

## September 2004

### **Glanbia posts fall in profits**

**Date:** Wed, 01 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Irish food group Glanbia has reported an 11.8 per cent drop in first-half operating profit to €40.3 million (£27.3 million).

The company said in a statement: "This reflects the impact of the difficulties in the Irish pigmeat sector on the first half results."

In its interim results for the first six months of 2004, the firm said operating profit had fallen from €45.7 million (£31 million) for the first-half of 2003. Pre-tax profit stood at €35.7 million (£24.2 million), up from €10.7 million last year, as the firm had no exceptional charges during the first-half of 2004.

Sales at Glanbia fell 7.3 per cent to €974 million (£659.8 million), hit by higher prices for pig meat. However, net income for the six months ended July 3rd was €25 million (£16.9 million), compared with a loss of €473,000 in the year-earlier period.

Kilkenny-based Glanbia Plc is Europe's biggest maker of cheese for pizzas and is currently undergoing a restructuring programme in order to focus on growth in consumer products, dairy ingredients and nutritional foods.

Group managing director John Moloney said: "Going forward, the group is well positioned to deliver solid earnings growth. We have an on-going programme of investing for the future, combined with strong market positions and leading brands in core operations."

Earlier this year, Glanbia agreed to sell its UK cheese business for £94.3 million to a joint-venture company it is forming with Milk Link Ltd. The sale will generate net proceeds of £79.9 million, to be used to invest in nutritional goods.

Further information: [www.glanbia.com](http://www.glanbia.com)  
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### **Tesco cuts milk suppliers**

**Date:** Wed, 01 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK supermarket giant Tesco has announced plans to reduce the number of milk suppliers from three to two. The company has dropped Dairy Crest, retaining just Arla and Robert Wiseman as milk suppliers.

Tesco's announcement follows decisions by Sainsbury's to use only Dairy Crest and Robert Wiseman as suppliers and Asda to make Robert Wiseman its sole milk supplier after Arla backed out of a deal.

Dairy Crest has lost out from both Tesco's and Asda's decisions and the firm saw its shares decline by almost 18 per cent this week in response to the news. The Tesco decision wiped more than £70 million off the value of the dairy company. Surrey-based Dairy Crest will continue to supply Tesco with other dairy products worth £100 million a year.

Robert Wiseman said the Tesco deal would boost its share of the supermarket chain's milk sales to 60 per cent.

Conditions for milk producers are getting increasingly tough in Britain as suppliers and supermarkets continue to squeeze their profits.

Farmers claim the trend towards supplier consolidation is bad news for the struggling industry and UK suppliers have complained about their relationship with the four main supermarkets, prompting an audit by the Office of Fair Trading.

However, retailers insist that the rationalisation of their supplier base will enable them to improve transparency in the supply chain and offer more stability to the milk industry.

Further information: [www.tesco.co.uk](http://www.tesco.co.uk)  
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### **Concerns over palm oil imports**

**Date:** Wed, 01 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Ghanaian Ministry of Trade, Industry PSI has announced that it has launched a new investigation into reports that palm oil exports to the UK have been contaminated with the carcinogenic food dye Sudan IV.

The Ghana Export Promotion Council (GEPC), Ghana Standards Board (GSB) and the Ghana Food and Drugs Board (GFDB) are co-operating with authorities in Britain on the inquiry.

Ghanaian minister Alan Kyeremanten said in a statement that the government had become concerned that a "rapid alert warning report from the UK Foods Standards Agency in respect of palm oil exports from Ghana to the UK suspected to be contaminated by Sudan IV dye which is dangerous to health".

"For avoidance of doubt, the general public is hereby being informed that the palm oil export from Ghana into the UK or any part of the world has not been banned," he added.

The statement reminded producers and exporters of oil palm that under Ghana's existing food standards established by the GSB, Sudan IV dye was not a permitted food colour

addictive since it represented a serious health hazard if consumed in sufficient quantities, the Ghanaian Times reports.

The GSB and GFDB are also conducting investigations to establish whether any palm oil put up for sale on the domestic market has been contaminated.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **Grampian completes move to Yorkshire**

**Date:** Wed, 01 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Grampian Country Food Group has completed its move to from Aberdeen to Leeds, Yorkshire. The firm has chosen to base its operational headquarters in the region as part of major expansion plans.

The move from Scotland follows the recruitment by Grampian of former Arla Foods boss David Salkeld. Since taking charge, he has overseen the acquisitions of beef and lamb processing business St Merryn Food Group and Yorkshire-based Frontline Foods from Uniq.

"We now need a period of consolidation to drive the earnings forward," Mr Salkeld told The Yorkshire Post, adding that he planned to concentrate on developing two key areas - raw added value foods and snack foods.

Mr Salkeld said he was also keen to develop Grampian's own-brand products as well as its business with the big supermarket chains.

He continued: "With Asda and Morrisons, 30 per cent of the UK grocery market is in Leeds and Bradford and we are based between the two. Around half our plants are based south of Yorkshire and the rest are north, so with the M1 and M62 motorways we are perfectly placed to reach them. The challenge is to run the business as one, rather than 21."

Grampian boasts a total workforce in excess of 25,000 at more than 50 food production plants in the UK, the Netherlands, Portugal and Thailand and is now larger than Heinz, Dairy Crest, Northern Foods and Unilever in terms of UK food sales. The privately-owned company, one of Britain's biggest food producers, already employs around 4,000 people at six plants in Yorkshire.

Further information: [www.gcfg.com](http://www.gcfg.com)  
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### **School lunches still too unhealthy**

**Date:** Wed, 01 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Children's packed lunches still contain too much fat, sugar and salt, the Food Standards Agency has warned.

Its second survey of school lunchboxes has revealed that children are eating double the recommended lunchtime intake of saturated fat and sugar and up to half their daily-recommended salt intake.

The investigation into 688 home-packed lunchboxes for children from 28 schools across Britain also found that three quarters fail to meet government nutritional standards set out in 2001.

"Parents want the best for their children but everybody knows how difficult and stressful it can be to get children to eat a wider range of different and healthier foods," said FSA nutritionist Sam Church.

"Our survey findings revealed that children need to eat more starchy foods such as bread, pasta, rice, fruit and vegetables and dairy foods, such as yoghurts."

The FSA found that, since last year's survey, the average amount of fat in a school lunchbox has increased by three grams, of which saturated fat has increased by one gram.

The Agency has now recommended a number of easy and healthy lunchtime recipes for children and parents to make together.

Further information: [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)  
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### **New GPI packaging to improve food freshness**

**Date:** Thu, 02 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Gold Peg International (GPI) has unveiled a new aseptic packaging which it claims eliminates the need for expensive refrigeration of end food products.

The firm says its new RotaTherm (RT) aseptic continuous cooking system improves on traditional aseptic systems such as retort and SSHE because there is no product burn-on and the system has the ability to handle highly viscous products and aseptically process particulates up to 25mm.

The company also claims that the process delivers improved taste and nutritional value due to its HTST (High Temperature, Short time) cooker heating profile, long run non-stop production and more compact footprint.

GPI insists that the Aseptic RotaTherm Cooker extends the options of food products that can be processed aseptically and improves efficiency.

Aseptic processing is a heat sterilisation process that destroys all micro-organisms and spores, giving food products a longer (ambient) shelf life and eliminating the need for refrigeration.

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### **Glanbia Nutritionals doing well**

**Date:** Thu, 02 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Irish dairy giant Glanbia has announced plans to increase sales from the nutritional products sector.

Glanbia has established a 'nutritionals' division within its core Food Ingredients business. The division, based in the US, makes dairy bioactives such as ProLibra, TruCal and Provon for applications in sports nutrition, weight loss and other functional foods.

Glanbia Nutritionals, which is expected to eventually become a stand-alone unit, is targeted for significant growth following a company reorganisation last year.

"Good progress was made in the first half with a number of new product launches in the EU and the US that are part of an overall pipeline of new products in the area," a company statement read.

"There is ongoing opportunity to develop the nutritionals business through acquisition, which will enhance the group's capability in key areas such as formulation, packaging, marketing and distribution."

Europe's biggest maker of cheese for pizzas also reported that its food ingredient sales jumped 20 per cent during the first half of this year, a 49 per cent increase on the same period last year.

Further information: [www.glanbia.com](http://www.glanbia.com)  
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### **Korean Kimchi may prevent food poisoning**

**Date:** Thu, 02 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Korean scientists have discovered that the country's spicy fermented vegetable dish, Kimchi, may help prevent food poisoning.

According to the research, lactic ferments in Kimchi are the source of an antibacterial substance found to be effective against harmful microbes such as Helicobacter (the cause of gastritis), Listeria and Shigella sonnei (which cause flu-like symptoms and diarrhoea).

The Chosun Ilbo reports that the scientists claim substances extracted from Kimchi have a competitive edge against other existing antibiotics.

One of the research team explained: "There are controversies over existing antibiotics as they can be toxic and people can grow tolerance against them. Whereas substances extracted from Kimchi are safe for human bodies."

The scientists said that, cultivating lactic ferments from Kimchi, mass production of antibiotics was also a possibility.

Further clinical tests are needed to accurately identify the benefits of Kimchi and it will take around five years before the research is practically applied to the medical industry. The scientific team also plans to develop preservatives for foods and animal feed after applying for patents at home and abroad.

(no further information)  
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### **New food centre of excellence due to open**

**Date:** Thu, 02 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A centre of excellence dedicated to boosting Yorkshire's food and drink industry is due to open later this month.

Leeds University's Food Chain Centre of Industrial Collaboration (CIC) will be officially opened by Lord Haskins, a board member of regional development agency Yorkshire Forward, at The Great Hall, Leeds University, on September 9th.

The new centre, a partnership between food research centres at the universities of Leeds and York and the Central Science Laboratory at Sand Hutton, near York, will promote increased research collaboration in the food and drink sector.

One of its aims is to attract research and development investment to the region to provide a high-level of scientific support for multi-national food manufacturers through to local small businesses, Leeds Today reports.

Lord Haskins, the former chairman of Hull-based Northern Foods, commented: "With growing globalisation, our businesses can no longer simply compete on cost grounds alone. We need to add value to our region's products and processes. Our aim is to transfer knowledge to regional companies, encourage investment by UK and international companies in the region and promote Yorkshire and Humber as the emerging force for technology and innovation."

According to Yorkshire Forward, the food and drink industry employs more than 58,000 people in the region and contributes more than £2.1 billion to the regional economy.

Further information: [www.yorkshire-forward.com](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com)  
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### **Premier launches reduced salt range for kids**

**Date:** Thu, 02 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Premier Foods launched a line of new reduced salt food products for children, under its HP brand.

Cans of HP Baked Beans and HP Beans with Sausage will feature popular children's characters Bob the Builder, Scooby Doo and Groovy Chick, and salt content has been reduced to counter growing concerns over high salt levels in children's food.

The new range will be labelled with a special reduced salt and sugar message in order to make shoppers aware of their health benefits, according to Datamonitor.

Research has found that the benefits of a low-salt diet are not exclusive to those with high blood pressure; a long term reduction in salt intake benefiting those with normal blood pressure to begin with.

Earlier this year, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) announced that salt levels still needed to fall across all processed foods, in order to reach targets of reducing salt consumption to an average of 6 grams per day by 2010.

At the same time UK health minister Melanie Johnson issued a 'final chance' warning to over 20 food companies, warning that the Government would introduce compulsory warnings on high-salt products if they failed to improve proposals by September.

Further information: [www.premierbrands.com](http://www.premierbrands.com)  
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### **BRC announces new packaging standard**

**Date:** Thu, 02 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) and the Institute of Packaging (IOP) have unveiled a new packaging standard.

The new standard comes into force in March next year and is designed to reflect new legislation, best practice and the inclusion of an extensive protocol section.

The revisions are based on extensive consultation between the BRC, the IOP, packaging suppliers, food manufacturers and third party certification bodies.

"This version reflects the changing industry and clearly focuses on the need to establish standards and the application of due diligence throughout the packaging chain," said IOP chief executive, Lynda Purser.

"A tremendous amount of work had gone into this standard - our thanks to all those involved."

The standard applies to both food and non-food products.

Further information: [www.brc.org.uk](http://www.brc.org.uk)  
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### **Diageo anticipates tough UK trading**

**Date:** Fri, 03 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Drinks giant Diageo has warned that UK and Ireland markets are likely to remain tough.

Sales of the firm's premium brands, which include Smirnoff and Baileys, rose one per cent last year and currency movements reduced profits by £100 million.

The company reported a pre-tax profit before exceptionals of £2.07 billion and an eight per cent increase in the final dividend to 17p, following the sale of its Pillsbury and Burger King

food operations. Total sales by the group rose from £8.8 billion to £8.89 billion in the year to June 30th.

Paul Walsh, Diageo chief executive, said: "We do face important challenges in Great Britain and Ireland and across parts of Europe." But, he added, "Our focus on premium drinks is paying off."

Diageo said the introduction of a smoking ban in Ireland and a tax on alcopops in Germany has weakened demand for many of its alcoholic brands, which include Guinness and Smirnoff Ice. The company also noted that UK consumers were increasingly opting to drink at home rather than in pubs, driving down sales of Smirnoff Ice by 17 per cent.

However, Diageo said growth had continued in North America, where four of its six spirits groups increased market share, and in Africa, reflected in an improvement in its overall trading performance.

The company is rumoured to be considering purchasing the Glenmorangie whisky company, but has refused to comment on comment on speculation.

Further information: [www.diageo.com](http://www.diageo.com)  
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### **Councillor backs anti-obesity book**

**Date:** Fri, 03 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A Manchester councillor is backing a new book aimed at tackling obesity in children.

Councillor Susan Fildes, a mother of two, is currently Trafford's Tory leader after sweeping to power in the local elections earlier this year, the Manchester Evening News reports.

The book, called Healthy Eating, will be available in schools or to borrow or buy in libraries

Trafford Council's young Tory group is calling on people in the borough to suggest recipes for the book and prizes will be awarded for the best entries.

The project follows the success of a similar scheme Ms Fildes promoted while working as a nutritionist for a charity for people with multiple sclerosis.

The councillor told the newspaper it can often be difficult for parents to come up with easy to prepare, healthy meals and the book aims to provide a valuable resource.

Recent figures have shown that incidents of childhood obesity in Britain are dramatically increasing and the government has launched a number of schemes in recent months aimed at tackling the problem.

(no further information)  
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### **Atkins impacting Bunzl sales**

**Date:** Fri, 03 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK packaging company Bunzl claims that the Atkins Diet has had a significant impact on sales of its products.

The firm, which supplies outsourced food packaging and cleaning and safety products for food processors, believes that its North American profits have been indirectly hit by a large-scale shift in consumer eating patterns.

Bunzl reported a 10 per cent increase in global sales for the first-half of 2004, with operating profit before goodwill up 11 per cent at £103.2 million.

However, in the United States sales grew over the first six months of the year by just three per cent and Bunzl insists that profits have suffered because supermarkets are struggling to respond to change. There are an estimated 30 million people in the US currently following the Atkins plan or a similar low-carb diet.

Bunzl also stated in its half-yearly report that profits had been affected by competitive pressures on margins and the weak dollar.

In Europe, Bunzl's outsourcing business performed better, with sales and operating profits up by 21 per cent and 35 per cent respectively over the six months to June 30th.

