

December 2005

"Healthy" fast food high in salt

Date

01/12/2005

Article Text

An investigation carried out by the consumer group Which? has revealed that many of the foods marketed by fast food chains as "healthy" options are still high in salt and fat.

The group examined the nutritional content of a range of the products served up at McDonald's, KFC, Burger King and Pizza Hut, and found that of all the foods tested at the former two, the three with the most salt per portion were all salads.

They all contained more than 3g of salt, which is half the total daily intake recommended by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) as a maximum.

The investigation also found that a KFC chicken salad contained more salt than the chain's chicken burger.

Saturated fat content was also raised as an issue, with Which? claiming that some of the nutritional information provided by companies was inaccurate.

The report found that a Burger King "Whopper" burger and regular fries contained 19g of saturated fat, although the firm's website claims 13g.

Fast food chains have been making an effort to appeal to an increasingly health-conscious public in recent years.

They have launched supposedly "healthier" products, such as salads, yoghurts and fruit, as well as turning to sport and fitness themes in their advertising.

However, Which? editor, Malcolm Coles, warned: "Do not assume that a salad is always a healthy option. You could be getting a large helping of fat and salt on the side."

Further information:

http://www.lse.co.uk/ShowStory.asp?story=US3020204M&news_headline=fast_food_chains_salads_are_unhealthier_than_their_burgers

Court clash over pork pie protection

Date

01/12/2005

Article Text

A high court battle has begun over whether the distinctive British Melton Mowbray pork pie should be able to apply for protected designated status from the European Commission (EC).

Similar to French champagne, Italian parma ham, and most recently Greek feta cheese, if Melton producers are successful in their pursuit it will mean their products alone will be able to carry the famous name.

However, manufacturer Northern Foods, which currently makes pies under the name, is appealing against the decision of the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) to back the Melton Mowbray Pork Pie Association in its ambition.

Northern Foods claims that the 1,800 square mile region covered in the association's proposal is much larger than the limit set by the EC in its legislation, covering Northampton, Grantham and Nottingham.

"A label informing consumers that a pie originates in Melton Mowbray when it has in fact been made in Northampton does not constitute an accurate identification of the product's geographical area," said Mark Hoskins for Northern Foods.

The firm also claimed that a decision to grant the pie protected geographical status would hamper competition and endanger jobs.

The Melton Mowbray Pork Pie Association counters that pies made outside the region use different ingredients, and therefore lack the meat's distinctive grey colour.

They also claim that the production methods used result in a product with a different shape.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=62579

Organic milk much in demand

Date

01/12/2005

Article Text

The UK is facing a shortage in the supply of organic milk for the first time in five years, after sales grew significantly this year, according to a new report.

Organic Monitor told just-food.com that many retailers had recorded growth "in excess of 30 per cent" in 2005, with consumer demand fuelled by a growing awareness of the health benefits to be derived.

Studies have found organic milk to be more nutritious than the standard alternative owing to the amount of Omega 3 fatty acids it contains.

Also found in oily fish such as salmon, this nutrient has enjoyed a lot of publicity of late, as it has emerged it boosts heart and brain health, and has been specifically linked with improved behaviour in young children.

However, the popularity of Omega 3 with the public has meant it is also increasingly being used by the producers of so-called "functional" food and drink to add value to their products in terms of health benefits.

Organic milk is now claiming a share in this market, competing directly with functional milk that has been fortified with Omega 3.

Organic Monitor states that a study carried out in Wales in February 2004 found organic milk contained a minimum 64 per cent more Omega 3 than conventional milk.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=62576

Preservatives in soft drinks deemed permissible

Date

01/12/2005

Article Text

A test of soft drinks has found that the vast majority contain legal levels of the preservatives benzoates and sorbates.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) found that 99 per cent of beverages tested did not contain either of the commonly used preservatives above the permitted limit.

Although four out of 300 drinks had higher than permitted levels of benzoic acid, the level was still too small to raise health concerns.

Rhodri Evans, head of the FSA's additives branch, said: "The results of this survey show that the vast majority of soft drink manufacturers are acting responsibly to make sure that levels of preservatives in their products are not above permitted limits, and that all ingredients are correctly labelled."

The FSA took samples from independent stores and supermarkets in eight areas of the UK.

The maximum level for benzoic acid in soft drinks when sold is set at 150mg per litre. The maximum level for sorbic acid in soft drinks is set at 300mg per litre when used by itself, or 250mg per litre when used in combination with benzoates.

No further information.

Coffee offers brain boost

Date

01/12/2005

Article Text

A cup of coffee can boost brain function, and improve short-term memory and reaction speeds, new research has shown.

Scans of volunteers doing simple memory and reaction tests show that caffeine increases activity in areas of the brain associated with working memory and attention, Austrian scientists report.

"We were able to show that caffeine modulates a higher brain function through its effects on distinct areas of the brain," said Dr Florian Koppelstatter from Innsbruck Medical University.

The researchers observed 15 healthy adult volunteers who were shown a sequence of the letters A, B, C and D and were asked to recall whether the letter was the same as the one seen two letters earlier.

This tests the working memory, which is the kind of brain activity required for tasks such as looking up a phone number and remembering it until it has been dialled.

The volunteers had to respond as quickly as possible using their left and right index fingers to indicate whether the letters were repeated or not.

First, the test was performed after 12 hours without caffeine and four hours without nicotine. The volunteers were then randomly assigned 100 milligrams of caffeine – the equivalent of two cups of coffee – or a placebo.

Under the effect of caffeine, the volunteers' short-term memory skills and reaction times were improved, and an fMRI scan showed increased activity in the areas of the brain associated with these skills.

The placebo group showed no change in brain activation compared with the earlier test.

The study was presented this week at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64258-caffeine-memory-energy-drink>

Tools to spot a bad egg

Date

01/12/2005

Article Text

An Italian company has introduced four devices designed to allow food producers to assess the quality of eggs in record time.

Between them they are able to test for yolk colour, eggshell thickness and resilience, and the egg's Haugh unit, which is used to determine freshness through internal quality.

Sanovo Engineering's SHCI 110/220 is able to measure this factor, the height of the egg's albumen (white) and the shade of the yolk, all markers of quality, in less than 20 seconds.

The Haugh unit is actually calculated using the ratio of the height of the albumen to the egg's overall weight, as thicker whites indicate fresher eggs.

The SSTI 110/220 measures the thickness of the eggshell to the nearest 0.01mm using ultrasonic technology, and the SSSI 110/220 destructively tests for strength, but only by cracking the shell.

A spokesperson for Sanovo told LabTechnologist.com: "Compared to traditional equipment available on the market, this is unique inasmuch as it measures without breaking the egg.

"Traditional measuring instruments require that the egg is broken before it is possible to measure."

Further information: <http://www.labtechnologist.com/news/ng.asp?n=64244-sanovo-engineering-egg-quality-ultrasonic-technology>

Cereal cafe chain coming to UK

Date

02/12/2005

Article Text

A new cafe chain that specialises in breakfast cereals looks set to arrive in the UK next year, building on early success with just four outlets in the US.

The love affair with US-style coffee shops has already led to coffee usurping the once national favourite tea, and the new concept will aim to build on this established format.

Dubbed Cereality, the menu will list childhood favourites from leading brands such as Kellogg's and Quaker Oats, and will seek to thrive by creating a sense that "It's Always Saturday Morning", regardless of the number of busy commuters that pass through.

Customers at Cereality will place their orders with waiters and waitresses dressed in pyjamas, with a range of toppings available as well.

Similar to many of the popular coffee chains, customers will then be able to add their own milk and sugar.

