacon, cooked meats and other processed products.

Carsten Jakobsen, present chairman of Tulip Ltd explained: "This transaction will help us to supply the UK consumer with an even wider range of quality meat products.

"We are delighted that the two companies will be joining forces and see ourselves as a U.K. meat business which is set to work closely with our U.K. supermarket customers and suppliers."

Sales from the new group in the UK are set to be nearly £1 billion and 7,000 employees will work for the company across 21 sites.

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Beacon develops innovative GM-free range

Date: Thu, 13 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Ingredients specialist Beacon Foods has launched a range of GM-free summer marinades, dips and dressings with citrus fruit and herb ingredients.

Previous successes of the Brecon-based company include a lime and chilli marinade, a tapas marinade and a chilli and coriander dressing.

A dip made of lime, garlic, herbs and soy sauce and marinades using lime, papaya and herbs have sparked positive feedback from customers who tested the new products.

"We are looking at a range of marinades and dips that utilise our comprehensive range of vegetable, fruit and herb ingredients," said Beacon's new product development manager Diane Bailey.

She added: "Part of our focus is to develop more complex recipes, which add value to our cooked vegetables and fruits."

Beacon Foods supplies food manufacturers and service companies with more than 500 varieties of processed and cooked GM-free vegetables, fruits, pulses and herbs, including an organic range.

Further information: www.beaconfoods.co.uk

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Baking industry addresses recruitment, retention

Date: Thu, 13 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Britain's baking sector is concerned about the difficulties in recruiting and retaining properly skilled employees.

In its annual general meeting, the UK Federation of Bakers highlighted an alliance between government and employers to improve the quality of food and drink industry personnel.

Food safety and governmental requirements have made attracting scientists into the industry very important.

Prospective food and drink sector skills council Improve revealed that a £4.5 million grant from the Sector Skills Development Agency will finance a major education programme.

Meanwhile, employers will contribute £1 for every £3 from the government.

Improve chairman Paul Wilkinson added that commercial income will steadily increase as the council build up an assortment of training projects.

Training via Internet is one of Improve's proposals to enhance and organise the training and provision of workforce in the sector.

Further information: www.bakersfederation.org.uk

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Calls for removal of GM feed from dairy production

Date: Thu, 13 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

British dairy companies are being urged to remove GM feed in production in a new study by Greenpeace.

Greenpeace claims the industry could go GM free for a cost of less than an additional 1p per litre of milk, according to Guardian Unlimited.

The report argues that such a move would decrease dependency on imports and create better farming as well as being more politically and socially popular.

Greenpeace hopes that when making changes, dairy farmers could then go on to growing lupins and other high protein crops as a replacement for feed, arguing supermarkets should pay for extra costs.

Each year hundreds of thousands of tonnes of GM maize and soya for cattle feed is imported by the UK dairy sector.

Further information: www.greenpeace.org

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UK beef exports set to resume

Date: Thu, 13 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

European authorities have downgraded the health risk from mad cow disease in the UK, clearing the way for the beef industry to resume exports.

The European Food Safety Authority has reduced the risk for BSE to "moderate" after receiving detailed reports from the British government and the Food Standards Agency.

However, a European Commission proposal and the agreement of other member states are also required before the market in British beef exports can be restored.

Britain has sold little to the international market since March 1996 due to a possible link between BSE and the human variant CJD, amounting for losses of £400 million.

"The government and industry have worked hard to control and eradicate BSE, and EFSA's view recognises this and is good news for British beef," said food and farming minister Lord Whitty of Camberwell.

BSE was first identified in the UK in 1986, since when more than 180,000 cases have been confirmed in the country.

A total of 425 cases were detected through testing in 2003 and the government claimed a further sharp reduction is expected this year.

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Pub group food sales buoyed by brands

Date: Thu, 13 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK pub group Barracuda has boosted its food sales by establishing links with popular major suppliers.

The chain has increased turnover in its 150 outlets by 30 per cent in the past 12 months through associations with well-known and trusted brands.

Barracuda has worked with Bernard Matthews Food Service to create a children's menu for its family-oriented pubs.

Traditional pub fare has been combined with Bernard Matthews range of products, such as Turkey Dinosaurs and Golden Whales.

The success of the partnership has prompted Barracuda to work with other brands, such as Cadbury's.

"Working with the big suppliers is a way for smaller groups and even independents to enhance their business and, ultimately, their profitability," said Barracuda's Catering Development Manager Martyn Smith.

He added: "It gives our children's menus a really professional look, while the discreet Bernard Matthews Food Service branding gives the reassurance we're after for the mums and dads."

Further information: www.barracuda-group.co.uk
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Ethically produced food a key issue for consumers

Date: Thu, 13 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Consumers are prepared to pay more money for their food if it is ethical according to a new survey out today.

The Co-operative Group survey conducted by NOP found that 84 per cent of people would pay "a little extra" for products that meet ethical requirements and are of a good quality.

Just a decade ago only 62 per cent felt this way, indicating a clear rise in concern for production standards.

David Croft, head of Co-op told the Financial Times: "Today's consumers want and expect higher standards of integrity and they'll vote with their wallets to support or veto products."

Additional findings in the 'Shopping with Attitude' survey showed that 90 per cent believe misleading food labelling should be banned, 80 per cent want retailers to help producers in developing countries and 90 per cent want retailers to help them eat a healthy diet.

Around 30,000 consumers were studied as part of the survey, which follows the introduction of higher standards for own brand products at the Co-op.

Further information: www.co-op.co.uk
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EU to lift GM ban

Date: Fri, 14 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

European Union officials have claimed the bloc intends to lift a five-year-old veto on genetically modified food by allowing the sale of a bio-engineered corn.

Sources have said that the EU's executive commission is expected to approve Swiss firm Syngenta's application to import BT-11 sweetcorn into the community.

According to EU officials the issue is on the agenda for the commission meeting on May 19, reports AP.

The decision to lift the ban was passed to the commission after EU member states failed to reach an agreement over the issue.

It appears that only four members of the commission, which now has 30 members, have voiced any concerns about the GM product.

Six countries voted in favour of approving the BT-11 corn last month : Britain, Finland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden.

The commission believes that new EU regulations on labelling and tracing GM foods implemented on April 18th are enough to ease public worries.

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BWG adopts high-tech distribution system

Date: Fri, 14 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Irish trader BWG has set up a high-tech distribution system at its cash and carry depots and supply centres.

The Accord software package was adopted to reduce supply chain expenses through total process integration.

The new system replaces outdated applications used at the depots and distribution centres, which provided limited functionality.

The software's product and pricing maintenance module is being used to centralise information at the head office.

Modernising the supply chain has been a major concern of food manufacturers and distributors due to strict regulations, consumer worries about food safety and increasing pressure from retailers.

BWG's choice of Accord for its Irish businesses follows its successful use in other branches within the group.

The company is one of Ireland's fastest developing wholesalers with annual sales of more than £620 million.

It has cash and carry and delivered operations in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England and Scotland.

BWG also holds the Mace and Spar franchises in Ulster and the Leinster region in Southern Ireland and the southwest of England.

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BRC responds to 'GM milk' allegations

Date: Fri, 14 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) has responded to a Greenpeace campaign against the use of GM feed for dairy cows, arguing that the criticisms are lacking in scientific evidence.

Protests have been staged regularly since it was revealed that Sainsbury's own-brand milk derived from GM fed cows, with Greenpeace campaigners stating that consumers should be aware of the nature of their milk.

"Most customers don't even know Sainsbury's own-brand milk is GM," Greenpeace spokesperson Sarah North told Food Production Daily. "Sainsbury's says it only sells the best quality food, but when it comes to milk it has a long way to go."

In response the BRC claims that the connection between GM feed and milk for sale has been made unfairly.

"The milk in question contains no GM protein and is no way classifiable as a GM product. Greenpeace's claims are without scientific foundation and are misleading," argues BRC director Kevin Hawkins. "They are pursuing their own campaigning and fund raising agenda."

New rules regarding the labelling of GM ingredients state that any feed and food containing over 0.9 per cent of GM material must be labelled as such.

Further information: www.brc.org.uk

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US company pioneers low-carb wine

Date: Fri, 14 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

US wine producer Brown-Forman has launched a new range of low-carb wines hoping to benefit from the popularity of the Atkins and similar diets.

The low-carb red and white varieties contain the same alcohol content as regular wines.

According to the company, a typical five-ounce glass of the distilled drink has between three and six grams of carbs.

The low-carb brands boast less than two carbohydrates per glass and are named after the amount, as in One.6 Chardonnay.

Brown-Forman, who produces Jack Daniel's whisky and Southern Comfort, has invested nearly \$1 million (£572,000) into research and development.

Slight changes in production included eliminating large quantities of sugar from the grapes during fermentation.

"Because of the branding efforts and because of the quality of the wine, we think we have a chance to really own this space," said Andrew Varga, vice president and global brand director of Brown-Forman Wines.

The low-carb wines will sell for \$9.99 (£5.70) a bottle and will be available across the US starting around Memorial Day.