"We have made good progress in the first half delivering double digit growth in sales, profits and adjusted earnings per share at constant exchange rates," Bunzl chairman Anthony Habgood commented. "The European outsourcing services business in particular demonstrated its continued evolution into a leading player of substance across Europe making it the logical partner for international customers and suppliers."

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

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### **RSPB launches farming training programme**

**Date:** Fri, 03 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new training programme for Cumbrian farmers will give participants the skills to help wildlife on their farms.

The programme of 24 courses starts next week and will be held on RSPB nature reserves.

The RSPB has linked up with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Vocational Training Scheme to organise the courses. Funding for the programme of 24 courses has come from Defra's Vocational Training Scheme and the first training day will be

held at the RSPB Campfield Marsh reserve, near Carlisle, on September 8th, The Cumberland News reports.

All the techniques have been tried and tested on RSPB-farmed reserves and the training day will give farmers a unique opportunity to learn about best practice techniques at first hand.

RSPB spokesman Tim Youngs said: "The RSPB already works directly with more than 2,000 farmers in the UK every year, supporting their vital conservation role. This groundbreaking new initiative continues this important work and will link forward-looking local farmers with our skilled Cumbrian nature reserve wardens."

With the current agri-environment schemes, such as Countryside Stewardship, and the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme, encouraging land managers to carry out environmentally-friendly activity, there is growing interest from farmers to develop their skills in wildlife protection.

Further information: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
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### **Atkins dieters lose weight 'through boredom'**

**Date:** Fri, 03 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new research paper is claiming that the popular low-carbohydrate Atkins diet may only be helping people lose weight because it is boring, offering dieters only a limited choice of foods.

Nutritionists in Denmark assert that the "monotony and simplicity" of the eating regime is conducive to weight loss because it suppresses the appetite.

They also maintain that there is no evidence that eliminating carbohydrates while eating more fat and protein can boost energy expenditure.

"In the long term, people start to regain weight," commented Dr Arne Astrup from the Centre of Advanced Food Research in Copenhagen. "After one year, there's hardly any differences between the Atkins groups and low-fat groups."

The nutritionists reviewed results of three clinical trials into Atkins, while examining claims made by its supporters.

To date, some 20 million adults are thought to have followed a low-carb regime of some description, worldwide.

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### **FSA issues warning on imported preserves**

**Date:** Fri, 03 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is advising UK consumers to avoid particular pickles, sauces and preserved vegetables imported from parts of Bangladesh, China, Pakistan and India.

The warning follows research finding an illegally high level of erucic acid in these products. Eight out of 71 samples of pickles, sauces and preserved vegetables were found to contain levels of erucic acid exceeding the UK legal limit.

Subsequently, the FSA is advising against the consumption of these products.

Erucic acid is a substance naturally found in some oils derived from plants, primarily in some varieties of mustard seed oil and rapeseed oil. Products with excessively high levels included varieties of preserved chilli beans, mango pickle and minced green chilli paste.

Andrew Wadge, director of food safety at the FSA, stated that the Agency is "asking local authorities to act to remove these packets and jars from sale and to ensure similar products sold in their areas don't break the law.

"We are also talking to the importers of these foods to highlight the concerns about high levels of erucic acid and to identify the source of the problem," he told News Medical.

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### **BFG facing possible break up**

**Date:** Mon, 06 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Big Food Group could be considering breaking up its operations, according to the Sunday Express.

The Welsh-based firm, which consists of the Iceland food retailer, the Booker cash-and-carry company and Woodward food service, has come under increasing pressure from the high levels of competition in the food sector.

The high-street retailer Iceland has reported declining sales in recent months and is struggling to compete with market leaders Tesco and Asda, despite a major store refit programme.

Industry experts predict that like-for-like sales are likely to have deteriorated from the 1.7 per cent dip reported by Iceland for the first quarter of the year especially because of the poor summer weather.

It is expected that shareholders will question chief executive Bill Grimsey about his long-term strategy for the company when Big Food Group announces its interim results in November and will raise the possibility of a break-up of the company.

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

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Further information: [www.thebigfoodgroup.co.uk](http://www.thebigfoodgroup.co.uk)  
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### **Farmers' markets offer new supply routes**

**Date:** Mon, 06 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The increased popularity of farmers' markets across Ireland is being hailed as a new way of developing relationships between small suppliers and customers, according to the Irish Examiner newspaper.

Britain has seen the number of farmers' markets increase from nothing just five years ago to around 400 in 2003, producing an estimated turnover of nearly £160 million.

However, Ireland has been slower to develop a farmers' market network and has just 40 regular markets but plans to expand this number in the near future.

It is hoped that the markets provide a vital link between producers and consumers and help encourage more community loyalty as well as giving customers more choice. The new supply route could also help preserve some of the more traditional Irish food produce.

Food Minister Noel Treacy, said: "Nationally, farmers' markets are essential as live incubation centres for new food businesses which are crucial in a post CAP reform environment for diversifying farmers."

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### **Health food salt content under examination**

**Date:** Mon, 06 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Research has discovered that Sainsbury's health food range is actually saltier than seawater.

The study, conducted by Consensus Action on Salt and Health (Cash), discovered that the supermarket's Be Good to Yourself range contained almost 50 per cent more salt than seawater.

The highest salt concentration was discovered in Sainsbury's healthy breakfast cereal. One bowl of the flakes-and-orchard-fruit cereal contains 1.8 grams of salt, more than three times the daily recommendation of 0.5 grams for an adult.

Sainsbury's announced that it plans to withdraw three of the saltiest products picked out by Cash, whilst another two products will be revamped to contain less salt.

Gill Fine, head of food and health at Sainsbury's, said: "We want to meet the government's target of reducing salt in food by a third by 2010."

A high intake of salt has been linked to increased blood pressure as well as heart attacks and strokes. Yet few people are aware of the risk and Cash predicate that consumers can eat up to 250,000 tons of salt a year - with only five per cent of that salt occurring naturally.

Further information: [www.hyp.ac.uk/cash](http://www.hyp.ac.uk/cash)  
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### **Food sector productivity ranks lowest**

**Date:** Mon, 06 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Workers within the food sector are the least productive in the UK, according to a new study.

The research, conducted by Proudfoot Consulting, discovered that the average worker in the food sector wastes 99 days a year significantly more than the average UK worker.

The report found that 87 out of the 235 days that average UK workers spend at work are unproductive, often due to poor management and insufficient planning.

Professor Nick Crafts, of the London School of Economics, calculates that this wasted time is costing the country's economy around £87 billion per year, with poor management alone costing £56 billion.

Mr Crafts said: "Worryingly, poor management is therefore costing the economy the same as the Government's education budget."

The telecommunications sector was the most productive, with workers wasting 61 days per year and the automotive sector wasting just 67.5 days at work.

Further information: [www.proudfootconsulting.com](http://www.proudfootconsulting.com)  
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### **Food retail slows during August**

**Date:** Mon, 06 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The forthcoming British Retail Consortium-KPMG retail sales monitor is expected to report a fall in food retail sales, according to The Times newspaper.

The monthly figures are likely to show that recent interest rate rises by the Bank of England and the poor summer weather has hit food retailers hard.

Supermarkets in particular have failed to sell the traditional summer products such as barbecue food and ice cream and have been left with excessive stock on their shelves.

The report is expected to show that like-for-like sales in August were between zero per cent and one per cent up on the same period last year, down from 1.8 per cent in July and 2.4 per cent in June and 3.7 per cent in May.

One leading supermarket company told the newspaper that "business had been brutal for both food and non-food sales" and that sales had been poor for the last two to three months.

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### **Innovative wheat-based packaging in development**

**Date:** Tue, 07 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A plant physiologist in California is currently working on the development of wheat-starch disposable containers.

Gregory Glenn of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Western Regional Research Centre is working with EarthShell Corp, a Californian innovator of potato-starch-based foam products, to perfect the manufacturing of environmentally-friendly biodegradable containers, such as burger boxes.

The starch-based disposables could provide a more environmentally friendly option than petroleum-based, polystyrene foam products, reducing industrial waste, and scientists believe the concept could eventually be extended to include cups, bowls and plates as well as food packaging.

Wheat is the world's most widely planted grain and the biodegradable prototypes are reportedly as sturdy, convenient to use and leak-proof as their polystyrene counterparts. A

water-resistant coating even helps the container keep its strength and shape when it is filled with a hot food.

Wheat starch offers manufacturers of foodservice products another choice among starches when they are buying raw materials and the resultant purchasing flexibility could help keep their prices competitive with polystyrene products.

Information on the latest research into wheat packaging is published in the September issue of Agricultural Research magazine.

(no further information)

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### **Kellogg's encouraging cereal consumption**

**Date:** Tue, 07 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Cereal giant Kellogg's is promoting National Breakfast Week online with a new microsite targeting mothers and families.

The site provides tips on saving time in the mornings, a questionnaire linked to a competition, and nutritional information on the health benefits of eating breakfast.

The week, which runs from September 6th to 10th will see a number of events run online, with Kellogg's partnering sites including iVillage.co.uk and Virgin Radio. The campaign will also feature broadcast and print activity.

Alyson Greenhalgh-Ball, head of nutrition for Kellogg's UK & ROI, said: "Online's immediacy and accessibility makes it a highly effective vehicle through which to tap into our audience's lifestyle and communicate the nutritional and social benefits of breakfast."

Britons are increasingly neglecting breakfast. According to Datamonitor, British consumers are more likely than their European counterparts to miss breakfast, having skipped the first meal of the day 113 times on average last year. By 2008, analysts predict that the average Briton will skip another seven more breakfast occasions annually.

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

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### **Celebrity chefs support pig campaign**

**Date:** Tue, 07 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Some of Britain's top celebrity chefs, including Antony Worrall Thompson, Brian Turner, Phil Vickery, James Martin and John Torode, have lent their support to a campaign against pork imports that fail to comply with British animal welfare standards.

Seventy per cent of all imports of pork, bacon and processed pork products would be illegal to produce in this country, according to a recent BPEX report. Imports of pigmeat rose 14 per cent last year and now account for 58 per cent of all pork, bacon and processed products consumed in the UK.

Brian Turner said: "British farmers and consumers have worked extremely hard to achieve the wonderful quality of meats we are now getting in this country and that carry the Quality Standard Mark. As a chef I feel that now is the time for these standards to be adopted as the minimum requirement for meat produced in this country or any other country from whom we import meat."

"I think it's really important that we as consumers actively support the UK's higher standards by choosing to buy British and looking out for the Quality Standard Mark," Antony Worrall-Thompson added.

A recent TNS report for BPEX showed that 92 per cent of consumers feel imported meat should be produced to standards that are equivalent to the UK.

British pig farmers have launched PorkWatch, a bi-monthly survey of supermarkets, to identify which retailers are performing best and worst in stocking pork, bacon and ham produced to minimum UK standards.

Further information: [www.npa-uk.net](http://www.npa-uk.net)  
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### **New diet director appointed at FSA**

**Date:** Tue, 07 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) has announced the appointment of a new director of consumer choice and dietary health.

Gill Fine takes up her post with the food watchdog on October 11th. She is currently head of food and health for supermarket chain Sainsbury's.

The Consumer Choice and Dietary Health group is a new Directorate in the Agency and its establishment reflects the growing importance of diet and nutrition work carried out by the FSA.

Jon Bell, FSA chief executive, said: "I am very pleased by Gill's appointment. Her joining us and the creation of the new Directorate that she will lead are important moves for us. We have major ongoing projects in the field of diet and nutrition and it is essential for the success of these and other key activities to come that we have the right sort of dynamic and creative leadership. I believe Gill fits the bill."

"I am delighted to be joining the FSA," Ms Fine added. "I share its commitment to putting the interests of consumers first and I am very impressed by the way it has taken the lead in trying to make it easier for people to eat more healthily. Leading the new Consumer Choice

and Dietary Health Directorate is a great opportunity for me and I am looking forward to the challenge."

Ms Fine has been at Sainsbury's since 1995, starting as the Company Nutritionist before moving to her present position in 2002.

Further Information: [www.fsa.gov.uk](http://www.fsa.gov.uk)  
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### **Industry calls for end to 30 month beef scheme**

**Date:** Tue, 07 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The beef industry has complained against the current 'over 30 month scheme', prompting Defra to reconsider the initiative.

According to the industry there is a current shortage of home-produced beef as a result of the initiative and it wants restrictions to be lifted.

In addition, the FSA and the government's Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee have recommended the scheme should be dropped completely.

NFU Cymru deputy director and head of policy Mary James said: "The Government has said it will be guided by independent scientific advice - and that's why the FSA was established - but their advice is not being heeded."

The group will now re-think its plans to cut compensation for steers and heifers to zero, but will have to get approval by the Ministry of Health, according to ic Wales.

A new meeting will be held in September between industry representatives and Defra in an attempt to resolve the issue.

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### **Patchi unveils sweet export deal**

**Date:** Tue, 07 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Mediterranean sweet company Patchi has announced it has confirmed the first order for its confectionery in France.

The leading London firm revealed the order is worth more than £18,000 and was assisted by UK Trade & Investment.

Marilyne Nafa, Export Manager for Patchi, said: "We are delighted to have achieved our goal to source a distributor to cover the whole country. The information we received from UK Trade & Investment has been invaluable in securing this deal."

The company currently sells its sweets to supermarkets and stores including Harrods and has a turnover of more than £750,000.

Although the majority of Patchi's sales are UK based, it is now planning future exports in Spain, Italy and Germany.

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### **Scottish salmon exports on the up**

**Date:** Wed, 08 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Exports of Label Rouge Scottish salmon to France increased by 15 per cent during the first half of 2004, compared to the same period last year, according to trade body Scottish Quality Salmon.

In a statement, the organisation revealed that a total of 2730 tonnes was exported to France during January-June 2004, compared with 2364 tonnes for the same period in 2003.

Commenting on the continued success of Label Rouge Scottish salmon, Brian Simpson, chief executive of Scottish Quality Salmon, commented: "This further demonstrates the confidence that the French consumers have in the quality of Label Rouge Scottish salmon. The first half of 2004 mirrors the growth of previous years."

Scottish salmon exports are on the increase in spite of recent controversy over the presence of toxins in the fish.

"Earlier this year I enthused about our new promotional material and this has undoubtedly helped to reassure those consumers that had their confidence dented at the beginning of the year," Mr Simpson continued.

"Adding the recently acquired Protected Geographical Index (PGI) status to this combination should help boost Label Rouge Scottish salmon sales even further and in doing so further improve the nation's health," he concluded.

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

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### **Japanese technology to help fight fake foods**

**Date:** Wed, 08 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Japanese technology developer Mediaseek has founded a joint operation aimed at tackling the growing problem of counterfeit food and beverages in China.

The first step in Mediaseek's anti-counterfeiting measure is to allocate dedicated numbers to authentic products, encrypted into 20-digit numbers that are printed on stickers and attached to the product as a security seal. A computer or mobile phone can then be used to track the product through its server to find out whether or not it is genuine.

The firm plans to sell its service to Japanese producers of big brand foods, pharmaceuticals and consumer electronics.

Mediaseek says that the cost of issuing 30,000 stickers starts at 600,000 yen (\$5,476) and the company expects to sell the service to 10-20 firms in its first year of offering.

China is coming under increasing pressure to stamp out fake production and the Chinese authorities are trying to implement measures to reduce the incidence of fake goods.

Earlier this year a scandal concerning fake baby food caused the deaths of at least 12 infants.