Cereality only launched in the US 18 months ago, but it has already started to attract significant media interest, according to Food Business Review.

Co-founder David Roth explained: "We are broadening our original strategy of focusing primarily on street-side cafes and are embarking on a parallel path to meet the overwhelming consumer demand in ways that are non-formulaic and in many cases, truly unique to the quick-serve restaurant category."

Further information: http://www.food-business-review.com/article_news.asp?guid=9A05258C-5E19-40ED-AFE1-41C0D5191349

Heinz the best of the brands, say consumers

Date

02/12/2005

Article Text

A survey to identify the nation's favourite brands has found that Heinz products are among the most cherished.

The simple tin of baked beans topped the poll of foods and other items that caused customers the greatest disappointment if unavailable (49.5 per cent).

Other comfort foods also fared well, with Heinz tinned soup and Heinz tomato ketchup also making it into the top 10, in second and eighth place respectively.

Waking up to a bowl of Kellogg's cereal and cup of Nescafe instant coffee was also considered indispensable, with around a third of all respondents singling them out.

The other food and drink products to make the 10 were Walker's crisps and Robinson's fruit squash, but if there seem to be some surprising omissions, a number of other big brands fell just outside the big league.

Coca-Cola only just missed out in 11th place, while Cadbury chocolate and Hovis bread were ranked 20th and 29th respectively.

The survey was carried out by the agency Geronimo in collaboration with the University of Bath, according to Brand Republic.

Managing partner, Andy Snuggs, said that while it was easy to assess which brands "sell the most", this survey was designed to reveal "which grocery brands consumers feel closest to and feel most passionately about".

Further information:

<http://www.brandrepublic.com/bulletins/br/article/530412/heinz-named-uks-most-desired-brand-shoppers/>

Nanotech firm turns to nutrition

Date

02/12/2005

Article Text

The global bio-nanotech company pSivida has announced the creation of a new division that will focus on the application of its silicon technology in the food industry.

The new company, pSiNutria, will receive \$1.1 million worth of funding from its parent company, which will be ploughed into efforts to develop silicon nanotechnology for use in food packaging.

pSiNutria will also be granted an exclusive licence for developing BioSilicon as an ingestible ingredient.

With the focus on food safety increasing owing to a number of recent food scares and even the threat of bioterrorism, potential products being investigated include tools to detect harmful pathogens and trace ingredients.

Nanotechnology is also instrumental in the ongoing development of smart packaging, which has been found to sense and inhibit food-borne viruses as well as extend shelf life and add nutritional value to functional food.

The BioSilicon licence may be used to develop a method of using silicon in modified atmosphere packaging (MAP) and will also explore the possibilities of dissolving it in silicic acid when in the body, found in items such as cereals, wine and beer.

pSivida cites Lux Research as reporting that the market for nano-enabled products will hit \$31 billion this year, with many large food firms showing interest, including Kraft and Unilever.

Further information:

http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20051130005444&newsLang=en

Spirit deal creates UK's largest pub group

Date

02/12/2005

Article Text

Punch Taverns has agreed a takeover deal for one of its major rivals, Spirit, in a move that will create the UK's largest pub group.

The £2.68 billion deal will see Punch add Spirit's 1,800 pubs and bars to its portfolio, bringing its total number of UK outlets to 9,500.

Punch beat off fierce competition from a number of bidders including Australian investment group Macquarie for control of debt-ridden Spirit, which it hopes will help cement its dominant position in the UK pub sector.

"This is an exceptional deal for Punch. The proposed acquisition of Spirit will further increase the scale and quality of our estate," said Punch chief executive, Giles Thorley.

"The acquisition also provides shareholders with a strongly enhanced earnings profile, returns in excess of cost of capital and excellent growth potential."

Punch has agreed to write-off Spirit's £1.25 billion debt as part of the takeover.

Spirit was previously owned by a consortium of private equity firms, including Texas Pacific, Blackstone and CVC Capital Partners.

Under the terms of the deal, 750 Spirit pubs, including a number of popular Chef & Brewer and John Barras inns, will be converted into leased, tenanted establishments, and 82 sold for alternative use within the next two years.

Further information:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?xml=/money/2005/12/02/cnpunch02.xml&menuId=242&sSheet=/money/2005/12/02/ixcitytop.html>

Cognis pushes African plant extracts

Date

02/12/2005

Article Text

Natural ingredients developer, Cognis, has unveiled two plant extracts from Africa for use in the enhancement of beverages.

The rooibos tea and honeybush extracts have antioxidant qualities, which would be of particular benefit in iced tea products, Nutraingredients reports.

The company has previously been focused on products containing healthy fats, but launched its first botanical extract products in May.

Of possible plans to move into the supplements sector, marketing manager Juergen Gierke told Nutraingredients: "We are still in the starting phase and have to make a name in this area.

"We are normally known as the fat-based company so when we approach beverage makers they wonder how the two will go together. But we are aiming at companies looking for scientific backing."

Further information: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/ng.asp?n=64262-cognis-plant-extracts-rooibos-tea-honeybush>

Food industry criticised for environmental impact

Date

02/12/2005

Article Text

The food industry is a major contributor to environmental damage, claims a senior environmentalist.

The executive director of Friends of the Earth, Tony Juniper, said that too many foods were imported to Britain at the same time that similar goods were being exported.

Food manufacturers should take more note of their effect on the environment, he said.

Speaking on the Today programme he said: "Very often the environmental cost of food production and distribution is hidden from consumers.

"If you take something that all of us are familiar with, for example a prawn mayonnaise sandwich, you may find that that particular product has been involved in the destruction of mangrove forests where prawns are being grown and also in the destruction of the rainforests where palm oil is being produced."

He went on: "We are importing into this country what we are exporting at the same time; ingredients like butter for example, pork and lamb, apples where we are importing from the other side of the world at the same time that we are harvesting apples in the south of England."

Speaking on the same programme, Julian Metcalfe of the Pret a Manger sandwich chain insisted that his company took steps to source food locally.

"We have pioneered the use of good natural food. We believe in it very very strongly."

No further information.

Tate & Lyle invests in new ingredients

Date

05/12/2005

Article Text

UK sugar firm, Tate & Lyle, has signed agreements leading to the acquisition of two ingredients companies, one Italian and one based in the US.

Valued at around £74 million, the purchases will enable Tate & Lyle to expand their "product mix, technology and customer base in rapidly expanding areas such as blends and fortification", chief executive Iain Ferguson told just-food.com.

US-based Continental Custom Ingredients (CCI) will bring the British company expertise of dairy stabilisers and emulsifier systems, as well as drink flavours and fortification with vitamins and minerals.

Cesalpinia Foods, meanwhile, manufactures stabilising systems and natural gums, which will assist Tate & Lyle in its production of foods for the dairy, soups and sauces markets.

The two transactions are both expected to be closed in the first quarter of 2006.

"Together we will be more responsive in developing distinctive and innovative solutions for the food industry as part of our value added growth strategy," said Mr Ferguson.

Further information:

<http://www.forbes.com/markets/feeds/afx/2005/12/05/afx2368377.html>

Light alcohol intake linked to lower risk of obesity

Date

05/12/2005

Article Text

The alcoholic beverages industry will welcome the news that regular light drinkers appear to run a smaller risk of becoming obese than people who abstain entirely.

In a survey of 8,236 US non-smokers, researchers found that current drinkers had a 0.73 lower chance of becoming obese.

Around half (46 per cent) of those involved in the study were classed as "current drinkers", which meant they had at least one drink a month, and probably up to a few each week.

Heavy drinkers were classed as having four or more drinks each day, and this group was 46 per cent more likely to be obese than non-drinkers.