Further information: www.brown-forman.com

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European packaging conference scheduled

Date: Fri, 14 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A conference to discuss Central and Eastern Europe's packaging markets will be held next month in Italy.

"The Future of Central & Eastern Europe's Packaging Markets" meeting will occur between June 9th and 10th at the Bologna Fiere Fairground in Bologna.

Over 20 different presentations are set to take place to evaluate the investment potential for packagers in the region and offer market forecasts on each country.

The Pack-Mat show will happen in parallel to the event, focusing on materials, products and solutions for packing and packaging.

Companies such as dairy giant Arla Foods are keen on exploring the export potential for those countries, most of which have recently entered the European Union.

The Danish firm is investing DKK15 million (£1.36 million) in a new mozzarella plant at its subsidiary in Poland to supply the product to a unified Europe.

"There are some excellent opportunities for Arla Foods in the new EU countries," said Arla's regional director Frede Juulsen.

He added: "However, it won't happen overnight, it's something that requires a good deal of hard work and investment."

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Food producers encouraged to decrease sandwich salt content

Date: Fri, 14 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new survey has raised concerns over the amount of salt contained in packaged sandwiches.

Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH) claims that the food products are so salty they should display a health warning, according to FoodNavigator.

As part of the study 250 packaged sandwiches on offer at 16 high street stores were surveyed from stores such as Sainsbury's, Tesco and Boots.

The salt content in over one in five sandwiches had over three grams of salt, with the recommended daily salt amount standing at six grams.

In fact the chicken Caesar sandwich actually contained 5.9 grams and a smoked salmon and creme fraiche flavour had 6.4 grams.

The FSA has recently launched a salt model to look into the effects of reducing salt in different food groups for consumers.

Further information: www.hyp.ac.uk/cash
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Experts call for crop research strategy

Date: Mon, 17 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A review panel from the UK's Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council has highlighted the need for a new national strategy for crop science research.

The BBSRC invests around £300 million every year in various research projects of which about £65 million goes to plant and crop science research.

Supported by the government, the council is responsible for more than 50 per cent of the non-industrial national expenditure in this area.

Promoting genetic modification to increase crop performance, improving the dietary value of food crops and finding non-food uses for crops are the goals of the report released by the funding agency for life sciences research.

Long-term aims include integrating the work at public-funded institutes and universities, establishing international links and strengthening national focus on plant breeding studies.

"A national strategy for crop science research will help focus efforts and key targets and technologies for the future," said Professor Chris Gilligan of Cambridge University, head of the review panel.

Further information: www.bbsrc.ac.uk
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Low-carb potato under development

Date: Mon, 17 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Florida farmers are developing a new low-carb potato to raise sales after the low carbohydrate diets boom.

Potatoes have often been banished by popular dietary programmes such as Atkins and South Beach.

University of Florida agriculturists are working with eight potato farmers in the state to produce the low-carb variety by next year's harvest.

Chad Hutchinson, head of the potato project at the university, has been growing non-GM Dutch crops with 30 per cent fewer carbs in Hastings for the past four years.

According to Hutchinson, Florida is the first US state to invest in and commercialise such potatoes.

"We're looking at two or three different lines to have in stores by next year," he said.

Studies by "Consumer Reports" magazine show that 930 low-carb products have invaded the American market in the last five years.

However, these products are usually richer in calories than their regular versions.

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Regional food groups go nationwide

Date: Mon, 17 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A newly announced partnership between food producers Farmfresh Meal Solutions and distributor Holdsworth Food Service will see innovative regional dishes distributed on a national level.

The news follows the announcement of another distribution deal between Farmfresh and Peterborough based King Bros, member of the Fairway Foodservice buying consortium. This deal is expected to result in increased availability of Farmfresh products in pubs, restaurants and other service outlets throughout the UK.

Farmfresh Meal Solutions were launched to support farmers and rural producers in the East Midlands, and in response to the demand from the public for meals produced with traceable ingredients.

Rob Danks, general manager of UK Countrylife Ltd, the company that produces Farmfresh Meal Solutions, explained the regional emphasis of the products on offer:

"Our dishes are given distinct names so that consumers can recognise the origins of the main ingredients, such as Lincolnshire Wild Rabbit Pie, Sherwood Forest Pork in Honey and Ginger, and Trent Valley Beef Braised in Red Melton Ale," he told Catering UK.

"This gives the outlets serving them a unique marketing opportunity, as our research shows that regional food consumers can trust is now very popular."

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MLC remains optimistic about UK beef

Date: Mon, 17 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Prospects for the British meat industry are increasingly good according to the Meat and Livestock Commission.

Increasing global demand for beef due to economic expansion in developing countries has been pointed out as the main reason for optimism.

MLC corporate strategy director Bob Bansback dismissed the notion that the European market could be invaded by South American beef exports at the British Meat Processors' Association first annual conference in London.

European countries could become net meat importers by 2006, offering British producers real business chances regardless of EU enlargement.

Producer returns and price levels in the UK would continue to be determined by currency exchange rates.

The green light for resuming beef exports next year and the continuing growth in red meat consumption were also cited as positive aspects.

"Who would have believed the trends over the past four years which show a five per cent rise in red meat consumption at the same time as a one per cent reduction in poultry meat," Mr Bansback told The Scotsman.

Further information: www.mlc.org.uk

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Arla sells Cremo business

Date: Mon, 17 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Danish-based dairy group Arla Foods has sold its Cremo business to Ireland's Kerry Group for an undisclosed sum.

Crema manufactures and sells food ingredients and flavourings used in the bakery, ready meals, prepared foods and snack sectors.

MD Foods, which merged with Arla in 2000, bought into Crema in 1989 and acquired full ownership in 1993.

Crema's 93 employees at Glamsberg in Funen, Denmark, were given assurances that production will continue as before.

"We were facing a situation where we either had to be a part of the industry's further consolidation or dispose of the company," said Arla's sales director Henrik Andersen.

He added: "The approach from Kerry Ingredients was unexpected, but the offer was such that we decided to sell."

The Kerry Group is one of the world's largest ingredients and flavourings producer for the food industry.

It employs 20,000 personnel and registered revenues of £2.6 billion in the last financial year.

Further information: www.arlafoods.com

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Milk farmers asked to re-jig 2004 schedule

Date: Mon, 17 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Milk producers are being asked to move production to the autumn in a bid to meet demand.

The idea has been introduced by Dairy Farmers of Britain (DFB), calling on producers to reduce cow and heifer inseminations for the next eight weeks.

Chief executive Malcolm Smith told *The Journal*: "DFB has made a start but we need all dairy farmers to do their bit and reduce cow and heifer inseminations over the next couple of months to have a real effect on next year's peak production.

"The price of milk is settled by the dynamics of supply and demand and in the spring supply exceeds demand, so milk is sold into lower-value markets and the price falls," he added.

"What we need to do as an industry is work constructively with the market to maximise milk prices by producing milk when the market demands it."

According to the DFB a similar campaign proved successful last year, with 40 per cent of members cutting or stopping services.

Further information: www.dairyfarmersofbritain.com
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Atkins garners new support

Date: Tue, 18 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The controversial low-carb Atkins diet has found new approval from two separate studies.

The low carbohydrate plan was found to help lower blood fats and weight loss and boost levels of "good" cholesterol.

Dr Walter Willett, from the Harvard School of Public Health who produced an editorial for both the investigations explained: "We can no longer dismiss very low-carbohydrate diets.

"We can encourage overweight patients to experiment with various methods for weight control, including reduced carbohydrate diets, as long as they emphasise healthy sources of fat and protein and incorporate regular physical activity."

However some are sceptical of the studies since they were both funded by the Robert C Atkins Foundation.

A number of key figures in the food and health industry have argued more research still needs to be completed.

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Coffee consumption on the rise

Date: Tue, 18 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK citizens are the biggest consumers of instant coffee in Europe due to the need for speed and convenience.

While only three per cent of British adults drink ground coffee on a regular basis, 44 per cent prefer instant options, reported a survey from Mintel.

Instant coffee product launches featured prominently in the UK over the last year, in particular premium blends which offer the ease of instant products and the taste of ground grains.

The proliferation of the coffee shop culture is pointed out as one of the reasons behind the launch of premium products such as Nescafe Cafe Hazelnut and Takeone Chocolate Instantly Tia Maria.

Manufacturers have also been experimenting with new flavours and varieties in order to increase coffee sales.

Britain has a far wider range of organic, ethical, functional and convenient products, including self-heating instant coffees and options with added guaran for extra energy.

"The British tend to be more adventurous than the French and, to a lesser extent the Germans, and the UK is often used as a test market for a new products, especially more convenient ones," said Mintel researcher Michelle Strutton.

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Experts develop fatty-acid plants

Date: Tue, 18 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

British scientists have genetically manipulated plants to produce healthy oils usually found in fish and eggs.

The GM cress is rich in the polyunsaturated fatty acids omega-3 and omega-6, which benefits include regulating high blood pressure and preventing heart conditions.