Further information: [www.mediaseek.co.jp](http://www.mediaseek.co.jp)

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### **Cargill releases innovative sweeteners for food and drink**

**Date:** Wed, 08 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Cargill has launched a new range of natural sweeteners.

Special FX sweeteners are ideal for formulating reduced calorie beverages containing less sugar, according to Cargill Sweeteners North America.

The new sweeteners make it possible to reduce calories and maintain taste all without an ingredient label change. Special FX sweeteners create mid-calorie beverages without the use of aspartame, sucralose or other high-intensity sweeteners.

"Using Special FX sweeteners, beverage companies can reduce calories 33 percent or more without artificial or high intensity sweeteners while delivering the same taste profile your customers enjoy," said Elaine Tecklenburg, Cargill Sweetener's new products manager.

Special FX sweeteners deliver more sweetness with fewer calories and are available in a range of formulations, including in combination with high-intensity sweeteners.

Cargill Incorporated is an international provider of food, agricultural and risk management products and services and employs 101,000 people in 59 countries.

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

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### **Travelodge chain updates food menu**

**Date:** Wed, 08 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK hotel chain Travelodge has unveiled a new Breakfast on the Go bag for guests.

The bag, for guests who do not have time to sit down for the most important meal of the day, contains a bottle of fresh Johnson's Orange Juice, a piece of fresh fruit, a Kellogg's breakfast cereal bar, a Delice de France breakfast muffin and a take away tea or coffee option.

The bag will retail for £4.00. It can be delivered to the guest's room between 5am to 7am or is available from reception 24 hours a day.

Travelodge Bar Cafes will also be offering a one-price breakfast option of eat as much as you like for £6.50 a head - free for children under 10 - which includes scrambled eggs, cereals, bacon, fruit and croissants.

Grant Hearn, CEO of Travelodge, said: "The breakfast range has been put together with consideration of the changes in how people choose to eat breakfast whilst giving value for money.

"More people are looking for a healthy breakfast option and when time is of the essence, they want to be able to eat while on the move. With this in mind we have introduced the Breakfast on the go bag as the items within it allow you to snack throughout the morning".

Further information: [www.travelodge.co.uk](http://www.travelodge.co.uk)  
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### **Northwest Food Alliance hosts multicultural health and safety conference**

**Date:** Wed, 08 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Northwest Food Alliance is holding a pioneering Conference today in Runcorn examining the issues surrounding the health and safety of ethnically-diverse workers within the food industry.

The conference at The Heath Business and Technical Park has been sponsored by the Greencore Group and endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive.

The event will lead to the creation of a specialist working group aimed at developing and delivering a code of practice for the training and supervision of diverse ethnic groups.

Chair of the Health and Safety Commission, Bill Callaghan, will open the conference with a discussion on the new policy strategy and the gathering will also feature key speeches from Jackie Wooldridge (Northern Foods) and Roger Bibbings (RoSPA), alongside presentations from legal firms DWF Solicitors and Eversheds.

Pat Foreman, executive director of the Northwest Food Alliance, said: "The food industry now has an increasingly polylingual workforce, which requires new approaches to ensure effective communication, not only in supervision and training, but also to allow workers to voice any concerns they may have. We welcome the development of this code of practice, which will help ensure the implementation of an effective health and safety strategy for the region's multicultural workers."

Tom Chambers, safety, health and environmental manager of the Greencore Group, added: "Greencore has been delighted to sponsor this event and assist both the HSE and the NWFA with its experience in this important field."

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

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### **London food group reveals new restaurant opening**

**Date:** Wed, 08 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A food company set up by two former directors of Pizza Express has announced plans for a new Indian restaurant to be opened in North London this autumn.

Clapham House Group revealed that the venue will be the first one to open since it acquired the Bombay Bicycle Club restaurant chain in April.

The firm also owns the Real Greek restaurant group and is currently in talks for four further acquisitions.

According to Caterer Online, both restaurants are trading ahead of expectations and a newly opened Greek souvlaki venue has "traded excellently in its initial weeks".

The company hopes to expand and at present has most of its food outlets in and around the M25 area.

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### **London's food to be boosted by new group**

**Date:** Wed, 08 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new group has been set up to provide advice on the future of food and farming in London.

The organisation 'London Food', set up by Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, is hoping to boost the health of Londoners and ascertain ways of making food in the capital more sustainable.

Ken Livingstone explained: "Londoners are more aware than ever of the importance of good food and diet. But there are still major barriers to access for many.

"I have set up this body to create practical schemes to enable people on low incomes to get access to healthy and affordable food, and get better quality food into London's schools and hospitals."

A host of leading figures from the food industry, community groups, agriculture and government are all part of the initiative.

The body is chaired by Jenny Jones, a London Assembly member, and is run by the London Development Agency (LDA).

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### **Fibre enriched products predicted to be next food fad**

**Date:** Thu, 09 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Fibre-enriched products could be the next big opportunity for food manufacturers, according to a new report.

The NY-based Productscan Online database of new products found that the percentage of new food and beverage products making high fibre claims in North America rose to 4.2 per cent by the end of August this year, up from a stagnant 2.5 per cent in previous years.

"At the end of August, a federal dietary guidelines advisory panel recommended at least three servings of whole grains daily. Assuming that this recommendation is adopted for the revised Food Pyramid in the US, it should encourage the introduction of more fibre-rich foods," said Tom Vierhile, executive editor of Productscan Online.

Mr Vierhile pointed out that packaged food giants, including Kellogg Company, Kraft Foods and General Mills, could have the most to gain from the emerging trend. An estimated 1,863 low-carb products have been introduced this year so far, with smaller firms making most of them.

He added: "An emphasis on fibre could help consumers forget about the fading low-carb trend while helping the packaged food giants restore the health credentials of some of their core offerings."

"The challenge for all packaged food makers is to make processed food "better for you" by not processing out natural nutrients and high fibre products are one step on the road to accomplishing this," Mr Vierhile concluded.

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

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### **EC approves host of GM seeds**

**Date:** Thu, 09 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The European Commission has approved 17 varieties of genetically modified maize for planting throughout the EU.

The 17 maize varieties are the first GM seeds to be included in the EU's "common catalogue" of seeds, which lists about 30,000 types which can be marketed commercially throughout the 25 European Union countries.

Environmental campaigners attacked the decision, claiming it is a "recipe for disaster", and lobby group Friends of the Earth urged the British government to stop farmers growing the GM crops in the UK.

A de facto embargo on new GM approvals within the EU ended earlier this year. Opposition groups to GM foods insist the EU's decision could lead to contamination of European crops.

However, David Byrne, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, claimed: "The maize has been thoroughly assessed to be safe for human health and environment. It has been grown in Spain for years without any known problems. It will be clearly labelled as GM maize to allow farmers a choice."

The Commission also recommended EU governments approve the import and processing of Monsanto's GM oilseed rape known as GT73. The biotechnology giant wants to sell the seed, modified to resist the herbicide glyphosate, for industrial processing and animal feed.

A decision on introducing new labelling legislation for GM seeds was postponed by the European Commission because of a disagreement over minimum levels of GM content.

(no further information)

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### **Little Chef sells restaurants**

**Date:** Thu, 09 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Restaurant chain Little Chef has put 38 of its restaurants up for sale.

According to Caterer & Hotelkeeper magazine, the outlets, which stretch from Perthshire in Scotland to Whitstable in Kent, have a combined price tag of around £10.5 million.

A Little Chef spokesman said the company was "considering the future" of the properties as part of a "valuation review".

The spokesman added that if any of the restaurants are sold or closed the firm will try to find suitable employment for the staff.

The restaurants are being offered as single units, groups or a whole package on the open market and the public sale follows a number of recent private disposals the company is understood to have made.

The auction is being handled by agents Christie & Co, which has set a deadline for bids of October 22nd.

Little Chef has more than 350 outlets across the UK.

Further information: [www.little-chef.co.uk](http://www.little-chef.co.uk)

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### **Caterers critical of government school meal funding**

**Date:** Thu, 09 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Caterers have attacked government plans to invest £1.1 million in improving school meals for being too thrifty.

The proposals, a response to soaring levels of childhood obesity in the UK, follow the publication of the Department for Education and Skills' Healthy Living Blueprint for Schools earlier this week.

Roger Denton, head of catering for the London Borough of Sutton, told *Caterer & Hotelkeeper* magazine that the amount was not enough if the government wanted to ensure all schoolchildren in England and Wales were being provided with healthy meals.

Neil Porter, chairman of the Local Authority Caterers Association, added: "In making comparisons with what has been invested in other areas of Britain to help improve school meals, such as the £63 million in Scotland over three years, it is questionable what could possibly be achieved with £1.1 million in a country the size of England."

Organic food campaign group the Soil Association estimates that the government needs to spend at least £200 million a year to reform the nutritional standard of school meals.

The government's Healthy Living Blueprint admits that nutritional standards for secondary schools, which were introduced just three years ago, are not working and should be revised and proposes that salt, sugar and fat levels in school meals should be lowered.

Recent research conducted by the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) into the nutritional content of children's packed lunches found that children's lunch boxes can contain up to double the recommended daily intake of saturated fat and sugar.

(no further information)

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### **New novel ingredient under consideration by FSA**

**Date:** Thu, 09 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The FSA has revealed it is considering the approval of a new novel food ingredient.

The agency has received an application by LycoRed Natural Products Industries for a lycopene-rich tomato extract that has antioxidant properties.

At present the extract is described as an ingredient in food supplements or a food colour within the EU.

The agency is now trying to obtain views on the novel ingredient, which will have to be highly assessed to determine its safety.

A decision will be reached by an independent committee of scientists chosen by the FSA and the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP).

It is hoped the extract could be used in a host of products including yoghurts, bread, cheese, cereal bars and sausages.

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### **Survey calls for lower costs for fruit and veg**

**Date:** Thu, 09 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new survey conducted by ICM for the BBC has found that 80 per cent of consumers want the government to subsidise the cost of fruit and vegetables to help boost healthy eating.

According to BBC News Online, 1,010 adults from Scotland, England and Wales were questioned for the study, with experts arguing costs were putting people off buying healthy foods.

Paul Streets, chief executive of the Health Development Agency commented: "The findings of this poll are a clear signal that a stronger partnership for health between the government and the public is needed to reduce ill-health.

"Barriers such as the high cost of fresh fruit and vegetables...are preventing many people from leading a healthy lifestyle."

The 'Healthy Britain poll' also found that 89 per cent feel that schools should be legally obliged to ensure children eat healthily when at school and that the free fruit and veg scheme should be extended.

In addition whilst 57 per cent of consumers felt the government should try and change people's eating habits, 65 per cent claimed what people eat is down to them.

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### **Healthy but tasty treats proving popular in UK**

**Date:** Fri, 10 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Almost all of the food and drink products launched in the UK between January 2003 and the end of June 2004 fit into one of three categories, a new survey claims.

A report by Leatherhead Food International on food and drink innovation claims that 97 per cent of the 4,323 new products launched fit across three themes: convenience and snacking, health and well-being and pleasure and indulgence, with some stretching across two or even all three.

Pleasure and indulgence topped the new products list, covering 2,945 products, followed by convenience and snack lines, with 2,536 products, and health and well-being, covering 1,154.

Susie Johnson, business manager of Leatherhead's Market Intelligence unit, told NutraIngredients.com: "Some of the health products being launched now are taking more notice of taste, with companies realizing that consumers are not going to sacrifice the taste."

"But the strong consumer demand for indulgence means that health food makers need to look at other things. People always want more, its not basic shopping any more. More and more people are travelling and they want more from their purchases."

Further information: [www.lfra.co.uk](http://www.lfra.co.uk)  
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### **Buyout rumours help boost Big Food Group**

**Date:** Fri, 10 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Rumours of a possible management buyout at Big Food Group have resurfaced.

The food giant saw its stock rise 1 p to 88p as speculation grew that a bid might be imminent.

The prospect of a management buyout of the group, which owns the Iceland grocery chain, was first raised two years ago.

Dealing rooms are rife with talk that the group is poised for an offer, possibly from a management-backed team, according to The Times.

However, some speculation suggests that an approach might come from Icelandic investor Baugur, which holds a 22 per cent stake in BFG, rather than from chief executive Bill Grimsey.

Baugur has recently been expanding its interests in the UK.

(no further information)  
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### **Sun Valley announces Canadian acquisition**

**Date:** Fri, 10 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Sun Valley Foods, a division of Cargill Limited, has announced that it has purchased Canadian firm Caravelle Foods.

Caravelle, which produces frozen beef patties for the Canadian quick service restaurant industry,

The acquisition gives Sun Valley control of both Caravelle's production plants at Spruce Grove, Alberta, and Brampton, Ontario. Caravelle employs around 120 people.

"Since January 2002, we have been supplying further processed chicken products to the Canadian food service industry. With this acquisition, we are looking forward to expanding our protein offerings," said David Andrzejewski, managing director for Sun Valley Foods.

"This acquisition will allow Sun Valley Foods to dramatically increase our ability to provide customer solutions across the country from a number of different locations and across a broader spectrum of products. We are becoming a truly trans-Canadian company."

The terms of the purchase deal have not been disclosed.

London, Ontario, based Sun Valley Foods, a division of Cargill Limited, is a major supplier of further processed chicken to the Canadian food service industry.

Further information: [www.cargill.ca](http://www.cargill.ca)  
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### **New UK centre to link food producers and researchers**

**Date:** Fri, 10 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new Yorkshire-based initiative, the Food Chain Centre of Industrial Collaboration (CIC), has been unveiled in Leeds.

The new centre aims to provide high-level scientific support for food chain companies and improve standards of quality assurance and added value.

The Food Chain CIC intends to form a link between food producers and research institutions in Yorkshire. It is a partnership between food research centres at the universities of Leeds and York and the Central Science Laboratory at Sand Hutton, near York.

The centre was officially opened by industry expert Lord Haskins, who is also a board member of Leeds-based regional development agency Yorkshire Forward.

The Food Chain CIC has already facilitated the development of an automatic auto-fluorescent system to reject fruit with stone remnants, and a technique to ensure consistency of aromas and flavours of identically branded products that are produced at different manufacturing plants.

Lord Haskins, former chairman of Northern Foods, said: "With growing globalisation, our businesses can no longer simply compete on cost grounds alone. We need to add value to our region's products and processes. Our aim is to transfer knowledge to regional companies, encourage investment by UK and international companies in the region and promote Yorkshire and Humber as the emerging force for technology and innovation."  
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### **Export opportunities spiced up with food trip**

**Date:** Fri, 10 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK curry chefs are being flown to the Czech Republic in an attempt to tempt locals' tastebuds with spicy food and create an export opportunity.

The trip has been set up by UK Trade and Investment, which believes exporting curry to Prague would be a "ready-made success".

At present, the capital only has one Indian restaurant, so a host of Indian dishes will be showcased at a special garden party next week.

Jane Johansen, a UK Trade and Investment advisor told BBC News Online: "We are taking a chef with us so we can demonstrate cooking the dishes as part of the enjoyment is the smells and the way it is cooked."

In addition, the Stilton Cheesemakers' Association and a flavoured tea maker will be attending in a bid to promote their goods too.

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### **Big brands help boost sales at Premier**

**Date:** Fri, 10 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Premier Foods has released its latest results, with sales increasing by 14 per cent to £425.8 million.

The UK firm produces items such as Sun-Pat peanut butter, Sarsons vinegar and Typhoo tea and claimed its big brands helped boost results, according to Bloomberg.

By cutting costs the business also managed to lower its net loss to £4.7 million in the six months to July 3, where it had previously stood at £7.1 million.