The health and nutrition survey asked participants to fill in a questionnaire about their drinking habits, and their body mass index (BMI) was calculated.

Author, Dr Armed Arif, said: "light to moderate drinking - consuming one or two drinks per day - was associated with lower odds of overweight and obesity."

However, the team said that the data gathered was not sufficient to recommend non-drinkers start drinking in order to reduce their weight.

This latest research, published in the journal BMC Public Health, follows a report last week that the health benefits frequently attributed to sensible drinking are misleading.

Dr Rod Jackson, from the University of Auckland in New Zealand, said that any such benefits to the heart were likely to be small, and were probably outweighed by harmful effects.

Further information: http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2005-12/bc-dsa112905.php

Wine tester to improve taste

Date

05/12/2005

Article Text

A pair of French contractors have unveiled an analysis device designed to help wine producers thrive in an ever more competitive market.

The handheld Viniscan quickly produces information about a sample, helping manufacturers to meet the demands of consumers' palates.

A small sample of the wine is placed onto a metal electrode, which is then inserted into the Viniscan, where data is generated concerning molecules and micro-bubbles that affect aroma and taste.

Cedric Naud, 24, told Beveragedaily.com that Viniscan is intended to accompany larger-scale laboratory tests, as it cannot complete a full analysis.

However, with an overview generated in just two minutes, he says it will help wineries to track the progress of their products more thoroughly.

"It controls in real time the critical phases of winemaking and more precisely malo-lactic fermentation," he explained.

"This fermentation is today a critical phase in winemaking and indispensable in obtaining good quality."

The device is currently being trialled in laboratories in the Languedoc region of France, where the firm, Scan2A, is based.

It received an innovation award at the Sitevi 2005 Wine Exposition, which ran in Montpellier between November 29th and December 1st this year.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?id=64282>

Watertight enclosure increases efficiency

Date

05/12/2005

Article Text

Markem has announced that its new printing machine has a washdown enclosure to dispense with the need to remove SmartDate thermal transfer codes.

With concern for food hygiene growing, and regulations becoming more stringent, production facilities are increasing the frequency with which they wash their equipment.

The addition of the enclosure means that the printhead is automatically protected, and the coders watertight, says FoodProductionDaily.

This makes the cleaning process more efficient, removing the need either to "bag" or remove the equipment, which is used in label applicators as well as other machines in the food packaging industry.

The unit also consists of a stainless steel control box enclosure, and a SmartTouch portable control system.

There is a removable cover, a hinged flap to close and seal the unit during operation, and a heater designed to prevent any condensation build-up.

SmartDate coders are used in the production of flexible packaging materials for snacks, confectionery, baked goods and frozen foods.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64340-markem-thermal-transfer-coders-printing>

Cauliflowers catching cold

Date

05/12/2005

Article Text

The recent cold weather has hit the UK production of cauliflower by as much as 80 per cent, warns one leading grower.

Marshalls of Butterwick has reported a sharp fall in production at its sites in Cornwall, Kent, Suffolk, the Isle of Wight and the south coast of England, and is predicting that production could fall ever further over the next few weeks.

"I can safely say that the next week will be desperate for cauliflower supply as climatic conditions [approach] -1°C and -2°C so the crop is not growing at these temperatures," said Marshall's Nigel Clare.

He added: "Most suppliers are only seeing 15 to 20 per cent cover from the UK crops per week and then are making up with imported if possible."

The drop in production is likely to push up market prices and France has already reported that the cost of Breton cauliflower has increased to around £1 per head.

Further information: <http://www.freshinfo.com/index.php?s=n&ss=nd&sid=37837>

Pea protein looks promising

Date

05/12/2005

Article Text

A new pea protein could help food manufacturers target health conscious consumers.

Roquette believes peas could provide a cheap, allergen-free source of protein.

"Demand for protein ingredients is really on the rise," said Bruno Gehin of Roquette. "They are ingredients with nutritional value, together with technical benefits."

He told website Food Navigator that the pea protein could both complement existing proteins and help manufacturers give their products new properties.

Furthermore pea protein could be labelled as non-GM, which would provide manufacturers with a labelling and marketing boost.

The alternative protein market is currently undergoing a period of growth and will continue to expand as diet conscious consumers seek products with lower calories and fat.

Further information: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/ng.asp?n=64323-roquette-protein-gm>

InBev UK launches chilled brands

Date

06/12/2005

Article Text

Following trials, InBev UK is to launch new "Extra Cold" chilled versions of two of its key brands, Boddingtons and Castlemaine 'XXXX'.

In spite of the unusual cold snap that has hit the UK in recent weeks, the firm's "Big Chill" initiative will hope to inspire retailers and consumers alike to look forward to a hot summer in 2006.

Boddingtons Extra Cold and Castlemaine 'XXX' Xtra Cold will both be launched on January 1st next year, with a nationwide TV advertising drive set for the spring.

It is envisaged that this will allow consumers sufficient time to become familiar with the brands prior to the anticipated busy summer trading period.

The new variants will be served in pubs across the UK alongside the existing beers at a similar price.

However, they will be served at temperatures between one and two degrees lower than is customary.

Just-drinks.com reports that 5,000 fonts with new designs are to be installed in outlets in the first quarter of 2006, as well as specially branded serving glasses.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=29388

Brewery backs binge drinking scheme

Date

06/12/2005

Article Text

A UK brewery has taken the unusual step of supporting a local police initiative by launching a guest ale in its honour.

The managers of Bath-based Abbey Ales were apparently so impressed with the local police's "Three Strikes" policy, covering Bath and North East Somerset, they created a Three Strikes Ale.

Served at selected outlets across Bath, the brewer said its ale is made with finest maris otter malt, and the flavour is stronger than its current flagship brew Bellringer.

Alan Morgan, Abbey Ales' managing director, said he thought the ale's name would promote the scheme by making it a conversation point, playing a part in combating the anti social behaviour associated with the UK's drinking culture.

"People should be able to enjoy socialising at licensed premises around the area without feeling intimidated by those who intend to ruin the night for others," he said.

"Any scheme that intends to weed this tiny minority of people out of pubs and bars has to be good and that is why we have chosen to support it."

As the name suggests, the Three Strikes scheme will see persistent offenders excluded from pubs in the area.

If a person is arrested twice in the space of a year, they could be banned from all pub watch-affiliated pubs and clubs in Bath and North East Somerset.

If they are then arrested a third time, they could be landed with one of the government's Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), and see the ban extended for up to 10 years.

Persistent offenders will also be encouraged to seek help for alcohol-related problems.

Further information: <http://www.thepublican.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=19333&d=32&h=24&f=23&dateformat=%25o%20%25B%20%25Y>

Suppliers show signs of increasing global enthusiasm

Date

06/12/2005

Article Text

A survey of 50 managers from Fast Moving Consumable Goods (FMCG) suppliers has found that almost three quarters (72 per cent) are keen to enter into international trading agreements.

This is a significant increase compared with a similar survey carried out last year, when just over half (54 per cent) signalled their enthusiasm, according to just-food.com.

Moreover, in 2003, only 21 per cent of respondents were positive about entering into agreements with major retailers on a global basis.

Joanne Denney Finch, chief executive at the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), who authored the report, commented: "This year we have seen a real change in attitudes towards global trading relationships.

"Many suppliers are now positively embracing what was avoided before."

The report also showed that the number of suppliers who incorporated global or regional pricing in contracts had increased, rising to 41 per cent from 13 per cent last year.

Of the retailers, Ms Denney-Finch said: "It is clear that they are looking to work with pro-active global suppliers that develop and share their best practice in all the markets in which they operate."