Researchers hope this could be the first step in creating a new generation of food crops capable of reducing the risk of certain medical conditions.

A team of scientists from Bristol University added genes from fatty-acid-producing algae and mushrooms to the Arabidopsis strain of cress.

As the plants grew, the genes switched themselves on to produce the health-promoting acids.

"Any plants with green tissue, they all have the potential to produce these long-chain fatty acids," co-researcher Dr Baoxiu Qi told the BBC.

He added: "As far as I know, this is the first time that genes have been put into higher plants to produce high amounts of fatty acids."

German biotech company BASF helped finance the study and intends to pursue further research on the subject.

Further information: www.bris.ac.uk

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Bill to ban unhealthy food ads

Date: Tue, 18 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New legislation to ban unhealthy food advertising to children will be presented today to the UK Parliament.

Stourbridge Labour MP Debra Shipley is putting forward a Private Member's Bill in the House of Commons directed to improve children's diets and tackle the obesity problem.

The draft law would require the Food Standards Agency to determine standards for healthy and unhealthy foods, considering nutritional content and the use of additives.

Through these criteria, marketing of unhealthy foodstuff at schools would be banned together with their sale in vending machines.

In addition, the Children's Food Bill would impose new regulations to improve school meals and include nutrition teaching in the National Curriculum.

"Obesity has doubled in six-year-olds and trebled among 15-year-olds over a 10-year period," said Ms Shipley.

She added: "It is no longer good enough to hold consultations, produce reviews and call on the industry to mend its ways. Action is urgently needed."

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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Child obesity continues to raise concerns

Date: Tue, 18 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

At least 155 million school-age children worldwide are overweight or obese, according to a major report from the International Obesity TaskForce.

The IOTF dossier revealing how young people are being affected by the global obesity epidemic stated that one in ten children in the world is overweight.

Between 30 and 45 million of those youngsters are considered obese, two to three per cent of all children aged 5-17 on the planet.

Previous IOTF estimates based on data by the World Health Organisation for children under five indicate that other 22 million infants are also affected.

The "Obesity in children and young people: A crisis in public health" report was presented to the WHO just before government ministers in Geneva decided on a global strategy on diet, activity and health.

Both developed and developing countries had seen increases in childhood obesity and the risk of weight-related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and heart problems.

"We need to address this challenge with an effective global strategy on diet, activity and health," said Chilean Professor Ricardo Uauy, chair of public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Further information: www.iotf.org
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Health conscious consumers reject junk food products

Date: Tue, 18 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New figures reveal that junk foods are becoming less popular in the UK as health awareness continues to rise among consumers.

Data from The Grocer shows that spending on crisps and salty snacks has dropped by 11 per cent, whilst impulse purchases of chocolate bars and fizzy drinks are down by 2.2 per cent.

However some experts have argued that the drop in sales could be due to the popularity of supermarket multi-packs.

Similarly food manufacturers have argued that the snacks market is not the key to solving the obesity problems in the UK anyway since "confectionery accounts for no more than two per cent of anyone's diet" and lifestyle is the main reason behind obesity.

The UK snacks market overall saw profits drop £2.1 billion, whilst sugar based sweets decreased by five per cent to £145 million.

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GM ban lifted

Date: Wed, 19 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The European Union has lifted a six-year European veto on the use of genetically-engineered crops today.

Euro commissioner for health and consumer protection David Byrne said Syngenta's Bt-11 sweetcorn strain's approval followed "the most rigorous pre-marketing assessment in the world".

The Swiss-based company is the first to have a GM product allowed to be produced and marketed in the continent.

Although Syngenta's crop was approved by the EC in January, local governments had until the end of April to raise objections to its endorsement.

No one tried to block the approval and so the Commission automatically cleared it for production and sale.

"It has been scientifically assessed as being as safe as any conventional maize," added Mr Byrne in Brussels.

"Food safety is therefore not an issue, it is a question of consumer choice."

Friends of the Earth campaigners have warned that the end of the ban doesn't mean opposition to GM crops is over and safety concerns are still unresolved.

Further Information: <http://europa.eu.int/>
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Gullet cancer increased by fizzy drinks exposure

Date: Wed, 19 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The chances of contracting cancers of the gullet could be increased by consumption of fizzy drinks.

A new report links the surging popularity of such drinks with a rising incidence of oesophageal cancer.

Indeed, researchers from India's Tata Memorial Hospital have found that, while consumption of fizzy drinks has increased five-fold in America over the past fifty years, the rate of oesophageal cancer among white men, the group most susceptible to the appeal of such beverages, has risen six-fold.

And the Mumbai research team, in writing their report, have discerned the development of a similar trend in both Britain and Australia.

In fact, the rate of emergence of such cancer has increased 65 per cent among British men over the past thirty years, although the rate is lower in countries such as China, where the popularity of fizzy drinks is less prevalent.

Dr Mohandas Mallath, the author of the report, believes that "as the rates may continue to rise for another 20 years, we believe that more epidemiological studies are urgently required to establish the true association."

However, not everyone is convinced by the new findings. The British Soft Drinks Association claim that the research proves nothing, as it omits detailed consideration of the consumption patterns of those who actually contract oesophageal cancer.

Speaking as a senior member of staff at Massachusetts General Hospital, Lee Kaplan added his voice to the debate by claiming that the new report is "only a correlation", and pointing out that a large number of different modern inventions, such as the refrigerator, have also been linked to the development of cancer.

Further information: <http://www.tatamemorialcentre.com/>
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Diet may be cause of 80,000 cancers each year

Date: Wed, 19 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Scientists have warned that diet may be the cause of as many as 80,000 cases of cancer per year in the UK.

A third of such cases have been blamed on alcohol and obesity, although experts are still not able yet to determine the exact reasons behind the other two thirds.

What people eat is second only to tobacco as a leading cause of cancer in the developed world.

These are the results of the largest ever research undertaken into diet and cancer in Europe, the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC).

"Alcohol consumption and obesity are important causes of cancer and, while alcohol consumption is increasing in UK women, obesity is on the rise in both sexes," Dr Tim Key from Oxford University told cancer experts in a conference in Harrogate.

Around 270,000 new cases of cancer are identified each year, nearly 30 per cent of which related to diet and obesity.

Obesity is said to be responsible for five per cent of cancer cases in Britain and alcohol is believed to cause six per cent.

Further information: <http://www.ism.uit.no/kk/e/EPIC%20international.htm>

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Scientists endorse the Atkins Diet

Date: Wed, 19 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Low-carb Atkins-style diets have been given a vote of approval by two separate teams of scientists in the United States.

Both studies published in the "Annals of Internal Medicine" journal compared the effect of low-carbohydrate and conventional low-fat diets on groups of overweight patients.

Each found that after six months the low-carb group had lost more weight and had improved cholesterol and triglycerides levels.

Although the low-carb dieters lost more weight initially, one of the studies showed that after 12 months both groups had shed about the same number of pounds.

Researchers from Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina assigned 120 obese volunteers either to a low-carb, high protein diet, or a low-fat, low cholesterol diet.

Six months later the Atkins-style dieters had lost an average of 26lbs while low-fat dieters had dropped 14lbs.

Experts at the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center in Philadelphia followed 132 obese patients split into low-carb and low-fat groups in the second study.

The low-carb group lost more weight in the first six months but both groups had shed the same amount after continuing the study to 12 months.

A survey last year estimated that 3 million people in the UK had tried the Atkins diet.

Further information: <http://www.annals.org/>
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Walkers Crisps set to cut saturated fat levels

Date: Wed, 19 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food giant Walkers Crisps is changing its ingredients in order to assuage consumers' fears over obesity which caused a drop in sales.

Walkers are reducing the saturated fats in its crisps by ten per cent this year and plans include a further 20 per cent reduction in 2005, according to marketing director Vinita Pandey.

Health experts have warned that obesity among children under 16 has doubled in Britain since the 1980s.

UK sales of crisps and packed peanuts have dropped by 10.9 per cent in the year ending in February 2004 and the fear of obesity has been identified as one of the causes for the slump.

Food and Health Research director Jack Winckler told BBC One's "Six O'clock News" that the crisp industry is making progress in bettering the quality of their products.

However, he pointed out that companies should work on cutting sugar levels if they want to make a more permanent contribution to reducing obesity.

"If you go from saturated to unsaturated fat, it's the same amount of calories, if you cut down salt that's good, but it has nothing to do with obesity," said Mr Winckler.

Further information: <http://walkers.corpex.com/cr15p5/>
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Sainsbury's sees slide in profits

Date: Wed, 19 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

British supermarket chain Sainsbury's has seen a slide in annual profits as new CEO Justin King takes over the challenge of reviving sales and improving competitiveness.

Core profits for the year to March 27 fell 2.9 per cent to £675 million, while sales shot up 2.4 per cent at £15.5 billion.

However, turnover was down 0.2 per cent when viewed on a like-for-like basis, and operating profits were 1.4 per cent lower at £564 million.