Chief executive Robert Schofield commented: "Our brands, scale and efficiency mean we are well positioned to deliver profitable growth and strong cash flow generation to support progressive dividends and complementary acquisitions in the future."

Sales of branded goods at the firm now make up 54 per cent of its grocery sales and future outlook remains positive.

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### **Restaurants issued with disaster advice**

**Date:** Mon, 13 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new guide has been produced for restaurateurs to help them cope in the event of a natural disaster or terrorism attack.

The guide has been launched by business network Business Link for London and has been created with the London Development Agency (LDA) and VisitLondon.

Small businesses such as restaurants are particularly vulnerable to these types of events.

Judith Rutherford, Business Link for London chief executive, told Caterer Online: "The toolkit has been designed to provide a solution to a very real need identified through research with small businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector.

"Assessing risks and working out how to respond to a potential disaster, both short and long term, is vital."

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### **Grant awarded to UK researchers for nanotechnology in food**

**Date:** Mon, 13 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A grant of £1.4 million has been awarded to UK researchers at the University of Birmingham to help develop new nanotechnology for liquid based products.

The government grant is part of latest funding into nanotechnology and is being conducted with both the food and engineering industries.

Nanotechnology is already used to preserve foods, boost nutritional values and improve flavour.

With the money a project group will develop a new generation of micro devices known as rheometers, according to Food Production Daily.

It is hoped the new device will allow cost effective development and help to save time for food companies.

A new UK based study has revealed that 200 food manufacturing companies are already working on ways to insert nanotechnology into foods.

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### **Safeway store sales announced at Morrisons**

**Date:** Mon, 13 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Morrisons has announced it has agreed to sell four of its Safeway stores to Asda today.

The move by the food retailer is part of its obligations to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), which it agreed to on completing the takeover deal with Safeway in March.

Bob Stott, joint managing director for Morrisons, said: "Our integration of the Safeway business is progressing and today's announcement is a further step in the overall process.

The contract with Asda is subject to the approval of the Office of Fair Trading, and discussions with them have commenced."

According to Morrisons, staff already working at the stores will now transfer to Asda.

The stores are based in Coventry, Shrewsbury, Northampton and Burton-on-Trent.

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### **FSA launches salt reduction campaign**

**Date:** Mon, 13 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The FSA has launched a huge public health campaign today to reduce high salt consumption in the UK.

According to latest figures, each day at least 26 million people eat more than the recommended daily limit of 6g of salt.

Food Standards Agency chair Sir John Krebs commented: "Everybody has got used to eating too much salt. We want to encourage everyone to see how they can reduce the salt they eat.

"By cutting back on adding salt to food at home and when eating out, as well as looking at what's on the labels of processed foods, it's possible for people to make positive health choices."

The move follows the launch of a new consumer advice booklet on salt by the FDF last week.

"Many in the food industry have introduced salt reduction programmes and, to their credit, many major retailers and manufacturers now label products with the salt content," Sir John said.

He added the food industry is now about two thirds of the way to reaching the FSA target of a 1g salt reduction in processed foods by the end of 2005.

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### **Coffee companies form fair trade agreement**

**Date:** Mon, 13 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A host of major coffee companies, including Nestle, have agreed to a code of conduct with producers.

The move is hoped to boost standards across the industry and the agreement will help to improve working conditions and help protect the environment in the countries where the coffee is produced.

According to Food Ingredients First, the 'Common Code for the Coffee Community (CCCC) has been put forward by industry representatives but it is not clear yet as to when the voluntary code will be signed.

Under the agreement, companies will have to pay minimum salaries, not use child labour, stick to international environmental standards and allow trade union membership.

Additional companies taking part in the initiative are Kraft Foods, Sara Lee and Tchibo.  
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### **ABF issues positive pre-closing trading update**

**Date:** Mon, 13 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Associated British Foods (ABF) has issued a pre-closing trading update today in the run up to its full year results to September 18.

Results show the company's various businesses have performed well and the group is now expecting "second half operating profit growth to be similar to that achieved in the first half".

ABF's chairman welcomed the results and explained they were particularly positive since there had been key issues such as currency and raw materials set to effect business.

Key areas that performed well were British Sugar in the UK with a record factory performance and the grocery sector, which achieved positive production despite higher costs.

A number of acquisitions were also made in the food area of the business, including vegetable oil, herbs and spices and yeast and bakery ingredients deals.

The firm's full year results are due for release on November 10.  
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### **English food and drink highlighted in new campaign**

**Date:** Tue, 14 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new campaign has been launched today by VisitBritain England, promoting regional food and drink in the country.

The £300,000 'tasteEngland' campaign hopes to encourage more people to enjoy the high quality food and drink available in different areas.

Michael Bedingfield, director of England Marketing, commented: "Our research indicates that half of England's visitors rate the quality of local food and drink as playing an important part of their holiday and many are delighted to be able to enjoy the specialities of the region they are visiting.

"The year-long tasteEngland campaign fulfils these visitors' appetite for information about food and drink in the places they want to visit, showcasing all that makes England a great destination to experience the best regional food and drink and inspiring British people to visit because of our culinary heritage."

According to Visit Britain, over the last decade English food and drink has seen a boost in quality and variety, with a traditional selection of foods offered on improved menus and in recipes.

Celebrity chefs have helped launch the campaign, with each one representing a different region and providing tips and advice on food and drink and a recipe using regional ingredients.

A free colour brochure packed full of information has also been produced as part of the campaign.

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### **Ring rot procedures reviewed in new report**

**Date:** Tue, 14 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Defra has produced a new report on lessons learnt from the potato ring rot outbreak.

The 'Lessons Learned' review has been submitted to parliament under-secretary of state for Defra, Ben Bradshaw.

Under the report procedures completed throughout the outbreak were reviewed along with government action to protect against the disease.

Mr Bradshaw commented: "I want to ensure that if changes are needed they are introduced as quickly as possible.

"I have therefore asked the head of Plant Health, Dr Stephen Hunter, to assess each of the recommendations and to report back to me by the end of October, to allow time to implement any changes necessary in time for the 2005 planting season."

As a result of the study, 54 recommendations have been suggested from Defra officials, the NFU and a host of organisations and individuals involved in the outbreak.

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### **New breakfast range released by speciality dairy firm**

**Date:** Tue, 14 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Llaeth-y-Llan Village Dairy, a Welsh dairy firm that has customers such as Jamie Oliver's 'Fifteen' restaurants, has launched a new healthy breakfast range.

The 'Bora Da!' selection includes low fat breakfast yoghurts in flavours such as blueberry, orange and cereal, grapefruit, and apple and cereal, all produced without colourings or additives.

Falmai Roberts, who runs Llaeth-y-Llan Village Dairy, told The Western Mail: "Realising that many of our fruit yoghurts were being eaten for breakfast in hotels, we identified an opportunity to develop a new breakfast range.

"It is something different for the market. Buyers in the speciality food business are always looking for innovation and to stay on top, you must develop new products."

Products from the company were showcased at the Speciality and Fine Food Fair in Olympia, for speciality food and drink buyers and suppliers.

The company has been producing yoghurt for nearly 20 years, with 25 different flavours and has already won a host of Great Taste awards this year.

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### **Soil Association calls for more organic food in eateries**

**Date:** Tue, 14 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Soil Association is calling on more cafes, restaurants and pubs to serve organic food.

The move follows recent research showing that 44 per cent of respondents would like an organic option when they are eating out, according to Medical News Today.

Recently the association held Organic Week to help promote organic food and farming in the UK overall.

Additional findings showed that the amount of people buying organic food for its taste has doubled since 2002 to 48 per cent.

At present, many restaurants offer a dish of the day organic option for customers or some are fully organic.

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### **Profits on the up at Paramount's restaurants**

**Date:** Tue, 14 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Paramount has announced its latest results, with pre tax profits of £1.8 million compared to a loss of £230,000 last year.

The owner of the Bertorelli and Chez Gerard restaurant chains also experienced an increase in like-for-like sales of 5.6 per cent.

However, sales did drop in the period to June 27, since the company reduced its outlets from 26 to 21.

Chief executive Nick Basing told Caterer Online: "The strong financial performance reflects our success in turning around the business. We are now positioned to deliver a controlled growth plan."

Mr Basing thought a key factor behind the positive results was an improvement in the restaurants' food and wine quality through new suppliers.

Future plans for the company involve a new format Deli Bertorelli and sites outside of London.

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### **Plans put forward to display safety information in food outlets**

**Date:** Tue, 14 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

New proposals have been put forward to ask restaurants and cafes to have graded food safety certificates on display.

The plans suggested by UK environmental health officials will be submitted at this week's annual meeting of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH).

At present food outlets do not have to display results, but they do get inspected by councils.

CIEH policy officer Jenny Morris told BBC News: "Consumer information drives up hygiene standards and there is no reason why it can't be introduced, we are in an era of wider freedom of information after all.

"Clearly armed with this basic information, UK consumers would be able to exercise choice about where they eat, based not only on the menu but also on knowing how conscientious the restaurants they choose to frequent are in maintaining good food hygiene."

Although any approval of the plans would originally be on a voluntary basis, Ms Morris explained that the law could be changed to force food establishments to display the certificates.

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### **Scientists analyse mango texture**

**Date:** Wed, 15 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Scientists in the United States claim to have improved the gumminess texture of fresh mangoes.

The research team from the department of food science at the University of Georgia found that texture of the fruit could be improved through the presence of an enzyme involved in the breakdown of plant cell walls and in combination with calcium chloride.

The scientists infused a common variety of mangoes found extensively on the supermarket shelves with pectinesterase (PME) and calcium chloride.

"Temperature gradient infusion with PME and/or calcium chloride increased gumminess and chewiness, but had no impact on hardness and adhesiveness," the researchers wrote in the September issue of the Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture.

According to the US scientists, the distribution of pectic substances, such as protopectin or alkaline soluble pectin, was approximately twice that of water- or chelator-soluble pectin.

"The initial hardness of Kent mango was variable, and differences in distribution of pectic substances were observed," the scientists added.

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### **Caffe Nero brews up top profits**

**Date:** Wed, 15 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Coffee bar chain Caffe Nero has reported a record 127 per cent increase in annual pre-tax profits to £2.4 million for the year ending May 31st.

The company also announced that turnover rose 28 per cent to £50.5 million over the year.

Caffe Nero opened 43 new outlets over the year, taking its total to 162 stores across 66 UK towns and cities.

Chairman Gerry Ford said: "The UK branded coffee sector continues to experience high levels of growth and Caffe Nero has clearly demonstrated its market-leading potential in this expanding segment of the market.

"Trading in the current year has had an encouraging start and the group looks well positioned to deliver another year of excellent financial performance."

Caffe Nero is the third largest in the UK behind Starbucks and Costa Coffee with an 11 per cent share of the British branded market.

The chain plans to have 200 stores trading across Britain by February 2005.

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

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### **EU disciplines Belgium and Luxembourg over patent protection law**

**Date:** Wed, 15 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Belgium and Luxembourg have been censured by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) over both nations' failure to implement legislation.

The ECJ action relates to key European Union (EU) legislation on granting patent protection to innovative food industry products.

The governments in Belgium and Luxembourg have both failed to adhere to a deadline to write directive 98/44/EC on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions into their national laws by July 2000, according to Just-food.com.

Both EU states insist they are now taking steps to implement the directive, but the European Commission has lost patience with them stalling and the ECJ could now impose a fine.

(no further information)

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### **Glisten hails confectionary success**

**Date:** Wed, 15 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The UK-based Glisten group has announced that it has secured a major share of the competitive confectionary market over the past two years.

The firm, which specialises in a range of niche products, such as chocolate buttons and popcorn, also reported that its sales rose by a third in the year to June to £20.8 million, up from £15.6 million the previous year.

The company, created in October 2001, now supplies most of the UK's leading retailers and said pre-tax profits rose over the year to £1.33 million from £1.06 million.

Established to "build a food manufacturing group focusing on niche sectors", the firm purchased Glisten Confectionery in June 2002, and has since acquired a number of companies, three in the past year, including Sunya, F Fravigar and House of York.

"You can buy sweets anywhere from DIY stores to clothes shops," said Glisten chairman Jeremy Hamer. He added that the company is looking for more acquisitions in "market areas we haven't yet got into".

Glisten produces a range of confectionary products, including chocolate-coated raisins, edible decorations, chocolate balls, sugar-coated almonds, popcorn and jelly beans.

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

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### **Oil products found to be contaminated with Sudan dye**

**Date:** Wed, 15 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The UK Food Standards Agency has issued a warning after a number of Nanas Products Palm Oil Zomi were found to be contaminated with the illegal dye Sudan IV.

The agency states that the following sizes of Nanas Products Palm Oil Zomi are known to be contaminated with the carcinogenic food dye: Nanas Products Palm Oil Zomi - 1l 'best before' Dec 2006; and Nanas Products Palm Oil Zomi - 1l 'best before' 2006.

The product warning has been given a Category C rating by the food standards watchdog - For action as deemed necessary.

Sudan IV is banned under the Colours in Food Regulations 1995 and is considered to be a genotoxic carcinogen.

The affected products were manufactured in Ghana by Accra-based Nanas Products and the FSA has no details of the UK importer or distribution outlets.

The agency said that the product appears to be distributed through direct van sales, where retailers who sell African or Afro-Caribbean food products are the main clients.

The products in question are sold in clear plastic containers, with a red screw top cap and are sold in one litre size, though other sizes or batch codes of the product may also exist. The FSA is calling on local authorities to ensure appropriate enforcement action is taken.

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### **Brake Brothers announces supplier acquisition**

**Date:** Wed, 15 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Brake Brothers has revealed it is in talks to buy the chilled food distribution business of Peter's Food Service.

The UK food supplier supplies frozen, chilled and grocery products to UK caterers.

Owned by private equity firm Clayton, Dubilier and Rice, the firm is hoping the move will strengthen its position in the sector.

Peter's is based in Caerphilly and supplies chilled products to UK foodservice outlets including cooked meats, dairy and fruit and vegetables.

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### **Wales gets first yoghurt drinks company**

**Date:** Wed, 15 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Hoping to reap the benefits of the booming healthy food market, two dairy farmers in Wales have set up a yoghurt drinks company.

The pair claim they are the first in Wales to set up such a business and have already had positive feedback to their summer-fruit flavoured smoothie Cult, according to ic Wales.

Jamie Adams, one of the owners of 'The Handmade Smoothie Company' said: "We were drinking yoghurt drinks abroad and enjoyed them but we could not get anything comparable over here. We thought we'd identified a gap in the market, certainly in Wales.

"We looked at the UK market and found that the yoghurt drinks market was growing at 11 per cent a year - that was a substantial growth. We felt it was the right sector to get involved in and one which would give us total control of the milk from start to finish."

At present, the firm produces 400 units a week, however it has the potential to produce five million litres a year.

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### **Fibre-rich food to takeover from low-carb trends**

**Date:** Thu, 16 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The percentage of new food and drink products in North America being marketed as high in fibre has risen to 4.2 per cent in 2004, a new survey claims.

The Productscan Online database of new products reports that high-fibre diets may start replacing the craze for low-carb foods in the United States, as the government launches a healthy eating campaign.

The percentage of new products claiming to be high in fibre had remained at around 2.5 per cent for the last four years.