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=62622

Rice protein promises purity

Date

06/12/2005

Article Text

A new Chinese rice protein has a number of advantages over the alternatives available, according to the UK firm AMC-Chemicals.

Recently displayed at Food Ingredients Europe (FIE) 2005 in Paris, the protein is now being imported by the US company Axiom Foods for use in a range of functional products.

Axiom Foods says that wholegrain rice-based Oryzatein is more readily absorbed by the body than pea protein, which is also becoming increasingly common.

This is because pea proteins are less expensive than those derived from soy and whey, and unlike most other proteins, do not need to carry an allergen warning label.

However, Axiom's president, David Janow, insists that Oryzatein is also cheaper than soy and whey, as well as having higher protein levels than the vegetable.

Protein demand is soaring on the back of consumer demand for healthier products that don't rely on carbohydrates, and particularly functional foods such as sports drinks and slimming aids.

Foodnavigator.com reports that the new rice protein also contains a multitude of amino acids, making it similar enough to mother's milk to be used in infant formulas.

Removing the rice's carbohydrate content, the ingredient is held to achieve a protein purity of 90 per cent.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=64355-amc-chemicals-axiom-rice-protein>

Living cell additives unlock the secret of extended shelf life

Date

06/12/2005

Article Text

Additives found naturally in living cells could be used to keep meat fresh for up to three months, a team of Russian scientists have discovered.

Russian science journal Informnauka states that the team replaced nitrates in sausage meat with substances found in any living cells.

By adding the nicotinamide-dinucleotide and adenosinetriphosphoric acid, dicarbon acids and myoglobin to the meat, the team from the Cell Biophysics Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences were able to keep it fresh for two to three months.

The discovery could have implications for both Russian and global meat production, particularly with regard to long-life and snack products.

Industry news portal Food Production Daily reports that the innovation could also offer benefits with regard to distribution.

Further information: <http://www.cee-foodindustry.com/news/ng.asp?n=64319-kampomos-fresh-meat-russian-meat>

Danone joins Pasteur to research probiotics

Date

06/12/2005

Article Text

Danone, the world's largest dairy producer, has undertaken a joint research programme with the Pasteur Institute to develop their know-how of probiotics.

Danone's Actimel is one of the most popular probiotic yoghurt drinks in the UK, coming in several different flavours including strawberry, pineapple and orange.

The drink contains a unique culture of bacteria called L casei Imunitass, which is assimilated into the intestinal flora in the stomach, helping to battle the imbalance caused by antibiotic treatment, stress or a bad diet.

The new research partnership is focusing its attention on ferments from the Danone collection, using techniques from the Pasteur Institute. The aim is to produce new probiotic ferments to develop a better understanding of their impact on human health.

Sven Thormahlen, Danone vice president of research and development, comments: "This partnership will reinforce Danone's research capability in probiotics, helping to further enhance our current products and develop the probiotics of the future."

Danone's products, which also include bottled water brand-leaders Evian and Volvic, are on sale in 120 countries - with reported sales of €13.7 billion (£9.3 billion) in 2004.

Further information:

<http://www.npicenter.com/anm/templates/newsATemp.aspx?articleid=14356&zzoneid=12>

New type of broccoli could boost cancer protection

Date

07/12/2005

Article Text

Food scientists are in the process of developing a new variety of broccoli with higher levels of a chemical that protects against cancer.

Already hailed as one nature's "superfoods", it is hoped that the new, improved version will benefit people whose genes mean their bodies absorb less sulforaphane.

Sulforaphane is the main isothiocyanate released when the body processes crucifer, "green leafy" vegetables, including cabbage, brussel spouts and broccoli, as well as cauliflower. Isothiocyanates are powerful anti-carcinogens.

However, people without the gene GSTM1 are less able to retain sulforaphane, and the team from Institute of Food Research say they are therefore at a disadvantage when it comes to protection against cancer.

Around half the population could be affected in this way, they claim.

The new broccoli would have around 3.4 times as much sulforaphane as the type currently on the shelves, which would be enough make up for the genetic deficiency.

Lead scientist, Professor Richard Mithen, said: "if you consume larger portions of broccoli, or broccoli with higher levels of sulforaphane, such as the super broccoli, you may be able to retain as much sulforaphane in your body as those who have the gene."

He added that broccoli "is also a rich source of other vitamins and minerals".

Spokesperson for Cancer Research UK, Josephine Querido, said that the scale of the study was too small "to draw specific conclusions", adding however that a healthy diet, containing five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, was key to preventing cancer.

Further information:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/12/07/nveg07.xml&Sheet=/news/2005/12/07/ixhome.html>

Brazilian beer heads to UK

Date

07/12/2005

Article Text

A leading Brazilian beer has come to the UK as part of an international rollout programme.

InBev believes its recently launched international Brahma brand could lead to sales worth €30 million outside Brazil as soon as 2007.

The beer is marketed as bringing a touch of laid-back Brazilian style, as well as a great taste, to the UK's time-stretched drinkers.

And although the recipe is slightly different, it will still foster a sense of "living with effortless flair", the company said, according to Drinks Business Review.

In addition to the UK, Brahma will soon be sold in Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, Russia and the US.

Belgium-based InBev was formed when the drinks firm Interbrew merged with Brazil's Ambev to create the world's largest brewer by volume.

Yesterday InBev also announced the UK's pubs would be installed with fonts for two new, chilled versions of its Boddingtons and Castlemaine 'XXX' brands, each served a couple of degrees lower than the standard varieties.

Further information: http://www.drinks-business-review.com/article_news.asp?guid=10E95C08-F311-42CB-85D0-4C6C2168B48F

Food ethics report highlights health flaws

Date

07/12/2005

Article Text

Low fat versions of traditional "junk foods" will not be enough to combat the increase in diet-related health problems such as obesity, a new report warns.

However, diet soft drinks, low fat crisps and processed foods with lower salt content are better than nothing, according to the UK's Food Ethics Council.

The council accepts that food firms cannot compromise much further in terms of consumer acceptability, as making foods healthier inevitably means changing the taste to some degree.

"Food companies are accountable first to their shareholders, not to the public," the report admitted, according to the Daily Mail.

However, the government did come in for criticism for emphasising consumer choice at the expense of the low-income families most at risk from unhealthy food.

"Healthy junk won't solve everything," said Dr Tom MacMillan, the council's chief executive.

"We also need to fight poverty, regulate food marketing and deal with all the other factors that make it hard for many people to eat a healthy diet," he continued.

The report also called on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to follow up its recent salt campaign with similar publicity drives on fat and sugar intake.

Further information:

<http://www.upi.com/ConsumerHealthDaily/view.php?StoryID=20051206-083646-8371r>

Allergy manual makes eating easier

Date

07/12/2005

Article Text

A new book has been published to help allergy sufferers when cooking and eating out.

Allergens are one of the key areas of concern for the food industry at present, with incidents of contamination throwing the spotlight on labelling regulations, in the EU in particular.

Available through Amazon priced US\$24.95, 'Let's Eat Out! Your Passport to Living Gluten and Allergy Free' claims to be an invaluable tool for those on specialised diets around the world.

The 500-page manual collects the advice of culinary experts, nutritionists and affected individuals concerning ten principal food allergens: gluten, corn, wheat, dairy, eggs, fish, peanuts, soy, shellfish and tree nuts.

Specifically, the book provides 175 suggestions of what to order at restaurants serving all manner of cuisines, from French to Thai and American 'surf and turf'.

It also offers snack possibilities, contact details of airlines and international organisations, and useful phrases in French, German, Spanish and Italian.

Authors Kim Koeller and Robert La France dined in restaurants in more than 30 countries to produce the book.