Former UK's number one grocery chain has seen its figures wilt in the face of price competition from rivals such as Asda and Tesco and the impact of its own restructuring campaign.

Chairman Peter Davis has consented to go part-time from July, cutting his wages to reflect his reduced role.

Investors were warned in March to expect two years of lower profits as Mr King tries to halt a sharp loss of market share.

"The past three years have seen enormous change but we must now build on the investments made and refocus our attention on delivering a better offer for our customers", said Mr King, who formerly worked for Marks & Spencer.

Further information: <http://www.sainsbury.co.uk/>
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Producers warned over salt levels

Date: Thu, 20 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Major food manufacturers were warned to reduce salt in their products or else they could face strict Government sanctions.

Public health minister Melanie Johnson has told food producers and retailers at a salt summit that cuts should be done by next February.

Penalties for those who do not comply could include products being labelled "high in salt".

Food manufacturers have been under intense pressure to reduce salt content since 75 per cent of the substance in peoples' diets comes from processed foods.

The Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency were jointly hosting by the salt summit in London.

Representatives from supermarket chains and producers such as Kraft, Nestl and Cadbury were among those present.

High blood pressure, which is linked to salt consumption, causes around 100,000 deaths every year from heart disease and 50,000 from stroke in England.

"Salt can be a hidden killer," said Ms Johnson before the meeting.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk

She added: "Whereas people are generally aware of the risks of a high sugar or high fat diet, they're often unaware of the effect of high salt intake."

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CAP costing €50bn a year

Date: Thu, 20 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A government paper published today has revealed that the average family of four is paying more than £800 a year for the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy.

The document is called "Trade and the Global Economy: the Role of International Trade in Productivity, Economic Reform and Growth".

Chancellor Gordon Brown and Trade and Industry Secretary Patricia Hewitt have called on the EU to remove trade barriers and set out the full cost of protectionism.

They also claim that the world economy is losing \$500 billion (£283 billion) of income each year due to continuing trade barriers.

The CAP has been "wasting" €50 billion (£33.7 billion) of the taxpayers' money a year within Europe, plus a further €50 billion in artificially high food prices.

Chancellor and minister also believe the CAP fails to deliver on its core objectives as farming incomes continues to decline and food prices keep increasing.

"Reducing barriers to trade in agriculture could benefit developing countries by 240 billion US dollars a year - more than three times as much as current annual aid flows," said Mr Brown.

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Food industry urged to stay green

Date: Thu, 20 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Environmental regulator NetRegs has promised hefty fines for food and drink producers that fail to adhere to essential green legislation.

The warning accompanies the launch of the British eco-regulator's website to assist small firms in understanding their environmental duties.

NetRegs' website had been in development since 2002 by the Environment Agency, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Environment & Heritage Service.

The site's guidelines follow the publication of the most complete ecological survey ever carried out of the sector's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

As well as obligatory requirements, the site contains good practice suggestions and links to other information sources.

According to the SME-Environment 2003 survey, only 28 per cent of companies in the food and drink sector had introduced eco-friendly practical measures.

These include conducting an environmental assessment of their business and appointing an environmental officer.

Expensive fines and lawsuits against directors of the worst offending companies are some of the penalties for failing to comply with green legislation.

Good green credentials can also bring commercial benefits to businesses.

Further information: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/netregs
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New views on GM foods

Date: Thu, 20 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new survey suggests that consumers aren't so resistant to genetically modified goods as originally thought.

Research conducted by the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale reveals that while opposition remains high, it drops fast when factors such as price are considered.

The study, published in the online journal AgBioForum, argues that since the EU veto has now been lifted, European food manufacturers will use increasing amounts of GM crops in their products due to economic reasons.

When asked about buying breakfast cereal with GM ingredients, 71 per cent of the over 2,000 UK respondents said they would prefer a non-GM variety.

Yet only 56 per cent of those would be willing to pay more for the non-GM cereal to cover the increased production costs.

A further question revealed "the percentage of respondents in the UK who are willing to pay a premium decreases as the size of the premium is paid".

The researchers concluded that appealing to British buyers' wallets would be more effective than trying to curb their concerns over safety in the long term.

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Invensys develops innovate milk processing system

Date: Thu, 20 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Invensys has developed a new way to kill bacteria spores in milk that destroys more spores than past traditional methods.

The Gold System uses advanced technology that holds items at high temperatures before flash cooling them, according to Food Production Daily.

The system sterilises the milk but preserves nutritional and vitamin content as well as product quality.

Described as an ideal solution for the ultra heat treatment (UHT) of heat-sensitive products, the company has developed new methods to make sure the product doesn't burn or suffer from chemical damage.

Among the benefits of the new system are a uniform bacterial kill rate for low and high viscosity products, proven long operating times and consistent product quality.

The technology can deal with capacities from 100-8000 l/h, maximum total solids of 60 per cent and a sterilisation temperature of 500 cp.

Further information: www.invensys.com

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ABF sells seed facility

Date: Thu, 20 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Fuerst Day Lawson (FDL), a global supplier of products to the food, beverage, fragrance and chemical industries, has acquired Westmill Foods' seeds processing facility from Associated British Foods (ABF).

Based at Little Walden the 65,000 square foot facility supplies rice, noodles and flours to supermarkets and specialist ethnic food stores as well as blending seeds and pulses primarily for UK bakery customers.

According to Aroq FDL plans to relocate its current blending and processing equipment activities, currently sited at Halstead, to Walden this summer.

Bosses state that the new acquisition is in line with expansion plans for the company's seeds and natural products division.

Further information: www.abf.co.uk
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Meat trade federation appoints new president

Date: Fri, 21 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Haltwhistle farmer and former butcher Norman Kyle has become president of the National Federation of Meat and Food Traders.

The NFMFT represents around 8,000 independent butchers throughout Britain.

Mr Kyle's started one of the first on-farm butcheries in Cumbria in 1975 and ran NK Meats in Brampton for 23 years until his retirement last April.

His family has been on the meat business for over a hundred years and he was the first farmer to be president of Carlisle Butchers Association in 1978.

A supporter of UK native breeds and locally produced meat, Mr Kyle has taken on the role when trade in the private butchery sector is growing.

"An independent survey carried out in February by Harris International Marketing shows a tug-of-war going on between butchers and supermarkets," he said at his first official lunch.

Mr Kyle added: "Since February 2002, an extra one per cent of UK adults visited a butcher each week and a similar picture applies to other specialist food shops. So, the public

apparently is now becoming more willing to accept the trade-off between supermarket convenience and better quality food."

Further information: www.nfmft.co.uk
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Biodiversity to feature at international food conference

Date: Fri, 21 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has announced the theme of the 2004 World Food Day will be 'Biodiversity for Food Security'.

This year's World Food Day/TeleFood campaign will emphasize the importance of biodiversity for agriculture, food security and rural livelihoods, and especially for those populations living in marginal and harsh environments.

The FAO said conserving and using biodiversity sustainably is key to feeding the around 800 million malnourished people in developing countries.

Biological diversity comprises countless plants that feed and heal people, many crop varieties and aquatic species with specific nutritional characteristics, livestock species adapted to harsh environments, insects that pollinate fields and micro-organisms that regenerate agricultural soils.

According to the FAO, about three-quarters of the genetic diversity found in agricultural crops have been lost over the last century. Of 6300 animal breeds, 1350 are endangered or already extinct.

Funds collected through TeleFood, a public-awareness campaign including television shows, have enabled needy rural families to benefit from more than 1600 projects in 122 countries to increase their agricultural production and to feed themselves better.

Further information: www.fao.org
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Atkins boost to beer and beef

Date: Fri, 21 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Brewing company SAB Miller and the US beef sector have recognized the low-carb Atkins diet as responsible for increased profits.

Second-biggest global brewer SAB Miller credited the sales boost of its Miller Lite beer for a 50 per cent rise in annual revenue.

The low-carb variety now accounts for two thirds of the company's overall profits.

"Since last July, there's been double-digit growth and there are no signs of a slowdown," a spokeswoman for SAB Miller told the Daily Record.

Rival "lite" beers such as Michelob Ultra, Rolling Rock's Green Light and Coors' Aspen Edge have also seen sales increase thanks to Atkins.

Low-carb dieters have also helped keep beef demand constant in the United States despite a mad cow alert six months ago.

Colorado-based National Cattlemen's Beef Association said average beef prices have grown 10.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2004.

"Consumers are willing to consume the same amount at higher prices," Livestock Marketing Information Centre director Jim Robb told the BBC.

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Food waste rulings

Date: Fri, 21 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Environment Agency has ruled that by-products of food and drink production which are passed on to another manufacturing stage are not to be considered "waste".

This follows discussions with Defra over Article 1 of the Waste Framework Directive, as interpreted by the European Court of Justice in recent cases.

Food and drink by-products so reutilized are regarded by the Agency as another product obtained from the original raw materials.

The reasoning applies to brewers' grains, spent yeast and derivatives from sugar manufacturing used to make animal feed, for example.