Executive editor of Productscan Online, Tom Vierhile, said: "There is no doubt that consumers could use more fibre in their diet. An emphasis on fibre could help consumers forget about the fading low-carb trend while helping the packaged food giants restore the health credentials of some of their core offerings."

Experts predict that renewed interest in high-fibre products will prove popular with bakers, pasta makers and cereal producers, whose sales suffered most as a result of the low-carb craze.

The Productscan survey also found that 125 new, low-carb products hit supermarket shelves since August 2003. Mr Vierhile suggested that the market has now reached saturation levels.

At the end of August this year, a dietary guidelines advisory panel of the US government recommended that people eat at least three servings of whole grains daily.

(no further information)

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## **UK firms join forces to create innovative food packaging technology**

**Date:** Thu, 16 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Automated packaging developer Bradman Lake has unveiled its latest robotic top load cartoner for throughputs of up to 300ppm, which will operate in conjunction with the Flowtronic 120 from Autowrappers.

Autowrappers is a new member of the Bradman Lake Group and was acquired alongside UK-based firm Europack as part of the group's strategy of achieving better global coverage.

The new HS2/60 Lock Former, medium speed LJ300 robotic collator with ABB pick & place multiple loader and Compact R right angle lugless closer with flexible carton control will be linked by an electronic motion control system.

One of the purposes behind acquiring the two UK firms was to create a single source to provide initial line design, specification of equipment, installation and control systems to major packaging firms, foodproductiondaily.com reports.

"Autowrappers and Europack machinery naturally complements the Bradman Lake carton erecting, loading and sealing range," said Graham Hayes, chief executive officer of the Bradman Lake Group.

"Our customers are increasingly searching for a fully integrated, comprehensive packaging solution from a single source - and that's exactly what we can now offer. Very few enterprises are able to deliver the range of technologies and products we now have, together with the level of support we offer as the original equipment manufacturer."

Bradman Lake has around 3000 machines installed in over 50 countries and has manufacturing plants in Britain, the United States and Germany.

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

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## **Organic farming study to look at impact on quality and cattle**

**Date:** Thu, 16 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Researchers in the United States are looking into the transition of dairy cattle from conventional to organic farming.

The scientists at the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine will monitor cattle in order to understand changes in animal health, milk quality and milk safety.

The transition from conventional to organic dairy farming usually takes three years, according to just-food.com.

The \$1.1 million US study aims to analyse milk samples from five transitional herds in New York to ensure animals are healthy, and farms remain in good fiscal health.

Organic milk accounts for less than one per cent of the US milk market at present, but is the fastest-growing segment of the natural food market, with a 277 per cent increase in the number of certified organic cows in the United States over the past seven years.

Further information: [www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov)  
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### **General Foods releases sugar free flavours**

**Date:** Thu, 16 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

General Foods International has relaunched its range of sugar-free, low-fat flavours.

The healthier flavours, which include French Vanilla Cafe, Suisse Mocha, Cafe Vienna and Chai Latte, contain two grams of carbohydrates and 30 calories per serving.

General Foods International is a line of rich, creamy-tasting flavoured coffees and Chai teas packed in the brand's trademarked tin. The product blends coffee, unique flavourings, sweetener and non-dairy creamer and is the only premium instant coffee brand with sugar free offerings.

The company claims the low-fat products "offer a creamy and rich-tasting drink option" and an alternative to many flavoured coffee and tea drinks on the market, which can be very high in calories, fat and carbohydrates.

A recent Gallup Poll stated that 63 per cent of Chai users are dieters and new Sugar Free Chai Latte, General Foods International's first non-coffee flavour, consists of a sweet blend of tea, cinnamon and nutmeg, and is available in a 4.4 oz tin.

Sugar Free French Vanilla Cafe, Sugar Free Suisse Mocha and Sugar Free Cafe Vienna are also sold in 4.4 oz tins, and the French Vanilla Cafe and Suisse Mocha flavours are available in decaffeinated form, for around \$3.69.

Further information: [www.kraft.com](http://www.kraft.com)  
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### **Geest announces new fresh foods acquisition**

**Date:** Thu, 16 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Geest has revealed it has strengthened its position in the fresh foods sector with a new acquisition.

The fresh food firm has purchased Anglia Crown for £14 million and further results included the launch of more than 550 new products and a seven per cent growth in sales.

However in its first half results announced today, the company reported a 16 per cent fall in first half profits and claimed trading conditions were becoming "increasingly turbulent".

Chairman John Banham commented: "The UK trading environment for food retailers continues to be challenging and has created increasingly turbulent trading conditions for suppliers and which are affecting our results this year.

"We have responded by improving operational efficiencies and developing new revenue streams."

Key reasons behind the difficulties, according to the firm, were higher prices for some ingredients and bad weather affecting seasonal foods such as salad.

Geest makes pizzas, ready meals and bagged salads for the big supermarket chains.  
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### **Uniq announces new £20 million supply deal**

**Date:** Thu, 16 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

British food group Uniq has released its first half results and revealed it is on track to reach planned supply chain savings of £17 million in 2006/07.

The firm also revealed it had won new business over the period to supply salads, sandwiches and desserts, in a deal worth around £20 million per year.

However, sales were down three per cent compared to the same period last year and UK and North European markets remained challenging, according to Reuters.

The company commented: "The performance in the first five months was in line with our budget in what was a difficult period. Our results traditionally have a strong second-half weighting, and our new business wins are encouraging."

Uniq supplies chilled convenience foods to grocery chains in 15 European countries.  
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### **Report advises cautious approach to nanotechnology and food**

**Date:** Fri, 17 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Nanotechnology offers a wealth of potential benefits to food production, but its implications must be appropriately assessed, a new report claims.

The study, commissioned by the UK government and carried out by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering, examines current and future developments in nanotechnology and concludes that the industry's development must be guided by appropriate safety assessments and regulation.

The report also identifies a range of potential benefits to be gained from nanoscience and nanotechnologies. Nanoscience and nanotechnologies involve the study and use of miniscule materials at sizes of millionths of a millimetre.

Professor Ann Dowling, chair of the working group that produced the report, cautioned: "Most areas present no new health or safety risks, but where particles are concerned, size really does matter. Nanoparticles can behave quite differently from larger particles of the same material and this can be exploited in a number of exciting ways. But it is vital that we determine both the positive and negative effects they might have."

A recent study from Helmut Kaiser Consultancy estimates that the nanofood market will surge from \$2.6 billion today to \$20.4 billion in 2010. The report predicts that nanoscale biotech and nano-bio-info will have a major impact on the food and food-processing industries.

There are currently more than 200 companies around the world active in nanotechnology research and development, according to foodnavigator.com.

(no further information)

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### **Pig industry urged to adapt for future sector growth**

**Date:** Fri, 17 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A UK agriculture expert has advised the British pig industry to 'de-commoditise' its products in order to boost sales and improve margins.

Roland Bonney of the Food Animal Initiative told a conference at Nottingham University that the industry needed to adapt and "reach out" to the end-consumer.

Delegates attending the 15th Annual JSR Technical Conference heard that UK agriculture had strengths upon which the industry could capitalise, including a "strong legislative baseline" in most consumer areas, including public health, environment, animal and worker welfare, and controls to ensure the safe use of drugs.

Mr Bonney also pointed out that the UK livestock industry also had known health status and impartial assurance schemes, with strong traceability and production operated "in full view of the consumer". He noted that there was reduced opportunity for food terrorism and suggested that traceability could be used as a tool to account for certain qualities.

Mr Bonney pointed out that an industry that is not valued dies and claimed that the greatest opportunity came from higher value products and those which could only be supplied by the home market.

(no further information)

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## **Takeover rumours boost Big Food Group shares**

**Date:** Fri, 17 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Shares in UK food giant Big Food Group shot up by more than 13 per cent after the company announced it was the subject of a possible takeover offer.

Big Food, which owns the 760-store Iceland frozen food chain and the Booker cash-and-carry business, revealed it was in talks with a possible suitor, though refused to name the potential buyer.

The company said the offer could be worth 110 pence a share, but stressed that the deal was far from done and no offer had yet been made.

Responding to growing speculation about a possible offer, Big Food issued a statement saying it "confirms that preliminary discussions have been held with a potential acquirer about an offer for the company at 110p per share."

Speculation suggests that the potential bidder could be Icelandic retail group Baugur, owner of toy store Hamleys and Karen Millen, which already holds a 22 per cent stake in BFG, and sold its 10 per cent stake in department store group House of Fraser this week.

In May, Big Food posted full year pre-tax profits up 35 per cent at £50.1 million.

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

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## **Welsh politician opposes EU's decision on GM crops**

**Date:** Fri, 17 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

A Welsh Assembly member calling for answers on the potential impact of the EU Commission's decision to approve 17 different varieties of GM maize on Wales.

Welsh Liberal Democrat countryside spokesman Mick Bates has written to countryside minister Carwyn Jones to query whether the sanctioning of genetically modified crops could threaten Wales's GM-free status.

Mr Bates wants to know what impact the move will have on Welsh policy and his stance is backed by watchdog group GM Free Cymru, which is urging the Assembly and Defra to lodge formal objections on the basis that the maize poses unacceptable risks to human health and the environment, the Liverpool Daily Post reports.

Mr Bates said the listing highlighted the "creeping commercialisation" of GM crops and urged UK administrations to adopt rules on co-existence between GM and conventional crops.

GM Free Cymru spokesman Dr Brian John said: "This listing is a despicable piece of opportunism, pushed through by a group of commissioners who are shortly to retire, and in particular at the behest of David Byrne, who has been a leading proponent of GM in agriculture."

Welsh farmers are unlikely to use the crop varieties because they are modified to be resistant to insects that are not problematic in Wales. However, there is nothing to stop farmers opting to grow any one of the strains of Monsanto-produced GM maize.

Almost 2,000 regional authorities across Europe, including Wales, have already declared themselves GMO-free.

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### **Atkins attempts to stem waning interest in low-carb diets**

**Date:** Fri, 17 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Atkins Nutritionals has reportedly hired a turnaround specialist to halt waning consumer interest in the low-carb diet trend.

The US-based firm behind the popular low-carbohydrate diet is planning to cut jobs and boost efficiency in a bid to reverse its fortunes.

The market has become flooded with low-carbohydrate foods and other products and Atkins Nutritionals is facing a more competitive trading environment.

However, the company's UK division, which launched its first products on the market earlier this year, insists it has seen no such pressure and has received an "exceptionally positive response" to its products, sold through Boots, Holland & Barrett and health food stores.

A statement from Atkins UK managing director Roger Spicer said: "There are over three million people in the UK who are currently following the Atkins low-carb lifestyle. I'm delighted to say that our sales are buoyant and there are no signs of a downward trend."

Recent research carried out by Reuters found that over a quarter of food and drink companies in the UK,

Europe and US view the development of low-carb foods as a priority and are actively investing in research and development of new products.

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

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### **Child diets at 'crisis' point**

**Date:** Fri, 17 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Children's dietary health in the UK has reached crisis point according to a group of MPs.

More than 100 MPs have now backed a Commons motion calling on the government to tackle the "alarming" rate of childhood obesity.

The motion sites the "lack of practical cooking skills" in the national curriculum and "insufficient promotion to children of healthy foods" as two of the reasons behind the problem.

The 2000 National Diet and Nutrition Survey showed that 90 per cent of children consume more than the recommended level of saturated fat, while half consume more salt than levels recommended for adults.

The government is currently working with food manufacturers to reduce salt content in food.

Childhood obesity and the diseases it can lead to in later life are a major burden on the health service.

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### **MPs back National Vegetarian Week**

**Date:** Fri, 17 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

MPs have thrown their weight behind a national initiative to promote vegetarian food.

National Vegetarian Week, organised by the Vegetarian Society, is now in its 12th year.

Pubs, restaurants, cafes, schools and hospitals have all supported the campaign, which is designed to fit with the government's own healthy eating strategy.

The Department of Health is keen for people, especially children, to eat five pieces of fruit and veg a day as part of a healthy diet.

Thanks to the Commons catering department, MPs have been able to sample some vegetarian alternatives at mealtimes.

There are an estimated three million vegetarians in the UK.

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### **Defra to re-think 30 month beef scheme again**

**Date:** Mon, 20 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The UK government is reportedly considering its proposal to exclude heifers and steers from the Over-Thirty-Months Scheme.

The farming industry has opposed the exclusion of heifers from the scheme and has attempted to persuade the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to retain the current compensation system in some form.

The OTM Rule is currently costing Defra £700,000 a month to dispose of animals, The Journal reports. Lobby groups are leaning on the department to concentrate on lifting the OTM rule rather than introducing short-term measures.

The NFU, the NBA and other farming organisations are calling for compensation to be maintained, but have failed to agree on how the system should operate, with the NFU recommending compensation both for steers and heifers and the NBA arguing that steers should be barred from the scheme.

NFU representative Richard Haddock said: "There is a principle here and it is that the continuation of the OTM scheme is unjustifiable. The scheme should be abolished in its entirety. Officials in Europe and countless industry experts in the UK have agreed that British beef is safe. Until it is abolished, all cattle over 30 months old should be eligible for compensation."

Further Information: [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
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### **DNA tool improves quality of cheese**

**Date:** Mon, 20 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A team of scientists in France is reportedly developing new DNA tools to improve the quality of cheese.

The research team monitored the dynamic changes in the bacterial population in milk associated with refrigeration and found that refrigerating raw milk for as little as 24 hours can cut levels of bacteria responsible for the development of desirable qualities of raw-milk cheeses.

The scientists from the Agence Francaise de Securite Sanitaire des Aliments, the French food security organisation, stated: "Many of the species identified after refrigeration were present in the initial sample. However, the relative proportions of bacterial were clearly altered by refrigeration."

In the fresh samples, the scientists report that the dominant bacterial population was *Lactobacillus lactis*, a species of bacteria that is commonly used as a starter culture for many cheeses, while after refrigeration, the researchers found a significant decrease in *L. lactis* population and increases in a variety of other bacteria, including the common food pathogen, *Listeria monocytogenes*.

"The results obtained are of interest not only for their contribution to the knowledge on the bacterial flora of raw milk samples but also because they describe the consequences of a

simple process, milk refrigeration, on the quality of dairy products and its impact on health," the team concluded.

Direct analyses of DNA were achieved by using temporal temperature gel electrophoresis (TTGE) and denaturing gradient gel electrophoresis (DGGE).

A full report by the French scientists appears in the September 2004 issue of Applied and Environmental Microbiology.

Further information: [www.afssa.fr](http://www.afssa.fr)  
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### **Innovative technology to improve flavour of frozen food**

**Date:** Mon, 20 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Two inventions from US technology firm Asymptote have been granted European patents.

Both technologies reportedly exploit Asymptote's expertise in freezing and crystallisation, with the first stopping frozen food tasting inferior to the fresh equivalent and the second preventing damaging scale building up inside equipment used in petrochemical production and other heavy industries.

According to Business Weekly, Asymptote claims that its mastery of ice crystals has enabled the company to control the size and location of ice crystals during the freezing process, minimising the cell damage that affects the taste of frozen produce. Initial tests using fruit salad reportedly show that consumers cannot differentiate between fresh and Asymptote frozen food.

The second innovation uses ultrasound technology to reduce the build up of damaging scale inside production equipment, which can cause pressure losses, reduced flow rate in pipes and pipe blockage, leading to a reduction in the productivity and lifetime of equipment.

"Having the patents granted will allow Asymptote to license the technologies to major end users," Asymptote managing director, John Morris, said. "We will license the technologies to service suppliers in the petrochemical and food industries. We're actively looking to partner with an appropriate service provider to the offshore industry."