Further information:

<http://www.upi.com/ConsumerHealthDaily/view.php?StoryID=20051206-083646-8371r>

Fructose found to accelerate obesity

Date

07/12/2005

Article Text

Sugar could be making people fatter more quickly, US scientists have said.

A research team at the University of Florida said fructose - found in common sugar, processed foods and even fruit - could render the body's metabolism unable to function effectively, causing faster-than-usual weight gain.

The scientists say the findings are significant as many modern, processed foods contain high levels of fructose.

In tests on rats, scientists found that fructose "tricked" the animals into thinking they were hungrier than they really were, causing them to eat more.

The researchers fed the rats a high-fructose diet for ten weeks. Compared with rats on a low fructose diet, those on the high-fructose diet experienced a rise in uric acid in the bloodstream and developed insulin resistance.

They then found that when they lowered the levels of uric acid in the animals' bloodstream, they could prevent or reverse the effects of the metabolic syndrome.

Dr Richard J Johnson, lead author of the study, said: "There may be more than just the common concept that the reason a person gets fat is because they eat too many calories and they don't do enough exercise.

"Our data suggest certain foods and, in particular, fructose may actually speed the process for a person to become obese."

The researchers say that research now needs to be carried out in humans. They also commented that the link between fructose and obesity could be significant for future dietary guidelines.

The findings of the study were published this month in the Nature Clinical Practice Nephrology and the American Journal of Physiology-Renal Physiology.

Further information: http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2005-12/uof-usf120605.php

FSA and Ofcom co-operate over nutrition

Date

07/12/2005

Article Text

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has handed its new tool for categorising foods based on nutritional content, to the communications watchdog Ofcom.

The model was developed by the FSA to support Ofcom's work to improve child health by limiting broadcast advertising of foods that are high in saturated fat, sugar or salt.

Deirdre Hutton, chair of the FSA, explained: "This technical model, which has been overseen by scientific experts, provides a systematic basis for categorising food.

"We know that children's diets are too high in saturated fat, sugar and salt and we want to redress the current imbalance of food advertising to children. We are confident that this model provides a sound and robust basis for Ofcom to use in its work."

The model, which was developed by an expert working committee, is now subject to a consultation process run by Ofcom. The results of this will be published in early 2006.

No further information.

Marks makes move into hot convenience food

Date

08/12/2005

Article Text

High street retailer Marks & Spencer is preparing to compete with the likes of Starbucks, Costa Coffee and Cafe Nero for a slice of the UK's lucrative coffee shop market.

The firm has launched three 'Hot Food to Go' takeaway counters at key London outlets, with more planned for 2006.

Marks & Spencer has always strived to meet demand for "on the go" convenience food products, with a range of premium sandwiches, wraps, fruit salads and cake slices similar to those offered by other chains.

Now, however, it plans to up the stakes, differentiating itself in the eyes of the busy city professionals who are regular customers.

Claiming customers will be served in a maximum of three minutes, the food on offer will include soups, noodles, hot pasta dishes and risotto, as well as pasties and chips.

Tea and coffee will be reasonably priced and solely Fair Trade, and early starters will also be able to grab breakfast in the form of croissants, muesli, or even hot porridge, known to be enjoying a comeback for its health benefits.

The stores involved in the trial are in Kensington, Hammersmith and Moorgate, and plans for expansion include a number of in-store eating experiences.

Mark Ashley, head of hospitality, explained that many of the businesspeople who come in at lunchtime picked up a sandwich to take to the park and eat.

Sales were seen to drop over the winter, however, hence the move to hot alternatives.

"It's a big step for us to move into hospitality," Mr Ashley told the Daily Mail.

"We are very good at quality food, so we are now trying to sell that in different environments."

Further information: <http://www.retail-week.com/nav?page=retailweek.news.food.detail&resource=3810627>

BASF to launch biodegradable packaging plastic

Date

08/12/2005

Article Text

The German company BASF has announced plans to launch a new biodegradable plastic that can be used for food packaging.

The material, Ecovio, is formed from two major components, including Cargill's corn-based polylactic acid (PLA), which is increasingly being seen as a cost-effective alternative to the more commonly used polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

PET is largely reliant on petroleum, the price of which has increased dramatically in recent years.

PLA, on the other hand, is a starch derivative, which can be formed into either sheets or film for use in packaging applications such as food containers and milk or juice cartons.

Ecovio is made up of 45 per cent PLA, with the rest coming from BASF's own biodegradable plastic, Ecoflex.

Biodegradable plastics are expected to grow in demand, as consumers become more environmentally conscious, but also increase their reliance on ready-to-eat convenience food.

BASF expects the global market for biodegradable packaging to increase by around 20 per cent between now and 2010.

The company will begin marketing Ecovio in its home European market in the first half of 2006.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64364-basf-natureworks-biodegradable>

Ulma unveils thermoformer

Date

08/12/2005

Article Text

Spain-based Ulma Packaging has announced the addition of a new thermoformer to its UK portfolio of products, suitable for packaging a wide range of food types including cheese, meats and fish.

The TF Supra can process as many as 70 packs per minute at the top end, say the manufacturers, and can be used with either flexible or rigid film up to 700 microns.

Depending on the application in question, optional add-ons include extra cutting stations, an extension of the loading area and the inclusion of pre-heaters.

Vacuum and gas flushing systems are also on hand, allowing producers to create modified atmosphere packs (MAPs) for extended shelf life.

Ulma Packaging was first formed in Onati in the north of Spain in 1956, but it now has subsidiaries in 14 other countries, offering a range of packaging solutions for the food industry.

Further information: <http://www.packagingessentials.com/eqnews.asp?id=2005-12-07-18.12.32.000000>

Signatrol samples temperatures for food safety

Date

08/12/2005

Article Text

UK-based Signatrol has unveiled a new ultra-small temperature logger that food processors can insert into products such as jars, bottles and ready meals.

With food safety coming under increasing scrutiny, the SL53 will offer companies the opportunity to monitor their supply chains more effectively, the manufacturers claim.

Examples of suitable applications include the manufacture of chocolate, jam making, and cutlery washing to ensure adequate sterilisation.

With the ability to hold 4,000 individual temperature records in its high resolution mode, a range of sampling frequencies can be set to log temperatures between 0 and 125 degrees C.

Additional possibilities are to delay the start of a series of readings by 45 days, and programming the logger to start automatically when a certain "safe" temperature is exceeded.

When used with liquids, the battery-sized device can operate effectively at depths of up to a metre, says Food Production Daily.

Each logger also has its own registration number, allowing a particular item, or batch of foods, to be intercepted if necessary.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64433-signatrol-temperature-data-logger>

Coke revamp targets consumer relevance

Date

08/12/2005

Article Text

Soft drinks giant Coca-Cola announced an extensive revamp yesterday, with a new slogan, redesigned packaging and new product launches as it aims to turn around its sluggish performance.

A new advertising campaign, to kick off in North America during the 2006 Winter Olympics in February, will feature the slogan "Welcome to the Coke side of Life".

At Atlanta-based Coca Cola's investor conference, chief executive Neville Isdell said: "I heard from you, from our bottlers and our people that we had an innovation deficit, and they were right."

The firm plans to launch various new carbonated and soft drinks, packaged in newly designed 200ml aluminium bottles.

A cola and coffee drink is also to be released in France next month, dubbed Coca-Cola Blak, targeting the more sophisticated soft drinker.

The firm's head of marketing, Mary Minnick, said that the moves sought to make its product line more relevant to customers.

"We believe there are times or a moment in the day when only a Coke will do, and that is the framework for our advertising," she said.