However, residues of food or drink production will be considered waste if they are disposed of or used for a different purpose.

Off-specification or out of date food and drink products have not been included in this ruling as the Agency and Defra are still giving further consideration to the matter.

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Domino's joins the salad bandwagon

Date: Fri, 21 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Popular pizza firm Domino's has announced plans to start offering salads as part of its menu.

Among the new selection of 'Amazin' Greens salads' will be Garden Fresh and Grilled Chicken Caesar.

The products will be available in America first of all and instead of being marketed as an alternative as has been done in McDonalds, the firm will offer them as an addition to order along with a pizza.

Reportedly the company has suggested customers to "enjoy a fresh, high-quality salad with their oven-hot pizza".

Having made a slower move into the healthy food market, Domino's is concentrating on healthy products rather than low-carb meals.

Further information: www.dominos.com

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Retailers give mixed backing to RFID

Date: Mon, 24 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Retailers remain divided on the economic benefits of using radio frequency identification technology (RFID) in the supply chain.

Executives from Wal-Mart, Marks & Spencer and Target claimed during this year's Retail Systems conference that it was possible to make a business case for using RFID in the supply chain. However, other business leaders were less optimistic about the benefits of the new technology.

"One of the greatest benefits will be increased sales," Wal-Mart executive Michael Duke claimed, during his keynote address. He added that an RFID-enabled supply chain would help companies be more productive, better manage expenses and improve inventory turns, stressing that the new technology's potential to reduce out-of-stock items and feed sales is most compelling.

Retailer Wal-Mart is around four weeks into its first live RFID pilot, which covers 21 products from eight suppliers passing through its distribution centre and into seven of its retail stores.

At a retail RFID symposium held in conjunction with the show, Marks & Spencer outlined its use of RFID in its food operations, according to ARNnet. The UK retailer has tagged 3.5 million trays used for transporting perishable items among suppliers and stores.

Head of RFID at Marks & Spencer, James Stafford, said the company was able to read RFID tags faster, which saves time and money. He acknowledged that the new technology was complex but insisted that it should not put retailers off.

However, other retailers revealed that they were not doing anything with the new technology, preferring to wait and see how it progresses. Chico, apparel chain Ajit Patel and Wilsons Leather all said they were watching RFID developments before opting to use the technology.

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Uniq warns of possible factory closures

Date: Mon, 24 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Convenience foods group Uniq has warned that it faces a tough year ahead.

The company announced annual losses of £15.6 million and revealed that it was considering the closure of two UK factories as part of a shake-up at its dessert-making division.

The company blamed its losses on retailers continuing to put pressure on margins, as well as the impact of restructuring and the sale of businesses.

The moves to cease production at Newton Abbot, Devon, and Evercreech in Wiltshire come after Uniq acquired a Shropshire-based dairy products business from Northern Foods

earlier this month. An estimated 550 jobs at the two sites are under threat if Uniq goes ahead with plans to close the plants over the next two years.

Uniq reported annual losses of £15.6 million for the year to March 31st, compared with profits of £16.7 million last year. The company said operating profits from continuing businesses grew 46 per cent to £39.5 million over the year. The chilled goods firm has sold brands including Utterly Butterly and Vitalite as part of a pan-European focus on desserts, ready meals and sandwiches.

Chief executive Bill Ronald warned that the company faced a tough year ahead, but pointed out that recent changes had left the UK division better placed to cope.

"This has been a year of significant progress in a very tough retail environment. While I am confident of our long-term performance, the start of the new financial year will be extremely challenging," he said.

Further information: www.uniqplc.com
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MPs debate banning junk food ads for children

Date: Mon, 24 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

MPs are looking into banning junk food advertising aimed at children as part of a new bill.

The Children's Food Bill, introduced by Labour MP for Stourbridge Debra Shipley, was presented to the UK Parliament last week and aims to regulate the marketing, promotion and sale of food and drink to children.

The private members bill, developed in partnership with Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, has the support of 114 national organisations, including the British Dental Association, Diabetes UK and the Children's Society. The proposals are also supported by 12 MPs from each of the major parties, but Tony Blair has indicated he is against a ban.

The bill requires the Food Standards Agency to draw up criteria for unhealthy and healthy food, and then prohibit the marketing of foods judged unhealthy to children.

The types of food available to children at school would also be addressed under the bill, which includes proposals for school meal standards, better food education, and a ban on selling unhealthy food in school vending machines.

However, Ms Shipley has said she is aware that the bill's prospects of reaching the statute books within the next few years are slim. The food industry has lobbied hard against labelling foods as good or bad.

The bill comes in advance of a Commons health select committee report on obesity due to be published on May 27th, which many expect to criticise the government's failure to formulate joined-up policy on the issue.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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FSA warns consumers about pesticides on fruit and veg

Date: Mon, 24 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has reportedly issued a warning to Britain's supermarkets to cut the amount of agricultural poisons found on everyday purchases of fruit and vegetables and is also cautioning UK consumers.

Although the amounts of individual pesticides found on everyday foodstuffs may be within safety limits, scientists are worried that many foods contain a 'cocktail' of potentially harmful chemicals, which combined could pose a serious risk to health, including the threat of cancer.

The food watchdog is urging supermarkets and other food retailers to put pressure on their suppliers to curb pesticide use, Scotland on Sunday reports.

The FSA's report reveals that almost all soft citrus fruit, for example, has traces of two or more chemicals, which have been linked to a range of cancers, diseases of the immune system, hormonal changes and declining sperm counts.

An analysis of more than 4,000 samples found that toxic chemicals contaminate more than 40 per cent of the fresh fruit and vegetables sold by supermarkets, while overall contamination has barely come down over the past five years.

Dr Vyvyan Howard, a toxicopathologist at the University of Liverpool and a member of the government's advisory committee on pesticides, said: "The problem is that in our bodies we have hundreds of chemicals milling about that were not there 60 years ago. Doctors do not have the tools to analyse mixes of this complexity, so we do not know what the long-term effect of consuming pesticide residues will be."

Supermarkets insist they take their responsibilities for consumer health very seriously.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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Debate over regional food authentication continues

Date: Mon, 24 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Discussions between the Government and food industry members over the legal status of distinctive region-specific food products are gaining pace, with new involvement from Cornish pasty manufacturers.

The debate stems from concerns that consumer may be offered imitations of popular regional foods such as Cornish Clotted Cream and Dorset Blue Cheese.

Currently, both these products and Westcountry Farmhouse Cheddar are legally protected under EU legislation. In 2003 a bid was put forward for the Cornish pasty to be given Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status, but no action has yet been taken to this end.

"Anything that is made in Cornwall deserves to have the Cornish name attached to it," Carol Trewin of the Cornish Pasty Association told the Western Morning News.

"Consumers who buy Cornish pasties which have been made outside the county feel as though they have been deceived."

The Cornish Pasty Association currently has 44 members, representing an industry that generates some 10,000 direct and indirect jobs in Cornwall. Commenting on these figures Ms Trewin said: "That reflects its value to the Cornish economy and particularly agriculture because most of the ingredients can be sourced and are produced in Cornwall."

In related news a dispute has arisen between the Government and Hull-based Northern Foods, which has objected to both the Cornish pasty application and a recent ministerial decision to back an application to protect the regional status of the Melton Mowbray pork pie.

Further information: www.cornwalltasteofthewest.co.uk
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ABNA announces feed ingredients business expansion

Date: Mon, 24 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The agricultural division in Associated British Foods has appointed a new managing director to help developments in its feed ingredients business.

Richard Cooper begins his new position at ABNA today and has broad international experience in the sector.

Mr Cooper explained: "The international animal feed industry has become very specialised and sophisticated. Primary producers are looking for ingredients that offer even the smallest performance gains and added end product quality to give them the edge over competitors in what is increasingly a world market.

"We have plans to expand the business in the UK and overseas through acquisition, strategic alliances, new product development and organic growth."

The selection occurs just weeks after ABNA revealed the acquisition of Vistavet, an Irish feed ingredients business.

Further information: www.abf.co.uk
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FSA launches saskatoon berry consultation

Date: Tue, 25 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency is calling for comments on the possible marketing of the saskatoon berry in Europe.

The berry is the small purple fruit of a shrub found in North America, particularly in the north west of Canada, and has been grown commercially since the late 1960s.

The FSA has received an application from Prairie Lane Ltd asking that saskatoon berries should be considered as substantially equivalent to blueberries.

Saskatoon berries are exported to the United States and Japan, but the fruit has no history of being eaten in Europe. Blueberries are widely available across the UK and Europe.

The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) will discuss this request at their meeting on May 27th. Comments should be addressed to the ACNFP Secretariat by June 9th and will be passed to the committee before it finalises its decision.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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Experts call for ban on artificial colourings and preservatives

Date: Tue, 25 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Artificial colourings and preservatives in food and drink can affect children's health, new research claims.

Scientists at Southampton University found that artificial colourings and preservatives boost levels of hyperactivity in pre-school children and have a "significant" impact on the behaviour of ordinary children.