The frozen food market (excluding ice cream) in the UK is worth over £3.7 billion a year.

Further information: [www.asymptote.net](http://www.asymptote.net)  
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### **Premium burger to be introduced at Burger King**

**Date:** Mon, 20 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Fast food chain Burger King is hoping to boost its image and beat rival McDonalds by using Aberdeen Angus beef in a new premium burger.

Already released in the US the burger is set to be introduced in Europe next year and has already helped US burger sales rise by 12.9 per cent.

Advertising for the new product involves Harry Enfield with a spoof self-help and lifestyle guru approach.

Although there have been concerns that the fast food might cheapen the beef's reputation and lead to cheaper imported beef being used in the UK, the Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society is in favour.

Ron McHattie, chief executive of the society, told the Scotsman: "The more people that are exposed to the brand and enjoy it, then the better it is for us all. Angus is the premium brand in the red meat sector, there is no question about it, and Burger King is cottoning on to that."

Burger King claims that its policy is to source meat for the burger from the UK and does not believe it will have a negative effect on the beef's reputation.

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### **Study finds those who live alone eat more healthily**

**Date:** Mon, 20 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

New research from America has found that women that live alone are less likely to become obese and tend to eat less food.

In the UK cheaper food, a lack of exercise and the "couch potato culture" have all been attributed to a rise in weight problems.

TV presenter Amanda Protheroe Thomas told ic Wales: "When you're in a relationship or live with someone you tend to cook more and I think you tend to make more luxurious meals than when you're on your own.

"On my own I tend to keep it quite simple. I make a conscious effort to eat very healthily."

Ms Protheroe Thomas praised the UK for its smaller portion sizes in restaurants though, compared to countries such as America.

Researchers from the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Centre spoke to around 300 women for the study.

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### **Further Safeway stores sold by Morrisons**

**Date:** Mon, 20 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Morrisons is to sell a further ten Safeway stores to Tesco as part of the measures required through its Safeway takeover deal.

Once the sales are complete Tesco will pay for the stores, an amount said to be worth £87.6 million.

Bob Stott, joint managing director for Morrisons commented: "Our integration of the Safeway business is progressing and today's announcement is a further step in the overall process."

The amount to be paid for the stores is in line with Morrisons' expectations and further details will be released once the process has been completed.

As with the previous sales, existing staff in the stores will continue to work for Tesco and the contract must first be approved by the Office of Fair Trading.

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### **Salt firms criticise FSA campaign**

**Date:** Tue, 21 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Debate over salt levels in processed foods is continuing, with growing support for and opposition to plans to reduce levels at an industry level.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) argues that at least 26 million people in the UK are at risk of high blood pressure, strokes and heart attacks because they consume too much salt, citing the fact that some three-quarters of all consumed salt comes from processed food.

It has been recommended that two grams of salt per day is necessary for good health, but according to the FSA people eat 9.5 grams on average. The government's goal is to cut average daily consumption to less than six grams by 2010.

However, Salt Manufacturers' Association (SMA) asserts that there are no scientific benefits to be had from cutting salt from a diet.

Manufacturers have argued that the 'Sid the Slug' campaign is based on incorrect evidence and is very damaging to the salt industry's image.

However its claims have been dismissed by health organisations since it says its views are expected, as its job is to sell salt.

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### **New export deal revealed by EBLEX**

**Date:** Tue, 21 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The English Beef and Lamb Executive (EBLEX) has revealed new cuts of English lamb are being trialled in French supermarkets in a new export deal.

A Mille Plaisirs d'Agneau range was created by EBLEX and includes nine different cuts of meat, supplied to 14 different branches of French supermarket Intermarche.

The product has already won an award for second best fresh food product and was entered into the Food from Britain competition for best export products.

EBLEX chief executive David Croston told The Journal: "Mille Plaisirs d'Agneau offers great new export opportunities for English lamb as these are the first new lamb products to hit the shelves since leg steaks."

According to Mr Croston, recent estimates indicate English exports make up over half the £126 million a year trade in lamb with France.

Items include stuffed skewers, lamb chunkies, burgers, meat balls and lamb shank.  
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### **FSA undergoes department reshuffle**

**Date:** Tue, 21 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The FSA has announced it is now running with a new structure to run in line with its strategic plan.

Under the new plans some of the key areas in the agency will be changed to help support the main aims for work during the next three to five years.

Main changes have now come into effect although further developments will take place in the near future.

As part of the revamped structure a new group has been created which will be run by a director of Consumer Choice and Dietary Health.

The group will focus on work areas at a divisional level and the agency's nutritional agenda.  
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### **Nestle confirms profit guidance**

**Date:** Tue, 21 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Nestle has confirmed its profit guidance for 2004, following profit warnings from Unilever.

According to Reuters, shares in the food group rose following the announcement and the firm appears to be performing well.

A spokesman for Nestle commented: "Regarding our business, we have no further comment than what was said ... some weeks ago. We do not change our opinion."

Although conditions have been hard and poor weather has hit sales of more seasonal foods for other companies, Nestle remains positive.

The firm claims that underlying sales growth should still reach five to six per cent for 2004.  
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### **Baugur plans to break Iceland up**

**Date:** Tue, 21 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Baugur, which has recently bid for the Big Food Group, is planning to break the business up if it is successful in its takeover.

It is understood that the retailer, which already holds a 22 per cent stake in the company, is keen to acquire the whole of the business, with a break-up strategy providing a profitable exit.

It is believed that the company is currently holding talks to discuss the possible sale of 500 of the 750 Iceland food stores to former Iceland chairman Malcolm Walker.

Baugur is expected to offer 110p-a-share bid for BFG. The board of BFG have said they would recommend a bid at this level to shareholders.

Recently Baugur sold its 10 per cent share in department store chain House of Fraser, releasing capital ahead of a possible bid for BFG

The firm already holds shares in supermarket chain Somerfield.

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### **Tesco unveils profit increase**

**Date:** Tue, 21 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food retailer Tesco has released its interim results today for the 24 weeks ending August 14.

Results for the company have seen a 28 per cent increase in pre tax profits compared to last year - reaching £804 million.

Terry Leahy, Tesco chief executive, commented: "These results demonstrate the growing success of the four-part strategy we began seven years ago.

"We are well-placed to meet the challenges of tougher comparisons during the second half," he added.

Additional figures revealed an 11.5 per cent growth in UK sales to £13.1 billion.

Mr Leahy particularly praised a cut in prices in stores, boosted returns for shareholders and the creation of 20,000 jobs.

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### **Exopak unveils new plastic bag design**

**Date:** Wed, 22 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Flexible packaging specialist Exopak has reportedly launched a new patented two-handle plastic bag for the Cargill Salt Business.

The two-handle bag comes in response to growing consumer demand for an easier method of handling large quantities of the company's Diamond Crystal water conditioning salt products, Foodproductiondaily.com reports. Exopak claims the new bag is the first such plastic bag ever produced for both consumer and commercial markets.

"Cargill was in need of a simplified method for consumers to carry large bags of salt," Craig Miller, director of sales for Exopak's performance plastics division, explained. "They came to Exopak with an idea, and we responded by helping them to develop a quality, two-handled product capable of meeting the needs of their customers."

"Cargill developed the idea for the 2-handle bag and found that working with Exopak to refine the prototype and our concepts sped up the development and consumer testing process," added Nancy Lucas, director of marketing and pricing for Cargill.

The new packaging is covered by joint patents and patent applications from both Exopak and Cargill.

Cargill Salt Business is a subsidiary of Cargill, one of the world's largest marketers of salt products.

Exopak operates fourteen North American manufacturing facilities generating over \$500 million in annual revenue and is a leading firm in the manufacture of paper and plastic flexible packaging for consumer and industrial products.

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

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### **Australian firm gets approval to sell business to ABF**

**Date:** Wed, 22 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Australian food and ingredients maker Burns Philp has been granted approval by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to sell its yeast and bakery division to Associated British Foods (ABF).

The competition watchdog announced this week that it would not oppose the deal between Burns Philp and UK-based ABF, announced two months ago.

ACCC chairman Graeme Samuel said the acquisition was "unlikely to substantially lessen competition in the relevant markets".

"Although the acquisition exceeds the ACCC's thresholds for the exercise of co-ordinated market power, the ACCC concluded that strong competitors, low barriers to entry and significant countervailing power held by customers will effectively constrain the merged entity in this market," Mr Samuel ruled.

The ACCC boss said the organisation had considered the competitive impact of the proposed merger in the state-based bread markets, national yeast market and the national bread improver market.

Burns Philp will now proceed with plans to sell its industrial yeast and Tones Brothers spices and herbs business to ABF for AS\$1.9 billion.

In July, Burns Philp announced that the ABF deal would enable it to cut debt by AS\$475 million, with the remainder going to cash reserves. The firm's debt level rose to an estimated AS\$2.6 billion following its takeover of Australian food company Goodman Fielder last year for AS\$2 billion.

Further information: [www.burnsphilp.com](http://www.burnsphilp.com)  
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### **Co-op trials salt labelling scheme**

**Date:** Wed, 22 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Major food brands on sale in Co-op stores are being labelled as high, medium and low for their salt and fat content.

The supermarket chain claims that the trial initiative, launched this week, aims to "demystify the nutritional values of the other products it sells".

The Co-op already provides comprehensive information about salt and fat contents on its own-label products.

For the first time shelf cards will show whether the salt and fat content of comparable products is high, medium or low, enabling consumers to easily choose between them on the basis of their nutritional value.

Over 300 branded products, including biscuits, cereals, yoghurts and desserts, are included in the trial and ten Co-operative Group stores are taking part. Customer exit polls will test shoppers' reactions and the findings will be presented to the Food Standards Agency.

The Co-op's move follows growing concern about soaring levels of obesity and diet-related diseases in the UK. A Commons Health Select Committee report on obesity this year recommended legislation to promote a simpler food labelling system.

David Croft from the Co-operative Group said: "Many products do not carry full nutritional information and the information that they do give is often of little value to consumers without some further explanation like high, medium and low. By expanding our current approach, we want to see whether customers feel more confident about nutrition and are encouraged to make healthier choices."

Further information: [www.co-op.co.uk](http://www.co-op.co.uk)  
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### **UK chefs to bring seasonal food to homeless**

**Date:** Wed, 22 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

National homelessness charity Crisis is reportedly urging pub chefs to volunteer at shelters over the Christmas period.

Last year more than 1,200 homeless people visited the Crisis Open Christmas shelters in London and the charity requires large numbers of chefs to cover shifts from December 23rd to 30th.

Any pub chefs available over the Christmas period are asked to contact Crisis via its hotline or register on the charity's website, The Publican reports.

"The catering team of around 300 is an essential part of Crisis Open Christmas serving over 16,000 meals during the festive period. Volunteering is a fantastic experience and truly rewarding as well as being lots of fun," said Susie Ellis, food service organiser.

"I do urge you to get involved and really make a difference to homeless people this Christmas."

Further information: [www.crisis.org.uk](http://www.crisis.org.uk)  
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### **Consumers prefer to cut down on fat to lose weight**

**Date:** Wed, 22 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Although there are a host of different diets for consumers to test out, new research shows that people prefer to use more traditional methods.

A study by Mintel found that out of 1,000 questioned adults, 48 per cent said they would cut down on fat to lose weight, followed by 32 per cent who would stop eating chocolate.

According to Mintel, at any one time over a third of people are trying to lose weight and as the number of overweight people is increasing there is set to be a high demand for diet products in the future.

"The future of any market whether low-carb or not has more to do with convenience than with any other dietary trends," Mintel's senior consumer analyst James McCoy claimed.

A change in food buying habits has also been revealed by the study, with rice and pasta sales increasing considerably in the last five years and potato sales declining.

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### **New juice created to help circulation**

**Date:** Wed, 22 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new juice product has been created which helps circulation in humans and uses ripe tomato extract.

The product was created based on research by Aberdeen's Rowett Research Institute, which discovered the health benefits of the extract.

Now a joint venture has been set up with Nutrinnovator Holdings and Provexis, which will see the drink available in UK supermarkets by late spring 2005.

Dr Stephen Franklin, chief executive of Provexis Limited said: "Many people are familiar with the idea of taking aspirin to reduce the tendency for the blood to form an internal clot.

"The great advantage of CardioFlow is that it is a natural fruit-derived extract that has been added to a regular juice drink and proven to provide real health benefits without affecting the taste and without the side effects typically associated with aspirin."

The extract works by reducing the stickiness of blood platelets and helps prevent potential blood clots.

Managing director of Nutrinnovator Holdings, Stephen Moon explained that "consumer demand for genuinely healthy food and beverage products is increasing strongly in all sectors".

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### **Survey shows pesticide residue levels low**

**Date:** Thu, 23 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Defra has announced that the annual report on pesticide residues has been released today.

The 'Annual Report of the independent Pesticide Residues Committee' (PRC) displays the results of the £2.2 million programme on residue testing in food and drink in the UK.

Dr Ian Brown, chairman of the committee said: "The results in this report continue to demonstrate the high standard of food safety in the UK. But we are not complacent. We have made changes during 2003 to strengthen the surveillance scheme."

Findings were from more than 4000 samples of imported and home produced food and results collected showed that the maximum residue level remained low at 0.7 per cent.

Among the changes introduced to lower levels further were broadening the sample base and introducing more responsive surveys.

According to PRC, 99.3 per cent of the produce tested was either residue free or contained residue levels expected.

Other positive findings were that no residues were found in frozen carrots, cauliflower, meat pate, prawns, apple juice, squash or pork and gammon.

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### **Tesco confirmed as largest supermarket in UK**

**Date:** Thu, 23 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food retailer Tesco has been confirmed as still being the UK's largest supermarket chain, according to the latest research by the TNS superpanel.

The recent study shows that sales at Tesco outlets rose 9 per cent from a year ago in the 12 weeks to September 12.

Tesco recently announced a 24 per cent increase in half-year profits to reach £822 million - well above market forecasts - and is continuing to dominate the supermarket sector.

Tesco's market share over the period rose to 28 per cent from 26.8 per cent a year earlier.

Meanwhile Tesco's main rival Asda, part of the US Wal-mart company, showed a five per cent rise in sales, whilst Sainsbury's showed no growth in sales at all and its market share fell from 15.9 per cent to 15.3 per cent.

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### **EU health commissioner to focus on food labelling**

**Date:** Thu, 23 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The new health commissioner for the EU has revealed that he will be committed to revamping the EU's food labelling laws.

Cypriot Markos Kyprianou will take on his role in November and plans to involve the food industry in a thorough review.

Mr Kyprianou stated: "Food labels tend to be complex and unclear, which goes against the desired objective.

"We need to find an approach that emphasises key data needs, so consumers are not overwhelmed with a plethora of less important and often confusing information."

According to Just Food, the new commissioner hopes to hold an "in depth discussion" to help create a "framework for clear language labelling".

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### **Gourmet food service could be introduced at UK's Amazon**

**Date:** Thu, 23 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Users of Amazon's UK site could soon be able to order gourmet food if new plans by the company go ahead, according to Just Food.

The online shopping service already offers a gourmet service in the US and has signed up a host of new merchants since it launched a year ago.

Jonathan Hartnell-Beavis, chief operating officer of UK home shopping service Food Ferry, told Just Food that he thought the UK would follow suit.

He explained: "They are supplying the infrastructure and taking a commission on each and every sale. It is a smooth process that's clever."