Coke is hoping to attain previously forecast volume and profit growth figures after a five-year slump in sales, partly due to demand for healthier soft drinks.

The firm has turned a corner in recent months, announcing a 37 per cent rise in third-quarter earnings in October, which compounded second-quarter gains of nine per cent.

Further information: http://www.newratings.com/analyst_news/article_1155775.html

Sodexo signs deal for environmental packaging

Date

08/12/2005

Article Text

Facilities management group Sodexo has signed a deal with plastics producer Cereplast to supply the group with eco-friendly packaging made from natural or recycled materials.

Sodexo will purchase "commercial quantities" of Cereplast- made packaging food service ware for its North American operations.

Sodexo supply management director, Troy Acosta, said the decision to use Cereplast-made packaging is part of an overall strategy to increase the use of eco-friendly products made from natural or recycled materials.

"Sensitivity to environmental issues is an integral part of Sodexo's way of doing business. It's important to us and to our customers," said Mr Acosta.

"Cereplast-made packaging is similar in performance and price to standard food service packaging, but the fact that it is biobased, biodegradable and compostable sets it apart."

Cereplast president and CEO, Frederic Scheer, said that the company was finding that more businesses are approaching their packaging needs with "increased environmental awareness", indicating that greener practices are evolving as part of everyday business.

Further information:

http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20051205005359&newsLang=en

"Premium" food demand proceeds to grow

Date

09/12/2005

Article Text

The UK's consumers are increasingly exhibiting a taste for "premium" food and drink products, according to a new report.

The total value of the grocery market is around £11.6 billion, with the premium, or luxury segment accounting for around 9.5 per cent, says the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) citing its recent survey.

The "premiumisation" of food and drink is one of the key trends in the industry at present, as manufacturers seek to cash in on most consumers' increased spending power.

Known to be cash-rich but time-poor, people seem increasingly willing to pay more to treat themselves with convenience foods that promise a little bit extra.

The IGD also forecasts that this trend will only continue to grow in force, as supermarkets extend their own-brand premium lines to compete with the likes of Waitrose and Marks & Spencer, who are leaders in the field.

The Sainsbury's tag "Taste the difference", more recently "Try something different", and Tesco's "Finest" range, are two examples of a widespread attempt to please today's generation of "foodies" in this way.

Joanne Denney-Finch, IGD chief executive, told the Scotsman: "Clearly with a majority of consumers enjoying their food and seeing meal preparation as a fun event rather than a chore, there is still plenty of room in the premium market for new and existing players."

Further information: <http://business.scotsman.com/agriculture.cfm?id=2374322005>

Christmas turkey on your mobile

Date

09/12/2005

Article Text

A new mobile video service will allow people to hand pick their Christmas turkeys depending on the bird's personality.

It is a collaboration between the mobile operator 3 and a farm in Essex, where a number of video cameras have been set up around the pen.

Viewers will be able to switch cameras, receive more information by text message, and even order their bird to be delivered.

Paul Kelly, who runs Kelly's Farm, said: "I think it's a really nice and more personal way for people to be able to choose their turkeys for their Christmas dinner.

"For the turkeys it's their equivalent of a beauty pageant and it's a fitting send off as it's what they've been bred for."

Each of his 25 birds has been named after a celebrity, with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown joining soccer star Wayne Rooney.

Mr Kelly said the scheme would make the farming process more transparent and prove the turkeys were well looked after, as well as being fun.

And he will also be catering for vegetarians, although not with the usual meat substitute.

If vegetarians are upset at the idea of a turkey being sacrificed in the name of Christmas, they can pay the same price for it to be spared instead.

For the same £30 it will even be transported to a special turkey sanctuary.

Further information: <http://www.3g.co.uk/PR/Dec2005/2337.htm>

New wine position at Pernod

Date

09/12/2005

Article Text

The drinks firm Pernod Ricard UK has created the role of wine development director to oversee production and ensure the quality of its increased portfolio of products.

Pernod Ricard acquired Allied Domecq in July this year, boosting its position in the wine and spirits sector to number one outside the US, with brands now including Malibu, Beefeater gin, Mumm champagne and the Jacob's Creek wine range.

Newly appointed Adrian Atkinson will work closely alongside the wine brands' overseas manufacturers, focusing on innovations such as new product development, blending and styles, as well as ensuring consistent quality levels.

He will also take charge of wine education and trade PR, according to just-drinks.com.

Mr Atkinson himself comes from Allied Domecq Wines UK, where he has worked in a similar capacity for over a year.

Pernod Ricard's wines are produced by winemakers in New Zealand, California, Spain and Argentina.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=29433

New microwave sleeve mops up oil

Date

09/12/2005

Article Text

A US-based packaging manufacturer has designed a microwaveable container that absorbs excess oil produced as foods are heated.

The sleeve, which was created in six months, was initially commissioned by Dutch food firm Beckers for a meat-filled product known as "Vleeskroketen".

This is a popular snack most often sold by European street vendors, but Beckers wanted to produce a convenience heatable version that resembled the original as closely as possible in terms of taste and texture.

"Because the product has a high oil content, the package needs to both absorb oil and contain moisture," John McDonnell, microwave product marketing manager, told FoodProductionDaily.

This is necessary to "duplicate the taste and texture that consumers have come to expect in the eat-out version - namely a crisp exterior and a soft, moist interior", he continued.

Graphic Packaging's solution was to produce a two-sided sleeve, one with a crispness-enhancing metallised film, and the second made from a material that absorbs moisture.

These two sides are laminated together, and pierced with holes that allow oil to pass from the food to the material.

The sleeve was shipped to the Netherlands in August, and the firm now hopes to extend it use to other products in the burgeoning ready-meals market.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64428-graphic-packaging-microwave-snack>

Potato sector urged to pick up

Date

09/12/2005

Article Text

The potato sector needs to promote itself better to gain a bigger market share and combat the threat posed by the diet industry.

Addressing delegates at BP2005, David Hughes, professor of food marketing at Imperial College, said the industry was only just "emerging from the primordial swamp" with regard to marketing itself.

Mr Hughes also said potato producers had so far found themselves caught on the back foot in terms of changing consumer trends.

What is more, he added, the industry's links with large retailers were not providing benefits in terms of profitability or market share.

"We reduce the price and give it away. When a supermarket says it will promote your produce, do you say whoopee, or do you weep?" he asked.

Further information: <http://www.freshinfo.com/index.php?s=n&ss=nd&sid=37905>

Defra to safeguard the sea

Date

09/12/2005

Article Text

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), is working to simultaneously preserve sea ecosystems and support the UK's marine industries.

In a report published by Defra and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, they say they are committed towards the development of healthy, clean, safe and productive oceans and seas.

However Defra stresses it recognises the extent to which man is economically dependent on the marine system and will work to support sustainable fishing and harvesting.

Ben Bradshaw, Defra's marine and fisheries minister, said: "Pressures on the marine environment are growing, with industries like energy, aggregates and fisheries increasingly looking to use the same areas of sea.

Further information:

Boost for neighbourhood shops

Date

12/12/2005

Article Text

Sales in neighbourhood shops are reportedly outstripping those of high street or out-of-town outlets.

New research reveals that sales growth per square foot in smaller stores is growing faster than that of larger rivals, as supermarket operators increase their small store portfolios.

The study by Verdict Research found that neighbourhood shops are the retail winners against their high street and out-of-town rivals for the third consecutive year.

The retail analyst claims that part of the success of neighbourhood shops is the fact that they have forged closer ties with the local community than the major grocers. However,

the study also notes that weaker players are continuing to drop out of the market as the supermarkets increase their market share.