The researchers are calling on the government to consider eliminating artificial colourings and preservatives in the long-term interests of public health.

The study of 300 three-year-olds on the Isle of Wight found that the number of children with high levels of hyperactivity was halved when the additives were removed and the

doctors claim removing these substances from foods could cut hyperactivity rates in young children.

The Food Standards Agency, which assessed the findings, is to fund a larger follow-up study, beginning in September and continuing for three years. Researchers plan to look at whether additive-free diets have a positive effect in older children too.

Professor John Warner of the department of child health at Southampton University, who led the study, said: "It's absolutely imperative to have follow up studies because we are not now just talking about a population of children with a particular problem we are saying there's a potential for this to be an effect on all children. And if that really is the case reproducibly, then food colouring should be removed."

The research is published in the journal Archives of Child Health,

Further information: www.soton.ac.uk
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Children's food manufacturers 'failing to reduce salt content'

Date: Tue, 25 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Few children's food products have reduced the salt content one year after the Food and Drink Federation made a commitment to salt reduction, according to a new survey.

A study of 20 children's foods by the Food Magazine found that three quarters retained the same high salt levels.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) published guidelines on maximum recommended salt intakes for children in May 2003 and the FDF announced that it would work with its industry members to reduce salt content in soups and sauces by ten per cent.

The Food Magazine survey revealed that there had been some reductions in ketchup and soup salt levels, but children's foods such as Barney pasta shapes in tomato sauce and crisps had shown no reduction in salt content, despite the FDF's pledge to work with the FSA. Two of the products surveyed - Iceland Kids Crew cheese and tomato flavour pizza and Tidgy Toads (toad in the hole) - had both increased salt content.

Only three manufacturers had reduced salt content in their products - Dairylea Lunchables Ham Stack'ems, Cheestring Attack-a-Snak Cheestring and chicken wrap and Marks & Spencer's Tweenies Meal for One.

The Food Magazine survey also found that all of the food labels declared their sodium content, but only one in five of the products surveyed translated the sodium into the salt equivalent., MedicalNewsToday.com reports.

The FSA has issued a public consultation, including the proposal that any foods marketed at children should not be high in salt, sugar and fat, and it will publish nutrition criteria by March 2005.

Further information: www.foodstandards.gov.uk
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Nestle unveils plans for low-carb chocolate

Date: Tue, 25 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food manufacturer Nestle Rowntree has jumped on the Atkins Diet bandwagon with plans to launch a low-carbohydrate version of KitKat chocolate biscuits and Rolo chocolate toffees.

The confectionary company claims it is the first time a UK firm has developed a low-carb version of a mainstream brand. The new chocolate will hit shelves in the UK in mid-July.

Nestle Rowntree, the UK arm of the world's biggest food company, Nestle, has managed to reduce the carbohydrate content of a two-fingered KitKat from 13g to 5.9g and a pack of Rolos from 39.6g to 5.9g, by using sugar substitutes, such as polydextrose and sweeteners.

"We are constantly investigating new consumer trends and how we can respond with products that our consumers want," Sam Hunter, from Nestle Rowntree, said.

"This launch is significant as we are the first UK confectionery company to develop a low carb alternative that doesn't compromise on taste, texture or appeal."

Consumers can already choose low-carb options in products from beer to bread. Many of the new food choices are a direct result of the popularity of Dr Atkins' high-protein, low-carb diet plan; a favourite with celebrities.

An estimated three million Britons are currently opting for fewer carbohydrates in their diet..

Further information: www.nestle.com
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MLC study declares rare steak safe

Date: Tue, 25 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New research suggests that rare steak does not cause food poisoning providing utensils used to cook it are kept clean.

Scientists from the University of Nottingham conducted tests by spiking steak samples with E.coli and then cooking them rare, according to the BBC.

Only those steaks touched with utensils not cleaned after handling raw meat saw the bacteria survive.

The Meat and Livestock Commission (MLC) argue that this proves the idea that eating steak is unsafe is not true.

Tests were carried out on behalf of the MLC and concluded providing production is safe and utensils are cleaned and not contaminated then rare steak is safe.

Recent advice issued by the Food Standards Agency also supports the claims put forward by the MLC.

Further information: www.mlc.org.uk
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Heinz goes healthy with new salad products

Date: Tue, 25 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Moving into the salad sector, Heinz has announced the launch of two new products in the UK.

Available from next week, Heinz Salad Shakers will come in two varieties - Chicken Caesar and Greek Salad.

Hoping to attract health conscious consumers, the items will cost £2.99 from convenience outlets and the range will be expanded to five varieties if they prove popular.

It is hoped the salad packs will appeal to people wanting something different to a sandwich at lunchtime or a healthy alternative for a light meal at dinnertime.

Reportedly the products are mostly aimed at 16 to 45 year old women and working men on the move and come in a convenient and light packaging.

Packs contain a portion of salad with a 30ml dressing portion in a separate shaker lid, which can be scattered on the salad and then shaken to mix the contents.

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Holidaymakers warned star system does not guarantee holiday health

Date: Wed, 26 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Holidaymakers should not rely on the star system to protect them from food poisoning, food hygiene specialists have warned.

Travellers have accepted the star system as the standard by which the quality of holiday accommodation can be gauged, but it often fails to account for poor food hygiene, according to Steve Tate, CEO of website www.checksafetyfirst.com. There is currently no

recognised standard for food hygiene that consumers can refer to when booking their holiday and activities.

"It's practically impossible for consumers to protect themselves and their families," Mr Tate explained. "Despite parting with much more cash for the privilege, holidaymakers staying in a five star hotel may well stand a higher chance of contracting food poisoning than if they had booked in to three star accommodation."

The food hygiene expert warned that, with increasing demand for holiday accommodation, hotels are springing up everywhere, increasing the chance of corners being cut and staff being poorly trained.

Poor food hygiene is the single greatest cause of illness for holidaymakers and accounts for 75 per cent of all reported holiday illnesses amongst the 2.1 million holidaying Brits each year.

www.checksafetyfirst.com is advising holidaymakers to adopt a 'book smart' approach to booking holidays, using online resources to get more accurate and impartial information on their chosen destination.

Further information: www.checksafetyfirst.com
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Northern Foods plans to swoop for Geest

Date: Wed, 26 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Northern Foods is reportedly planning to make a move for rival company Geest.

Shares in Geest, a provider of ready-made supermarket salads and fruits, rose 25p to 520p, making it the biggest riser in the FTSE 250, after rumours started circulating that Northern Foods was planning to buy the company in order to strengthen its share of the ready-made meals market.

Northern Foods has been selling off unwanted businesses recently, including its loss-making Minsterley desserts factory to Uniq for £16.5 million.

Geest currently controls a 12 per cent share of the ready-made meals market and, with increased consumer awareness of healthy eating, sales of its fruit and salad products are expected to continue to grow.

Experts have predicted that Geest will also benefit from McDonald's decision to broaden its menu to include more salad-based products, as it already supplies the fast food firm with lettuce in four European countries.

The takeover speculation reportedly stemmed from rumours that two of Geest's biggest shareholders had been told they could not deal in company shares for 24 hours.

Further information: www.geest.co.uk
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Regional food campaign boosts trade

Date: Wed, 26 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Nearly 3,000 regional food and drink producers from all over the UK have taken part in various trade and consumer activities as part of a government funded regional food and drink programme.

The programme, run by the market development consultancy for British producers Food from Britain (FFB), reportedly saw over £2.2 million in additional sales generated during the first year of operation.

The three-year campaign, funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, aims to develop business opportunities and enhanced sales for producers, and FFB has been working closely with retail multiples, food halls and The Guild of Fine Food retailers.

FFB's involvement in events such as British Food Fortnight, Food and Drink Expo and Hotelympia boosted trade in quality regional food products and the campaign has also helped enhance consumer awareness of quality British regional food, by co-operating with VisitBritain to support the current growth in food tourism and at key events, including English Wine Week, The Great British Cheese Festival and Cheese 2003, in Bra, Italy.

During its first year FFB launched www.regionalfoodanddrink.co.uk, an online directory now featuring over 3,100 quality British regional food and food and drink producers, providing sales and profile opportunities for producers, and a sourcing centre for chefs, restaurateurs and food lovers.

Jane Wakeling, FFB's regional food and drink manager, commented, "It has been a busy and rewarding year, and we are pleased with the impact and contribution we have made towards building the profile and profitability of this important and growing sector."

Further information: www.foodfrombritain.com
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Food industry lobbies against calls for tighter regulation

Date: Wed, 26 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The UK food industry has launched an extensive lobbying campaign in Parliament ahead of the publication of a report into obesity by MPs.

The report by the House of Commons cross-party committee is expected to call for further regulation of the food industry in order to tackle obesity and diet-related diseases. The food

industry is facing increasing calls for it to reduce the salt and fat contents of food, particularly those aimed at children.

The Guardian newspaper claims to have obtained documents reportedly showing that manufacturers and advertisers have been using direct access to the heart of government to fight for their commercial interests.