The company would not confirm it definitely was going to roll out the scheme in the UK but a UK spokeswoman suggested it could be likely, describing how similar the two sites are.

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### **Profits beat expectations at Tate & Lyle**

**Date:** Thu, 23 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Tate & Lyle has released a trading update today for the five months to August 2004 and revealed profit before tax has beaten both last year's results and expectations for this year.

Trading since the last update has continued to perform well and Splenda Sucralose has seen particularly good growth.

It is thought performance has been so positive since customers have been more open to new products, production has increased and costs have been less than expected.

In addition sugar operations in the UK have all performed at or above the levels planned.

The company's interim results will be announced on November 4 2004.

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### **Japanese move announced at Conran Group**

**Date:** Thu, 23 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Conran Group has revealed plans to expand its profile in Asia, with the opening of eight to 10 restaurants in Japan.

According to caterer online, the new deal with Japanese restaurant group Hiramatsu, will take place over 10 years and see restaurants generally offering a European style of food.

A spokesperson for Sir Terence Conran's empire commented: "We aim to build a business with aggregate sales of between £25m and £30m a year."

It is hoped the restaurants will be "destination restaurants, targeting the jet-set (and) international executives" and the first venue will be opened in 2006 in Tokyo.

Menus and prices will vary in each restaurant, similar to in England, and the "successful elements" from its other restaurants will be used "while being sensitive to local needs".

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### **US scientists create a stir**

**Date:** Fri, 24 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Engineers in the United States have reportedly discovered that stirring a mix of granular ingredients faster or longer in food manufacturing does not necessarily produce a smooth blend.

The team from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, found that processors may even end up separating ingredients that had been thoroughly mixed and claim that the findings could help manufacturers of products as diverse as breakfast cereals, bakery products and dairy products create less waste.

"While mixing dry ingredients would seem to be a simple undertaking, getting uniform batches on a large scale can in fact be a challenge for industries," said Ben Glasser, professor of chemical and biochemical engineering at Rutgers. "The consequences of uneven blending could range from a box of raisin bran without enough raisins to pills that don't have the safe or effective amount of active pharmaceutical."

Professor Glasser and his colleagues, biomedical engineering professor Troy Shinbrot and doctoral student Stephen Conway, also revealed that fine particles have a tendency to separate into distinct layers under conditions that would otherwise seem to cause thorough mixing.

In their paper titled "A Taylor vortex analogy in granular flows", the researchers identified patterns of granular motion that promoted layer formation and interfered with achieving uniform mixing.

The findings of the study are published in this week's edition of science journal Nature.

(no further information)

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### **Concerns raised over salmon feed**

**Date:** Fri, 24 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Fish feed manufacturers are using threatened fish stocks to supply the Scottish aquaculture industry with salmon feed, two new reports claim.

Studies carried out by independent consultants for conservation groups the RSPB and WWF claim that there are growing concerns about the impacts of industrial fisheries on the fish stocks themselves and on the marine food chain, but little action is being taken to address these issues.

"Industrial fish farming is the fastest growing sector of the global food economy and Scotland is one of the largest salmon producers in this market. To feed these quantities of farmed salmon serious pressure is being placed on populations of small feed fish and questions must be raised about the sustainability of the feed fish industry, in particular blue whiting," said Dr Rebecca Boyd of WWF Scotland.

However, one of the report's authors insists that the documents should not be used as a condemnation of industrial fisheries, as the majority are well managed.

Richard Banks of Poseidon Aquatic Resources, told Fish Farming Today: "Most industrial fisheries stocks are well managed. In the EU context the only problem fishery is for blue whiting where urgent action is required to control fish catches.

"In contrast, the EU sandeel fishery actually scores pretty well against a number of standard sustainability assessment criteria which have not been highlighted in the press releases."

(no further information)

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### **Ramsay launches ready meals range**

**Date:** Fri, 24 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Celebrity chef and restaurateur Gordon Ramsay has unveiled a range of upmarket semi-ready meals.

The new selection is aimed at people who enjoy fine dining at home, but lack the necessary culinary skills.

Mr Ramsay, star of TV's Hell's Kitchen, claims the meals, costing between £15 and £25, plus delivery, will offer restaurant-quality food at home.

The initial range features three options - braised belly of pork with pomme puree au moutarde, carrots, baby onions and rich Madeira sauce; ballotine of beef with pomme puree,

baby vegetables in a red wine jus; and breast of chicken with etuv e of leeks, fricassee of smoked bacon and wild mushrooms in a red wine jus.

The meals will be made by Grampian Country Food and will be available from home-delivery website In2udelivery.com, as well as selected Sainsbury's and Whistlestop stores.

Michelin star holder Mr Ramsay said: "These meals have been prepared using some of my best recipes with no compromise on taste or quality and using only the finest ingredients available.

"Because of the pre-preparation we insist on carrying out that makes my cooking so distinctive, you can now easily create a sensational Gordon Ramsay restaurant meal in your own home."

(no further information)

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### **Researchers and bakers focus on cancer prevention**

**Date:** Fri, 24 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A consortium of researchers, farmers and a major baker have joined forces to improve consumers' consumption of the mineral selenium.

Selenium is of particular importance to men in male fertility and in the prevention of prostate cancer but research has also shown that it can help in the prevention of cardiovascular disease, stimulation of immune function, suppression of inflammatory conditions, and even brain function and development.

Researchers at University of Warwick's horticultural research arm Warwick HRI have been modelling selenium intake of plants and have carried out a number of field trials to gain a clear understanding of the effectiveness of selenium enhanced fertilisers on the selenium uptake of a number of grains and vegetables.

The Warwick HRI researchers, led by Professor Philip White, have now brought together a consortium of University of Warwick researchers, farmers, a fertiliser manufacturer and a major UK baker to develop and market British grain based bread products with enhanced selenium.

The researchers have also assembled a wealth of information on enhanced selenium uptake in soya and a number of vegetables and may form parallel consortia with growers of these products if there is an interest.

The UK's Food Standards Agency recommends that the daily intake for selenium should be 60 to 75 microgrammes per person per day, but the average selenium intake in the UK is far below this figure at just 39 microgrammes a day per person.

Further information: [www.warwick.ac.uk](http://www.warwick.ac.uk)

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### **New chief executive chosen at ABF**

**Date:** Fri, 24 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Associated British Foods (ABF) has announced a new chief executive today.

The new role will begin when current CEO Peter Jackson retires in April 2005 and sees a former ABF employee take on the position, according to Just Food.

George Weston has been selected for the role and has worked for ABF since 1988, currently working as chief executive of ABF's Australian subsidiary George Weston Foods.

Mr Weston will also remain as company deputy chairman, a position he acquired in May 2000.

The new CEO has also worked for Westmill Foods and Allied Bakeries.

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### **BSE detection designed by EFSA**

**Date:** Fri, 24 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has announced a field trial has been designed for a possible rapid BSE detection test.

If approved the test for live animals could considerably cut down the amount of culling and various problems caused by an outbreak.

According to Just Food a report on the trial explained: "An accurate live animal test might offer the possibility to reduce the number of culled animals after the detection of one positive animal."

EFSA's Scientific Expert Working Group on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) is hoping to add the rapid live test to five rapid post mortem tests.

The main aim for the EFSA is to ensure the new test is not "statistically inferior" to post mortem tests.

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### **Women have a 'sweeter tooth'**

**Date:** Mon, 27 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Research conducted by scientists at Florida State University suggests that women have a sweeter tooth than men.

The majority of research linked to obesity, particularly studies on overeating (hyperphagia) and sedentary behaviour, has been conducted on males so the Florida State University research team set out to investigate the effects of gender and exercise on caloric intake of a diet (chow supplemented with a supply of liquid sweetened condensed milk), chosen for its ability to stimulate hyperphagia.

The American animal study showed that female rats are more susceptible than male rats to over consume a palatable, sweetened diet and female rats are less likely than male rats to use exercise as a means to control appetite in the presence of such a diet. The rats were provided with exercise wheels in their cages.

Scientists Lisa Eckel and Shelley Moore concluded: "Availability of the chow plus milk diet increased caloric intake, compared to that observed in chow-fed rats. This diet-induced hyperphagia was significantly greater in sedentary females (35.7 3.1 per cent increase), relative to sedentary males (9.1 2.2 per cent increase)."

According to the World Health Organisation, approximately 300 million people worldwide are believed to be obese and a massive 750 million overweight.

The study, "Diet-induced hyperphagia in the rat is influenced by sex and exercise", is published in the American Journal of Physiology - Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology.

(No further information)

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### **Rexam buys Mexican beverage can business**

**Date:** Mon, 27 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Global consumer packaging group, Rexam Plc, has announced that it has agreed to acquire a 50 per cent shareholding in Mexican beverage can business, Vitro-American National Can SA de CV (VanCan).

Rexam already owns the remaining 50 per cent of VanCan and will now acquire the other half of the company from its joint venture partner, Vitro SA de CV for \$26.5 million, on a debt and cash free basis, subject to adjustment.

VanCan, a major supplier to the Mexican beverage market, reported sales of \$70 million last year, of which \$35 million was reported in the Rexam 2003 results under turnover of associates.

VanCan will continue to be part of the Rexam Beverage Can Americas operation, which has 25 plants in North and South America.

Commenting on the acquisition, Rexam chief executive Stefan Angwald said: "This deal represents another step in our commitment to extend our position in growing markets and to deliver increased value for customers."

Further information: [www.rexam.com](http://www.rexam.com)  
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### **King size chocolate bars face chop**

**Date:** Mon, 27 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A number of confectionary firms have announced plans to stop producing king size chocolate bars.

The decision comes amid growing concern at spiralling levels of obesity in the UK.

Reducing portion sizes is one of seven pledges in the first Manifesto for Food and Health, published by the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) ahead of a Department of Health White Paper this autumn.

Members of the Food and Drink Federation include food and drink giants Coca-Cola, Kellogg's, Kraft Foods, Nestle, Pepsi and Weetabix.

Cadbury Trebor Bassett has pledged to phase out king-size bars in 2005, while the larger Mars and Snickers bars are also set to vanish as part of the FDF campaign.

An FDF spokeswoman said: "Nobody wants extra regulation. The industry has always said it wants to be part of the solution on food and health.

"We are pulling together everything that the industry is doing and saying the manufacturing industry is already providing wider choice, changing the way it is marketing to children and changing its recipes. I'm sure that will contribute into the White Paper."

The FDF has also recommended clearer labelling on food products, reducing sugar, salt and fat levels, and removing vending machines from schools.

Further information: [www.fdf.org.uk](http://www.fdf.org.uk)  
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### **Nutreco agrees sale of pork business**

**Date:** Mon, 27 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Food group Nutreco has reportedly signed a deal to sell its Dutch-based Hendrix pork processing unit to Best Agrifund.

Nutreco claims that, the net proceeds from the 75 million euros deal after costs and other charges will be in excess of the unit's book value, news agency Reuters reports.

Nutreco is currently undertaking an ambitious re-organisation of its business interests. "The disposal of Hendrix Meat Group ... is the next important step to be taken by Nutreco as part of (its) strategic reorientation," the company said in a statement.

Nutreco, the world's largest salmon producer and Europe's largest maker of animal feed, has been hit by salmon prices and last year's avian flu outbreak and is now determined to focus on core activities.

"Hendrix Meat Group does not have sufficient resources to grow into a prominent European player within Nutreco," Juergen Steinemann, chief operating officer of Nutreco Agriculture, said in a statement. "The transaction provides the best guarantee of future opportunities for Nutreco's pork meat business and the people who work in it."

Dutch-based Hendrix Meat Group has an annual turnover of 450 million euros and employs around 1,100 people.

Further information: [www.nutreco.com](http://www.nutreco.com)  
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### **FDF publishes document on public health**

**Date:** Mon, 27 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new document has been published by the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) to help towards the UK effort on public health.

The report is an industry wide consensus, agreed across seven key areas where food manufacturers will work with the rest of the food chain, other partners and the advertising industry.

FDF president, John Sunderland, explained: "FDF's Food and Health Manifesto sets out the UK food and drink manufacturing industry's commitment to work constructively with consumers, government and others to help find solutions to the complex, multi-factorial issues surrounding obesity and the food and health debate generally."

The Food and Health Manifesto includes the different commitments put forward by each part of the food manufacturing sector, hoping to promote healthy living and boosting education on diet.

Among the issues covered in the document are more informative labelling, cutting sugar, salt and fat levels and new approaches to portion sizes.

In addition the report shows how FDF members are committed to removing vending machines from schools, removing branding and broadening choice, as well as working with Ofcom and the government with regards to food advertising to children.

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### **Folic acid in certain foods cuts down chance of birth defects**

**Date:** Mon, 27 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

New research has shown that folic acid added to foods like pasta and flour could reduce the number of babies born with birth defects.

Research by Health Canada found that folic acid could work with vitamin B12 to form healthy red blood cells and help reduce neural tube defects such as spina bifida in unborn babies.

Previous evidence has shown that fewer babies are born with such conditions in countries where certain food products are made to include folic acid.

Natural sources of folic acid can be found in peas, yeast extract, bananas, leafy green vegetables and brown rice.

The FSA recommends that women planning to have children need to have around 400 micrograms of folic acid each day.

However mandatory fortification has not been introduced in the UK following warnings from the FSA that people should not consume too much folic acid.

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### **Survey highlights disliked brand names**

**Date:** Tue, 28 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A survey of hated brands in the UK has declared savoury snack Pot Noodle the most hated.

According to the poll of 11,000 consumers, conducted for trade magazine Marketing, other food brands disliked by Brits are soft drink Sunny D and fast food chain McDonald's.

A spokeswoman for Unilever's Best Foods, which makes Pot Noodle, has claimed that the reason the product scored so poorly was because it interviewed a lot of women and the product is generally aimed at men.

It is thought Sunny D did not score so positively since it was revealed as having bad sugar and low fruit juice content.

Marcel Knobil, chairman of the Brand Council claimed the results were "indicative of the brands with which we commonly interact".

Another food related brand disliked by consumers was supermarket chain Tesco.

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### **Agricultural product promotion approved by EU**

**Date:** Tue, 28 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

## **Analysis**

The European Union has reached an agreement on measures to provide information on, and to promote, agricultural products outside the EU.

Member States have submitted 10 promotion and information programmes to the Commission to be examined and eight programmes have been approved, targeted at the USA, Canada, Japan, Russia, China, Australia, Norway, Switzerland, Bulgaria and Romania.

The products covered by the new programmes are wine, fruit and vegetables, olive oil, potatoes and Mediterranean products and the estimated expenditure for the EU is €5 million, or 50 per cent of the budget of the programmes.

Commissioner Franz Fischler, responsible for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, told Just Food: "Improving the competitiveness of EU quality products on markets outside the EU is a major challenge. By investing in promotion and information campaigns for our agricultural products outside the EU, the European Union is showing its determination to take up this challenge."

The European Council decided in December 1999 that the EU could fund, in whole or in part, measures in third countries that provide information on, or promote, agricultural products and food products.

Detailed rules for applying the promotion and information measures were laid down by a Commission Regulation on December 28th 2000 and member states submit a list of programmes and implementing bodies they have selected and a copy of each programme to the Commission each year to determine eligibility.

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## **Northern Foods releases trading update**

**Date:** Tue, 28 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

### **Analysis**

Northern Foods has revealed that sales to its three main customers, Asda, Tesco and Morrison's, have continued to grow, although it expects increased competition in the coming months.