The report, Neighbourhood Retailing 2006, indicates that average sales densities in neighbourhood stores grew two thirds faster than total retail during 2005, now standing at around £537 per square foot, or 20.1 per cent higher than across all retail outlets.

Nick Gladding, retail analyst at Verdict Research, said: "The arrival of the major grocers into the neighbourhood arena is driving improved sector performance as players transfer their expertise in superstore retailing, enhance ranges and make prices more competitive.

"Existing convenience store operators have been forced to fight back by increasing their own standards in order to remain competitive."

Convenience store forecourt retailing is set to boom, as major oil companies look to offload company owned sites and focus more closely on fuel wholesaling. Somerfield purchased almost 150 sites in 2005, mainly from Texaco, while M&S has reached an agreement with BP to introduce its Simply Food format on a trial basis into seven forecourts.

According to Verdict Research, forecourt retailing is largely untapped, but offers considerable advantages in the form of high levels of footfall and car-borne customers and a relatively captive audience.

The report also reveals that retail giant Tesco has achieved the largest market share increase of any retailer in the neighbourhood market this year, increasing its sales by £200 million. Tesco is now second only to market leaders Spar, tied with Irish operator Musgrave (owner of Londis and Budgens) for market share.

More information:

http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article332529.ece

Asda to launch discount supermarkets

Date

12/12/2005

Article Text

The Wal-Mart owned supermarket Asda is planning to launch a chain of discount food stores.

The new stores, which will rival both Sainsbury's' and Tesco's smaller outlets, will be modelled on European discount supermarket. Asda will sell only 100 branded products in the stores, the rest of the shelves being made up of own brand goods from the company's Smartprice and Extra Special ranges.

Analysts said that Asda was aiming to take a slice of Tesco's dominance of the south-east and London with the new chain.

Planning permission for the stores, which will average around 8,000 square feet in size, should be easier to obtain than Asda's traditional 80,000 square feet outlets.

Lee Scott, chief executive of Wal-Mart, hinted at the strategy to the Sunday Times in August: "A lot of Tesco's growth has come from the small convenience chain. Andy (Bond, Asda chief executive) and his team have got to look and see where this opportunity is for us with that kind of space.

"There are no limits, all we want to do is serve customers. We run multiple formats in different countries. In Mexico we are the second-largest restaurant operator."

It is thought that the format has been inspired by the Leaderprice chain in France, which subtly adjusts its range to suit local tastes.

More information:

http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=businessNews&storyID=2005-12-12T114528Z_01_SCH242274_RTRUKOC_0_UK-RETAIL-ASDA.xml&archived=False

Tetra Pak launches clear aseptic packaging

Date

12/12/2005

Article Text

Packaging giant Tetra Pak has launched its first transparent Aseptic package.

Aseptic packaging allows for a sterile food to be filled into a sterilised package within a protective atmosphere. As a result, foods can be preserved longer without the use of preservatives or refrigeration. It is designed for foods which advertise themselves as "preservative free" or "natural".

The Tetra Wedge Aseptic Clear package allows customers to see what's inside the pack, whilst a patented technology preserves the product. The barrier can be used for high and low-acid foods, opening up pouch-type packaging to the dairy industry.

"The demand for healthy beverages is increasing and Tetra Wedge Aseptic Clear can help fulfill that demand in an innovative new package," said Vanessa Solmaz of Tetra Pak.

The pouch is said to reduce water and energy use compared to hot-fill packaging processes, and reduces labour costs. It also has no sharp edges and smooth sides, and has been designed with a straw hole pocket.

The package has already been trailed in Mexico by beverage maker Jumex. Tetra Pak hopes that it will be used for juices, dairy products and flavoured waters.

More information:

<http://www.tetrapak.com/>

UK firm aids refrigerated transport

Date

12/12/2005

Article Text

Manual temperature checking might become a thing of the past with a new technology from British firm OEM Group.

Food Production Daily reported that the company has developed an RFID-based system which allows plant managers to monitor truck temperatures whilst the vehicle is parked or being loaded, eliminating manual checks.

The system will make it easier for plant owners to comply with the hazard analysis critical control points (HACCP) system, which specifies that shippers of meat, seafood and poultry must supply information regarding processing and food handling throughout the chain of supply.

"The unique thing about this system is that the trailers temperature can be measured whilst they are uncoupled from their trucks something that has not previously been available," said Steve Tickner, a spokesperson for OEM.

He added that the system also allows for temperatures to be monitored at any time the vehicle is on site, allowing "'instant' information on which trailer is at the optimum temperature and would save a fleet having to manually check the trailers."

The RFID system has a range of around 300 meters.

No further information

Food companies spending least on R&D

Date

12/12/2005

Article Text

European food companies are spending less on research and development than other industries, Food Production Daily has reported.

A report from the European Commission found that, amongst the top 15 sectors in the EU, the food industry was the worst for neglecting R&D spending. Food producers spent €3.5 billion on R&D in 2004, compared to the auto industry €58.5 billion investment.

The EC suggested that food firms should increase their competitiveness through boosting their research into new products and processing techniques. The industry has suffered a decline in profitability between 2003 and 2004.

However, overall R&D spending amongst EU business has remained stagnant compared to firms in the US and elsewhere. The sectors on aggregate increased their spending by only 0.7 per cent in 2004, up from a decrease of two per cent in 2003.

Food producers had increased their R&D investment by 6.3 per cent in 2004. Unilever was the highest EU food research spender, judged to be the 23rd largest investor in R&D in the EU as a whole.

Danone came second but was deemed the 101st biggest R&D investor.

No further information

Apples and pears unite in global campaign

Date

12/12/2005

Article Text

Apple and pear fruit and juice producers worldwide have pledged to cooperate to end the current crisis in the industry.

Members of the World Apple and Pear Association (WAPA) have committed to improving the level of information sharing between member countries.

Tom Lyall, at the WAPA secretariat in Brussels, said: "WAPA commits itself to improving the quality of the information flow within the industry, to allow exporters to better plan the campaigns."

Producers in Europe and the southern hemisphere are to improve the quality of their production forecasts.

European producers will also provide better stock information and producers in the southern hemisphere will transmit more accurate export data.

All members will focus on promotional activities to spread the message about the health benefits of the fruits and their juices.

Industry website Fresh Info reports that the association will focus on this campaign at its next meeting in February.

More information:

<http://www.wapa-association.org/>

Tea 'cuts cancer risk'

Date

13/12/2005

Article Text

Drinking tea could cut the risk of ovarian cancer, according to new research.

The research, published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, suggests that women who drink at least one cup of tea a day have a lower risk of ovarian cancer than non-tea drinkers.

Susanna C Larsson and Alicja Wolk, of the National Institute of Environmental Medicine in Stockholm examined the tea consumption and the risk of ovarian cancer in 61,057 women.

Participants in the research completed a 67-item food questionnaire at enrolment (1987 to 1990) and then their cancer incidence was followed through December 2004.

Researchers found that women who drank two or more cups of tea had a 46 per cent lower risk of ovarian cancer. Women who drank less tea (one cup a day) had a 24 per cent lower risk of ovarian cancer.

Other types of cancer were not included in the study.

The authors said the results suggested that tea consumption was indeed a factor.

"Each additional cup of tea per day was associated with an 18 per cent lower risk of ovarian cancer," Ms Larsson and Ms Wolk said.

"In summary, our results from a large population-based cohort of Swedish women suggest that tea consumption may lower the risk of ovarian cancer."

But they added that caution was necessary, saying: "Because prospective data on this relationship are scarce, our findings need confirmation by future studies."