The food manufacturers' lobbying group, the Food and Drink Federation, had over 2,000 contacts with ministers, MPs, lords, MEPs, MSPs and special advisers last year, the newspaper reports.

A letter sent to Downing Street ten days ago was signed by major food and advertising industry players. It proposes a voluntary "joint public health campaign" rather than the introduction of statutory labelling of food deemed detrimental to health.

"The lobbying is now intense. On the one side are all the health organisations you can think of, and on the other the vested interests in the industry. If the government takes no action, we will know the vested interests have won," Labour MP Debra Shipley said. The Stourbridge MP has been pushing for tighter controls on the marketing of junk foods to children.

Further information www.foodstandards.go.uk
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Experts tout benefits of white tea over green

Date: Wed, 26 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Although a host of studies have found a number of health benefits for green tea, now researchers are claiming white tea has even better health advantages.

According to researchers from the American Society for Microbiology, new work by US scientists has found extract from white tea can help hinder the growth of a host of different bacteria.

Milton Schiffenbauer, primary author of the research told Food Navigator: "Past studies have shown that green tea stimulates the immune system to fight disease.

"Our research shows White Tea Extract can actually destroy in vitro the organisms that cause disease."

Among the benefits of the drink are the prevention of bacteria growth that can cause pneumonia and dental caries.

Further informaton: www.asm.org
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Arla wins Asda milk contract

Date: Wed, 26 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Yorkshire-based Arla Foods has been awarded a contract to be the sole supplier of milk to the supermarket chain Asda.

Arla Foods was formed from the merger of Express Dairies and Arla. The company has one of the largest milk pools in Britain with farmers based across the UK.

The new deal means that Arla will supply cream and fresh milk to all 265 Asda stores. The company currently sells around 450 million litres of British milk with an estimated retail value of £230 million.

Chris Brown, Asda's agricultural strategy manager, said: "Arla is able to provide Asda with a segregated supply chain, which utilises a dedicated group of farmers.

This will enable us to have full traceability of our fresh milk from farm through to the bottles in our customers' trolleys."

The new deal means the termination of a previous contract with Robert Wiseman Diaries and Dairy Crest.

Further information: www.arlafoods.com
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Londis bid decision due in June

Date: Thu, 27 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Shareholder in Irish food and grocery wholesaler Londis will have the chance to vote next month on a £60 million takeover bid.

Londis posted offer documents to shareholders this week. The board of the UK grocery supplier has recommended the bid from Cork-based Musgrave but needs the approval of 75 per cent of the votes cast at an EGM.

Londis has stated that the Musgrave bid was not the highest it received, but insisted it provided the best long term future for the group. Company accounts show the bid process has cost Londis some £2.5 million.

If the Musgrave bid is accepted at the meeting on June 22nd, the company will become the biggest single supplier to independent retailers in the UK.

Londis is made up of 1,919 shopkeeper owners, who own a share in Londis. They own 2,200 Londis branded shops and use a central ordering and delivery network to operate the stores.

A number of bids for Londis have been rejected, including Big Food Group, the Co-Op, and one from former executives of convenience chain T&S Stores, who are now urging Londis shareholders to reject the Musgrave deal.

Further information: www.londis.co.uk
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Tate & Lyle and DuPont forge partnership

Date: Thu, 27 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK sugar group Tate & Lyle has formed a new joint venture with US chemical maker DuPont to make an industrial ingredient from renewable sources, such as corn (maize), which could replace petrochemicals.

The new substance will be used in the manufacture of clothing, plastics and textile fibres.

The formation of a joint venture is the next stage of an agreement between the companies, first announced on August 1st 2000.

The new company, DuPont Tate & Lyle BioProducts, LLC, is equally owned by Tate & Lyle and DuPont and will be based in Wilmington, Delaware. The company plans to construct its initial commercial manufacturing facility in Loudon, Tennessee, adjacent to an existing Tate & Lyle facility, and construction is scheduled for completion by March 31st 2006.

The joint venture will use a proprietary fermentation and purification process developed jointly by DuPont and Tate & Lyle to produce 1,3 propanediol (PDO), the key building block for DuPont Sorona. Sorona is currently manufactured from petroleum-based PDO.

"The joint venture is further evidence of Tate & Lyle's strength in innovation, our success in developing key industrial partnerships and our ability to generate value added product growth. It is a natural fit with our core skills in fermentation of natural products," said Iain Ferguson, Tate & Lyle PLC chief executive.

Further information: www.tateandlyle.co.uk
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Atkins Nutritionals launches low-carb pizza

Date: Thu, 27 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Atkins Nutritionals has announced plans to introduce a new line of controlled-carbohydrate frozen pizzas.

The agreement with Sara Lee Foods will see the new low-carb pizzas distributed to supermarkets and foodservice outlets across the United States.

Atkins Quick Quisine Pizza contains 70 to 80 per cent fewer digestible grams of carbohydrates than traditional pizza. It will be available in three flavours - Supreme, Smokehouse and Pepperoni. Each single-serving pizza contains only 11g net carbs, has more fibre and protein than traditional counterparts, and has no hydrogenated oil.

Atkins Nutritionals food scientists have reportedly been working with a team at Sara Lee Foods for months to ensure that the new pizza line is absolutely compatible with the Atkins low-carbohydrate diet plan.

Matt Wiant, senior vice president and chief marketing officer at Atkins Nutritionals, said: "Atkins is committed to educating consumers about the health benefits of controlled-carbohydrate nutrition. But we also want consumers to have the tools they need to make their lifestyle enjoyable and packaged foods are part of that. Since pizza is such a popular part of the traditional American diet, we were excited about producing a low-carb alternative."

Sara Lee Foodservice unveiled the Atkins branded pizzas during the National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago this week.

Further information: www.saralee.com
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McDonalds and Coca Cola launch new beverages in India

Date: Thu, 27 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Fast food company McDonald's has announced that its premium range of ready-to-drink Georgia Gold ice tea and cold coffee will be available throughout India shortly.

In the first phase of a marketing initiative in association with Coca-Cola, the new beverages have been rolled out across McDonald's restaurants in Delhi and Mumbai.

Ice Tea and Cold Coffee have been exclusively created for McDonald's by Coca-Cola India under the brand umbrella 'Georgia Gold' as part of a strategic partnership that Coca-Cola India has with McDonald's India.

The equipment, developed by Coca-Cola India R&D, enables premium iced tea and cold coffee to be dispensed in 25 seconds, out of a very compact machine.

Further information: www.mcdonalds.com
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Ministers call for action on obesity

Date: Thu, 27 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

In a hard-hitting report the Commons Health Select Committee has called for immediate action to stem the rise in obesity in the UK.

It has been estimated that obesity and weight problems cost the UK £7.4 billion a year, a figure they warn will rapidly rise.

The Health Select Committee recommends the establishment of a Cabinet level public health committee to oversee a cross departmental approach, and health secretary John Reid has confirmed that obesity will be one of the key issues in this year's White Paper on public health.

Regarding child obesity the committee welcomes increases in government funding to schools but has expressed deep concerns about the low levels of physical activity in schools.

It recommends that Ofsted should assess provision for physical activity in schools in their inspections and argues that schools should also monitor their pupils weight and facilitate annual obesity screenings in conjunction with NHS services.

The food industry also comes in for scathing criticism for their "relentless targeting of children through intense advertising and promotional campaigns, some of which explicitly aim to circumvent parental control by exploiting 'pester power'."

A "traffic light" system has been proposed to brand foods either red, amber or green based on its energy density. This would work to make healthy food choices easier for consumers to make and motivate the industry to re-examine the content of their foods.

Citing the health consequences of obesity, including links with heart disease and cancer, chairman David Hinchliffe said: "Wholesale cultural and societal changes will be needed if any headway is to be made.

"Our inquiry is a wake-up call for the Government to show that the causes of ill health need to be tackled by many departments, not just Health."

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Dairy Crest optimistic following positive results

Date: Thu, 27 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Dairy Crest has revealed an 11 per cent increase in profits today as it announced its audited results for the year ending March 31 2004.

Figures from the UK's leading chilled dairy foods company showed that adjusted profit before tax reached £85.1 million, whilst adjusted earnings per share grew by eight per cent to 50.0 pence and year-to-end net debt was down to £279.7 million.

Chief executive of the firm, Drummond Hall, said: "We made good progress in key areas last year delivering an 11 per cent rise in adjusted profit before tax backed by strong cash generation.

"Trading at the start of the year is in line with expectations, including good growth by Cathedral City. We believe that with strong brands, a well invested manufacturing base and good cash generation Dairy Crest is well placed to meet the challenges of the future."

The best performing area was the spreads business and is now the biggest profit centre for the company, with the relaunch of St Ivel Gold showing early signs of success.

Positive highlights for the company included a boost in marketing support for brands and the completion of a major scheme with Davidstow cheese creamery.