The company's trading update was in line with market expectations with underlying sales improving from late July, increasing by 5.5 per cent in the 11 weeks to 18 September.

However, Northern Foods stressed that results for its chilled food operations "remained unsatisfactory".

A statement from the Hull-based firm said: "We expect trading conditions for the remainder of the year to remain extremely competitive, reflecting continuing retailer pressure and ongoing cost inflation."

Northern Foods hopes to save around £45 million for the year following the introduction of various cost cutting plans, which include closing two factories in the UK.

Shares in the company closed at 144-1/2 pence, with the market valuing the firm at around £705 million.

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### **Survey claims parents need better healthy eating advice**

**Date:** Tue, 28 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new survey has shown that many parents find it difficult to know which foods are healthy for their children.

According to the Developing Patient Partnerships' poll, around two thirds of the 800 parents questioned, struggled to get their children to eat healthily.

Dr David Wrigley from the DPP said: "The power of parents to influence their children's behaviour simply by doing it themselves is clear from these findings. In order to get their family on track to a healthy lifestyle parents need support and tools to help them."

Figures showed that 65 per cent struggled to motivate their children to eat healthy foods and 87 per cent claimed schools should play a big role in teaching children to be healthy.

With only 16 per cent of children eating the recommended five portions of fruit and veg a day, children claimed that they would be more likely to eat better if their parents did so.

"Parents, schools, health professionals, the media, food manufacturers and the government all have an important role to play in reducing the risk to children's lives from obesity," Dr Ian Campbell from the National Obesity Forum added.

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### **Food division merger announced at Greencore**

**Date:** Tue, 28 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Irish food group Greencore has announced today it has merged its two food divisions together.

The company will now run one unit known as Convenience Food and has appointed Tony Hynes as the head of the newly merged business, according to Business World.

Previously the firm ran Greencore Chilled Foods and Greencore Ambient & Frozen and two of its chief executives Anne Truelove and Gerry Smith will now leave.

Commenting on the merger, Greencore chief executive, David Dilger, said, "There are clear benefits to further integrating the business and unifying the leadership of all of our convenience food activities.

"It will result in a single senior point of contact for our customers and a more focussed business structure designed to assist the group in optimising synergies across our businesses."

Greencore is a major supplier and international manufacturer of food ingredients and prepared foods and has sites in Ireland, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.  
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### **New drug developed to treat obesity**

**Date:** Tue, 28 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

A new solution to the current obesity crisis in the UK could be available in the form of a new nasal spray.

A new company, Thiakis, - which was formed as a result of Imperial College London, has signed a deal with US drugs company Nastech to develop the spray which would work by reducing appetite.

Money from the venture and sales would go towards the university, the Wellcome Trust and Diabetes UK.

Talks are also underway to develop hormone tablets to help to treat obesity.

According to reports, the drug works in a similar way to Alizyme's and disrupts the digestion of fat so less is absorbed.

However the new spray has fewer side effects than other treatments.  
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### **Microsoft develops RFID scheme with snack maker**

**Date:** Wed, 29 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Microsoft Business Solutions is reportedly working with a small US food company to develop a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) scheme designed to help small and midmarket segment businesses meet RFID mandates and drive efficiencies in internal operations.

Snack manufacturer Jack Link's Beef Jerky was identified by Microsoft as the type of small-scale firm that should be benefiting from RFID.

Jack Link's Beef Jerky, a midmarket segment international snack manufacturer that supplies Wal-Mart and other large retailers, has been working with Microsoft and partners ABC Computers Inc, Avery Dennison Corp, SAMSys Technologies Inc and SATO America Inc to implement RFID.

The resultant RFID data will be integrated into Microsoft Business Solutions-Navision, Jack Link's Beef Jerky's enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution, as well as to largely automate associated transactions.

Satya Nadella, corporate vice president of Microsoft Business Solutions, said: "We continue to strive to make complex things simple for our small- and midsize-business customers, building solutions that meet their unique requirements and enable small and midsize businesses to function more like large enterprise companies."

The Jack Link's Beef Jerky project will be implemented in four phases, with the support and involvement of several Microsoft partners. The first phase, which was completed in less than three weeks, involved tagging cases and pallets for select SKUs of beef jerky destined for the Wal-Mart distribution centre in North Texas.

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

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### **Starbucks forms sustainable supply partnership**

**Date:** Wed, 29 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Starbucks Coffee has pledged to help ensure a sustainable supply of high quality coffee from Latin America.

The coffee giant has teamed up with a US development agency and environmental conservationists following increased consumer concern about the environmental and social impact of the coffee industry.

Starbucks signed a memorandum of understanding with the US Agency for International Development, or USAID, and Washington-based Conservation International, in Mexico City, to provide economic incentives for high-quality coffee growers that minimise their environmental impact.

Under the alliance, Starbucks will pay higher prices to suppliers that can demonstrate that money gets to farmers without being diverted, comply with environmental practices outlined by Conservation International, and meet humanitarian standards of the home country or international authorities.

The US firm has also expressed concern about the future supply of premium coffee as it proceeds with future plans to open 25,000 stores worldwide. Starbucks president Orin Smith said that the company's goal is to buy 60 per cent of its coffee under the new sustainable standards by 2007.

"One of Starbucks highest priorities is working with farmers and their communities to encourage and expand the production of high quality, sustainable coffee and support farmers' success into the future," said Dub Hay, senior vice president of Coffee, Starbucks Coffee Company. "The Conservation Coffee Alliance complements Starbucks holistic

sustainability efforts in coffee origin countries and our desire to work with others to lead positive change in the coffee industry."

Further information: [www.starbucks.com](http://www.starbucks.com)  
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### **Birds Eye Foods acquires C&W**

**Date:** Wed, 29 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Frozen food firm Birds Eye Foods Inc has announced the acquisition of California & Washington Company (C&W), a San Francisco-based marketer of frozen vegetables and fruits.

Under the new deal, which expands Birds Eye Foods presence in the Western United States, the company will continue to market products under the C&W brand. The New York-based food firm refused to disclose terms of the agreement.

"C&W is a name long associated with premium products and consumers can be assured that we will continue to maintain that commitment to quality, under the same C&W brand that they know and trust," Dennis M Mullen, Birds Eye Foods chairman, president and chief executive officer, commented.

C&W is a premier frozen vegetable retail brand with number one market share positions in California, the Pacific Northwest and Arizona and is also the fastest growing frozen vegetable brand in the Western United States.

Robert W Maier, C&W's president, chairman and chief executive officer, added: "Both Birds Eye Foods and C&W have the reputation for only the finest quality premium products. This commitment to quality and excellence guarantees consumer satisfaction in the wide variety of choices they have to meet their needs."

Rochester-based Birds Eye Foods, with sales of approximately \$1.0 billion annually, processes fruits and vegetables in 14 facilities across United States.

Further information: [www.birdseye.com](http://www.birdseye.com)  
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### **Little Chef ditches plans for slimmer logo**

**Date:** Wed, 29 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

UK restaurant chain Little Chef has reportedly abandoned plans to slim down its logo following protests from customers.

The company, which operates roadside eateries, said 15,000 people visited its website to complain about the proposed slimmer logo, unveiled last month.

The chain's trademark smiling chef, Charlie, will remain his old portly self after Little Chef also received what it describes as "a significant number of letters" at its head office.

"We were absolutely amazed by the response," said Little Chef chief executive Tim Scoble. "We've had letters from children right up to pensioners."

Charlie has represented Little Chef for the past 32 years and the company had planned to put him on a diet in response to increasing concerns about healthy eating. The chain is also introducing a range of lighter meal options and reducing salt and sugar contents.

A poll conducted by trade magazine Caterer and Hotelkeeper found 55 per cent of respondents in favour of the current logo.

Further information: [www.little-chef.co.uk](http://www.little-chef.co.uk)  
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### **Tate & Lyle announces board change**

**Date:** Wed, 29 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Tate & Lyle have revealed that its non-executive director David Fish is to step down from the board.

The move will take effect from September 30 this year, after holding the position since December 1, 2003.

Sir David Lees, Tate & Lyle chairman commented: "I am very sorry David's commitments make it necessary for him to leave the Board but we respect his decision and I thank him for his contribution."

A key reason for Mr Fish's departure is his recent appointment as chairman of United Biscuits, a position he began in February this year.

This role as well as a number of other commitments led Mr Fish to step down since he feels they are not all compatible with his duties at Tate & Lyle.

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### **Beef dripping withdrawn by FSA**

**Date:** Wed, 29 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has begun an investigation into a beef dripping product produced by Nortech Foods.

Action follows the discovery that fat meant to be put in pet food, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics was in fact used to make beef dripping and sold for humans.

The product is now being withdrawn from sale and the agency is in contact with local authorities to ascertain how the dripping entered the food chain.

In addition, the full extent of the problem is to be discussed, although it is not thought to be a health risk since it was produced at high temperatures.

Nortech is now trying to obtain any unused portions of the dripping from customers and claims the fat has passed through usual checks for BSE.

Microbiological testing has also been conducted on the fat and no harmful bacteria were found.

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### **McDonald's hails UK turnaround**

**Date:** Thu, 30 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Fast food giant McDonald's claims its UK business is starting to rally following a 3.5 per cent drop in sales last year.

The McDonald's Property Company, the chain's UK holding company, reported that sales for the year to December 31st 2004 fell £40 million to £1.09 billion

However, the company said in a statement: "It has certainly been a challenging couple of years for McDonald's in the UK as the business has dealt with an explosion in competition and other issues. But in the last nine months the UK business has begun to follow the turnaround pattern that we've seen in places such as the US and Australia.

"In 2004 we are seeing positive sales momentum in our UK business and put this down to the increased choice on our menu, changes to popular menu items such as Chicken McNuggets, the investment we're making in restaurant refurbishments and the introduction of services such as Wi-Fi internet access."

McDonald's has seen sales hit by increasing concerns about soaring obesity levels in Britain and recently launched a range of healthier meal options for customers.

The company announced that operating profits at its 770 UK restaurants fell last year by £5.5 million to £144.5 million, while pre-tax profit remained virtually unchanged at £118 million.

The group claimed the dip in profits was due to a restructuring of its financial set-up, but admitted that it had seen a "challenging couple of years".

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

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### **Campaign promotes health benefits of pork**

**Date:** Thu, 30 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

**Analysis**

A new campaign has been launched aimed at counteracting the image of pork as a fatty, unhealthy meat.

The British Pig Executive has produced a leaflet for schools, hospitals and catering college lecturers. The leaflet, Pork - the Facts, explains that pork is an exceptionally lean meat, containing many essential vitamins and minerals required to maintain good health.

BPEX trade sector manager Tony Goodger said: "Feeding and breeding changes over the past 20 years together with new butchery techniques mean the fat content of fully trimmed British pork has fallen to only four per cent. Not only is British pork lean, but it is also nutritious containing protein, Iron, Zinc, Thiamin and Vitamins B12 and D - which are all essential for healthy growth and maintained health."

The leaflet aims to dispel the myth that pork should be well done, which would leave it dry and lacking in flavour, and points out that it is frequently served pink on the continent, leaving it succulent, tender and full of flavour.

"This leaflet also highlights the newly EU approved Quality Standard Mark for Pork, which explains that the Mark can be used only on products which meet the strict specifications set in the approved scheme," Mr Goodger added.

"These include: farm assurance, transportation, slaughtering and processing controls to ensure the pork products that carry the mark meet all safety standards and are of the highest quality."

Further information: [www.bpex.org.uk](http://www.bpex.org.uk)  
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**European seafood consumption strong**

**Date:** Thu, 30 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

**Analysis**

European consumers eat an average of 37.4 pounds of fish and seafood per capita, compared with just 15.6 pounds in America, according to a new survey.

Research conducted by Mintel found that the consumption of fish and seafood in Japan averages a whopping 88 pounds per person per year.

The report suggests that the US market for fish and seafood shows huge potential for growth, as the Atkins high-protein/low-carb diet becomes more popular, just-food.com reports. A fifth of Americans claim to have increased the amount of meat and fish they eat because of the low-carb diet trend.

Americans each eat an average of 15.6 pounds of fish and seafood per year, compared to 82.9 pounds of chicken and 64.9 pounds of beef. However, the Mintel survey found that

only seven per cent of Americans said they were most tired of eating fish, compared with 40 per cent for poultry and 23 per cent for red meat.

Nine out of ten Americans report eating fish and seafood, with 28 per cent eating it two or more times per week and 32 per cent eating it at least once a week. Just over 17 per cent eat fish and seafood less than once a month.

The US fish and seafood market is expected to grow by an estimated 7.5 per cent this year and sales of fish and seafood are forecast to grow 21 per cent by 2009 to reach \$26.8 billion.

No further information

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### **Wiseman still confident of growth**

**Date:** Thu, 30 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Scottish milk processor Robert Wiseman has declared that it remains confident of meeting growth targets for the first half of 2004, in spite of rising fuel, energy and plastics costs.

The company won new contracts from supermarket giants Tesco and Sainsbury last month to supply their own-label milk. The new business will commence in the first quarter of 2005.

The new deals will add a further 100 million litres to the company's annual sales, offsetting higher charges and the loss of the contract to supply Wal-Mart's Asda.

In a statement, Robert Wiseman insisted that its sales volumes and turnover in the half year to October 2nd were in line with its forecasts.

"The company is confident it will deliver results that are in line with current market expectations, despite recent increases in dery, energy and plastic costs," group finance director Billy Keane said.

Robert Wiseman plans to invest £7.5 million in a depot facility near Northampton, creating up to 175 new jobs. The new depot is expected to be operational in the second quarter of 2005.

The dairy firm is also looking at expanding production of a number of products, in particular those with a higher added-value. The company recently launched The One, a new branded milk with just one per cent fat designed to appeal to health-conscious Brits.

Further information: [www.wiseman-dairies.co.uk](http://www.wiseman-dairies.co.uk)

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### **Profits on the up at Finsbury Food**

**Date:** Thu, 30 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

Finsbury Food Group has released its preliminary results for the year to June 30, leading the firm to feel more confident for the upcoming Christmas period.

The well-known manufacturer and distributor of speciality cakes, breads and muffins, reported a profit of £176,000 for the period.

Commenting on the results, Lord Saatchi, Chairman of Finsbury Food, said:  
"It has been a challenging year, however in spite of the difficulties of last Christmas the Group made improvements in the second half and finished the year with a small profit.

The business has entered the new financial year with a stronger team and clear strategic focus so that it is in the best position to generate value from the Nestle licence, retailer brand business and the other opportunities presented by the growing market for our products."

Results were particularly welcomed since the business experienced a loss in its first six months of trading.

Additional results revealed an increase in total revenues to £59.9 million, up from £25.2 million.

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### **Vine leaves cause debate in the EU**

**Date:** Thu, 30 Sep 04 **Type:** DirectNews Item

#### **Analysis**

The European Court of Justice has highlighted a key issue with the consumption of vine leaves and is expected to rule that they are not covered by EU pesticide residue legislation.

A court case with a Finnish company has led to the debate, since it complained after a delivery of its products was stopped, as it was said to contain too much pesticide.

According to Just Food, an advocate general has said the leaves are not legally vegetables and are therefore not regulated by the pesticide directive.

Since the general's advice is usually followed by the court, the decision could lead to a legal model for the whole of the EU.

Vine leaves are usually stuffed or served in a sauce and are a particularly popular dish in Greek cuisine.

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