Further information: www.dairycrest.co.uk

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Britons consider benefits of GM foods

Date: Fri, 28 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Not all Britons are against the introduction of GM crops, according to a selection of views submitted to agbioworld.org's AgBioView Newsletter.

A number of recent studies have found no evidence that GM foods are unsafe for consumers or prevent any significant environmental hazard. The British Medical Association recently stated: "The BMA shares the view that there is no robust evidence to prove that GM foods are unsafe", adding that "genetically modified food has enormous potential to benefit both the developed and developing world in the long term".

Genetically modified crops are being grown extensively in North and South America and China and have become a part of the normal diet there. However, in consumers' opposition to GM foods has stunted research and development and has severely affected several countries in Africa and elsewhere, who have resisted growing GM crops in response to the European market.

Guy Smith, from St Osyth, Essex, is a farmer and wrote to the newsletter expressing his concern that importing GM food from abroad, while restricting cultivation in the UK is putting British farmers at a competitive disadvantage.

"Some may describe the policy of a government that gives foreign farmers advantages over its own as mistaken. I would call it treachery," he concluded.

RW Gray, from Cheselbourne in Dorset, argued: "We all have been eating GM tomatoes for nearly two decades without problems. The suggestion that we can be harmed by eating a gene, absorbing it through our gut wall and somehow being affected by it, is fanciful in the extreme."

"It is all very well for people in developed countries, where there is more food than is needed, to get high and mighty, but for those in the Third World who face starvation and for

whom hunger is a daily experience, GM technology could be a lifesaver," Manjit Singh from Leicester pointed out.

Sheila Moses from London called for GM products to be put on shelves and it left to customers to decide whether or not to buy them. She said: " We've heard all the arguments over and over again and need neither the pressure groups nor the companies, both pursuing their own interests, to tell us what to eat."

Finally, John Romer, also from London, simply stated: "I'm all for GM crops, antibiotics, anaesthetics, aspirin, telephones and wheels."

Further information: www.bma.org.uk
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Report predicts dieting market boom in Europe

Date: Fri, 28 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The European dieting market could be worth as much as 100 billion euros in the next three years, according to a new report.

The study conducted by Reuters Business Insight (RBI), a joint venture of Reuters Plc and consultants Datamonitor, found that recent enthusiasm for low-carbohydrate diets and mounting fears of an obesity epidemic could provide a massive boost to the dieting industry.

The survey reveals that 95 per cent of Europe's food makers believe they cannot afford to ignore the impact of low-carb dieting. An estimated three million Britons are cutting their carbohydrate intake as diets such as Atkins, South Beach and Hamptons gain in popularity.

A quarter of the companies polled by RBI said they had already manufactured a product under the low-carb umbrella, and two-thirds said they saw the expansion of the low-carb sector as an opportunity.

In the US, the financial impact of the switch in food preferences is already apparent. In Europe, Anglo-Dutch food group Unilever is increasing its research budget into healthier foods, after its Slimfast range saw sales dip as a result of the low-carb movement, while Swiss food giant Nestle announced this week that it is launching low-carb varieties of chocolate treats Kit-Kat and Rolo.

Camilla Palmer, analyst at RBI, suggested that other manufacturers would do well to follow Nestle's lead, adding, "There is no doubt that the consumer's appetite for low-carbohydrate foods is huge. With big names entering the market on a daily basis, it's important that the food and drink industry realises the potential of the sector."

No further information.

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Food marketers 'failing to target over 50s'

Date: Fri, 28 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food and drink marketers are failing to exploit the over 50s market, which is likely to account for an increasing proportion of consumer packaged goods (CPG) expenditure in the years to come, a new report claims.

Datamonitor's report, Empty Nesters, points out that the UK's over 50s currently enjoy the highest annual disposable income per capita. Over 50s spent a combined £38.4 billion on CPG in 2003 and this figure is likely to rise to £46 billion over the next five years, but few products and campaigns are targeted at this age group. 'Empty nesters' are adults whose children have grown up and left home.

There will be a total of 8.5 million of Early Empty Nesters (50-64-year-olds) in the UK by 2008, according to Datamonitor, and their annual disposable income per capita will have increased by 8.5 per cent to £17,872, or 147 per cent of the national average. The report notes that a sudden increase in wealth often sparks highly indulgent spending and also highlights the health concerns of 'empty nesters', providing opportunities of health-related products such as functional food and drinks.

"Most CPG marketing executives are in their early 30s, and their views of the over 50s are often limited to stereotypes - Saga holidays and cat food! This usually means that any marketing of branded goods to these consumers is at best wide of the mark and at worst patronising - which in turn means that few companies are in fact targeting this segment of society at all," Andrew Russell, Datamonitor consumer markets analyst and author of the report, told FoodandDrinkEurope.com.

"Our research found that most CPG manufacturers do not want to 'pigeonhole' themselves, to be seen as catering only for 'old people'. The best marketers are those who focus on what we call 'need states' - on people, young or old, who want to treat themselves, or improve their health, or are looking for something indulgent," he added.

Further information: www.datamonitor.com

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Commons obesity inquiry grills junk food bosses

Date: Fri, 28 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Some of the biggest names in UK fast food, medicine and diet were called to give evidence to an inquiry by MPs into Britain's obesity crisis.

Among the dozens of witnesses appearing before the House of Commons Select Committee on Health, were executives from McDonald's, Cadbury Schweppes, PepsiCo and Kelloggs UK.

Asked by MPs about the calorie count of his company's burgers, Julian Hilton-Johnson, the vice-president of McDonald's Restaurants Ltd, admitted that staff were told to encourage diners to opt for "supersize" portions of food, The Times reports.

However, other executives were less forthcoming about their marketing strategies. Representatives from Cadbury Schweppes and PepsiCo refused to give the number of Chocolate Buttons or cans of fizzy drink a child should eat and drink, while the head of Kellogg's insisted that Coco Pops contained a "multiplicity of micronutrients".

The Health Select Committee also heard from doctors, dieticians, nutritionists and sports specialists who outlined health problems associated with poor diet

Health experts included Professor Sir George Alberti, of the International Diabetes Federation, Len Almond, director of the British Heart Foundation, American nutritionists, who described how overproduction of food had affected the country, and Nick Wareham, of the Institute of Public Health.

The eleven member select committee, chaired by Labour MP David Hinchliffe, heard from more than 60 experts during the year-long inquiry.

Further information: www.parliament.uk
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Sainsbury's appoints new bosses

Date: Fri, 28 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Sainsbury's has announced the appointment of new marketing and trade directors.

Stephen Nelson will undertake the role of marketing director, moving from his former position as trading director. He joined Sainsbury's in July last year from Diageo where he worked in the UK and the US following an early career with Sainsbury's.

Mike Coupe, formerly on the Big Food Group Board and managing director of Iceland, will assume the role of trading director at Sainsbury's.

Mr Coupe spent his early career with Tesco before joining Asda and becoming trading director on its executive board.

Sainsbury's is currently battling to stem falling sales and regain market share under new chief executive Justin King. It lost its lead in the market to Tesco in 1995 and was overtaken by Asda to the second position last year.

The group last week announced a 2.9 percent fall in underlying annual pre-tax profit.

Further information: www.sainsbury.co.uk
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Bidding contest cost Londis £2.5 million

Date: Fri, 28 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New reports reveal that bidding over the convenience retail chain Londis cost the company somewhere in the region of £2.5 million.

The revelation comes with a new offer from Musgrave valued at £60 million, which will be put to vote at an extraordinary general meeting in Birmingham on June 22nd. The offer needs the support of 75 per cent of Londis shareholders to be successful.

According to Londis accounts the bid process has cost Londis an estimated £2.5 million while chief executive Graham White was paid £5.92 million in salary and bonuses last year.

In addition a £7.1 million settlement was shared between four directors for renegotiating their contracts at the end of 2003, following which the company slipped into the red, reporting a pre-tax loss of £3.48 million in the year to January 30th against a profit of £4.04 million a year previous.

Further information: www.londis.co.uk
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Soya-risk foods cut prevent womb cancer, new research suggests

Date: Fri, 28 May 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The consumption of soya-rich foods could cut a woman's womb cancer risk, according to experts.

The Shanghai Cancer Institute has made the claim, basing their findings on a study of 1,700 women.

The researchers, who looked at 832 endometrial cancer sufferers between 1997 and 2001, alongside 846 healthy women, claim the isoflavones in the soya mimic the effects of oestrogen in the body.

It has previously been suggested that the oestrogen effects of the isoflavones could help fight heart disease and cancer.

Now it is suggested that the higher consumption of soya-rich foods by Asian countries than western countries is largely responsible for the lower incidence of endometrial cancer in the former region.

Indeed, the researchers, led by Professor Xiao Ou Shu, wrote in the British Medical Journal that "Dietary factors may play an important role in this international variation.

However, Dr Tim Key, of the Cancer Research UK Epidemiology Unit in Oxford, told BBC News Online that, while overall "the data appears to be reasonably consistent" in support of the argument of a reduced risk from soya milk, "there is not sufficient data to suggest there really is an effect."

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