More information:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4521964.stm>

Diversification pushes Pepsi ahead of Coke

Date

13/12/2005

Article Text

PepsiCo has surpassed Coca-Cola for the first time in terms of market value, thanks to a boost in sales growth caused by diversifying beyond carbonated drinks.

Perennially second placed in the fizzy drinks market, PepsiCo's share value has risen by 14 per cent this year so far, taking its market worth up to \$98.4 billion, while Coca-Cola's share value declined by 1.2 per cent, meaning its total value has fallen to \$97.9 billion.

Diversification is clearly the key factor behind PepsiCo's success, with its sales strongly augmented by demand for Gatorade sports drinks, Aquafina bottled water and lower calorie snacks such as Baked Lay's potato chip.

As a result, PepsiCo acquires more than half its revenue through snacks and less than 20 per cent through soft drinks, whereas 82 per cent of Coca-Cola's sales come through soft drinks.

With many people now preferring healthier drinks such as sports drinks to sodas, PepsiCo has been quicker to move beyond the fizzy drinks market than Coca-Cola.

By the time Coca-Cola introduced its own brand of bottled water, Dasani, in 1999, Aquafina had already been on the market for four years.

Aquafina and PepsiCo's Tropicana refrigerated juices outsell Dasani and Coca-Cola's Minute Maid, and last month PepsiCo agreed to purchase Stacy's Pita Chip and Sara Lee's European nuts division as it seeks to boost snacks sales further.

More information:

<http://www.nydailynews.com/business/story/374145p-318061c.html>

Test developed for bird flu in food

Date

13/12/2005

Article Text

A new test has been developed to find evidence of bird flu infection in food.

Eurofins Scientific said that it has implemented a test for the H5N1 strain of avian influenza despite agreeing with a statement from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that humans are unlikely to contract the virus by eating raw meat or eggs and that cooking it properly would eliminate any risk.

However, it said that it had been approached by customers who wished to reduce the risk of customers or employees becoming infected by H5N1 to near zero. The company has implemented the test in a number of its laboratories, but does not expect a huge demand.

"We were very reluctant to introduce this assay as we concur with the EFSA scientists' view that the risk is extremely low," said Dr Bert Popping, director of molecular biology and immunology at Eurofins Scientific.

"But clients from different industries demanded zero risk for their employees and customers," he added.

Eurofins currently has 50 laboratories in 15 different countries. The firm specialises in providing testing services to, amongst others, the food and pharmaceutical industries.

No further information

New laws 'will not increase testing'

Date

13/12/2005

Article Text

New European criteria for microbiological safety and processing will not result in more tests for processors, according to Food Production Daily.

The Chilled Food Association's Kaarin Goodburn told the website that she was concerned that many producers may believe that the new regulations will mean that the amount of testing that needs to be completed will need to be increased.

Ms Goodburn said that some testing services had been trying to take advantage of the confusion.

Most firms who already apply the international Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) standards should not need to change their testing regime and 90 per cent of the UK food industry already does so.

"The regulations are about implementing HACCP and using the criteria given within HACCP," she said. "They are not about mandatory requirements on testing."

Companies will also be able to use the regulations to show that they have shown due diligence and have not been lax in their safety procedures, in the event that a food safety problem arises, she added.

HACCP will allow firms to set sampling and testing systems which are relative to the nature and size of their work.

More information:

<http://www.chilledfood.org/Content/home.asp>

'More scientists needed in pig industry'

Date

13/12/2005

Article Text

The pig industry must make further efforts to attract and retain young scientists, the British Pig Executive (BPEX) has announced.

The executive now sponsors PhD students working in relevant fields and it recently held a seminar where the students presented their work and fielded questions from their supervisors as well as BPEX members.

BPEX director of pig industry development Mark Wilson explained: "Sponsoring these PhD students is extremely important for the future of the British pig industry.

"It is important to attract the best brains to the industry and even more important that we retain them.

"The work they are doing is relevant to the challenges the industry faces - it is fundamental, practical and the results can be communicated to producers quickly and easily."

Among the subjects covered by the students are wasting syndromes in pigs, nutrition of weaned piglets and the impact of disease on production in the pig industry.

More information: <http://www.bpex.org/home.asp>

Firm sees the future in chocolate photos

Date

13/12/2005

Article Text

A chocolate company in County Durham has created a Tony Blair chocolate bar.

Chocpix has invented a chocolate bar that transforms into a photograph when held into the light, reports the Northern Echo.

Bishop Auckland Labour MP, Helen Goodman, tested the bars and claims that she hopes that the prime minister will approve after the company contacts Downing Street this week.

The bars have already gained interest from around the world, yet the chocolate cannot be sold without the permission of Mr Blair himself.

Chocpix director, Geoff Dixon, told the Northern Echo: "We needed a face that everyone would recognise to show how well the product works, to hand out as samples at confectionery exhibitions in Germany and America."

Chocpix has received funding for past ventures from government-backed Northern Enterprise.

No further information

Pillsbury aims at adult market

Date

14/12/2005

Article Text

American food maker Pillsbury is aiming for the adult market with a new range of desserts.

The company announced that it will aim its new Pillsbury Ultimate Dessert Kits and Ultimate muffins specifically at adults. Pillsbury previously marketed their desserts solely for children.

The dessert kits include cake mix, topping and filling, which the makers claim can be prepared in only five minutes. Flavours include Cookies n' Creme, Triple Chocolate Moose and White Velvet Moose.

"Kids have enjoyed Pillsbury desserts for generations, but Pillsbury also has desserts that satisfy grown up tastes, too," said Maribeth Badertscher of Pillsbury owner JM Smucker.

"We've taken the brownies and cakes that people love and combined them with rich fillings and decadent toppings to create the ultimate dessert experience. For people who like to bake but don't necessarily have the time, Ultimate Dessert Kits are the perfect solution."

The JM Smucker company sells a range of foods including peanut butters, jams and preserves.

More information:

<http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/12-12-2005/0004232193&EDATE=>

New egg alternative launched

Date

14/12/2005

Article Text

A new emulsifier-protein could eradicate the need for the use of eggs in the manufacture of bakery produce.

Cognis states its new ingredient can be used in numerous baked goods without significantly changing their taste or texture.

Spongolit ELC enables manufacturers to easily alter their formulations to target consumers who avoid eggs for concerns ranging from health and allergy issues to religious and cultural considerations.

A spokesman for Cognis said it "overcomes the technological problem by successfully combining the functionalities of specific milk proteins and emulsifiers into a single ingredient".

Spongolit is a fine powder that the manufacturer insists is both quick and easy to use.

More information:

<http://www.bakeryandsnacks.com/news/ng.asp?n=64521-cognis-spongolit-eggs>

Fibre's anti-cancer claims questioned

Date

14/12/2005

Article Text

A new study has cast doubt on the belief that a high fibre diet reduces the risk of bowel cancer.

While many people tuck into fibre-rich breakfast cereals in a bid to avoid cancer, scientific evidence of a preventative effect has been mixed.

So in an effort to tackle this uncertainty, a team from Harvard Medical School analysed 13 studies involving a total of more than 725,000 people.

There were 8,000 cases of cancer identified, but there appeared to be no correlation between the risk of developing the disease and eating high fibre foods like cereals, fruits, and vegetables.

"Although high dietary fibre intake may not have a major effect on the risk of colorectal cancer, a diet high in dietary fibre from whole plant foods can be advised because this has been related to lower risks of other chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes," write the researchers, led by Dr Yikyung Park.

The team reports in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) that earlier contradictory studies yielded contrasting results depending on how evidence was collected.

Those that asked both healthy people and patients with bowel cancer to report on their diets in retrospect seemed to reveal a link between high fibre diets and a reduced cancer risk.

But studies that recorded people's diets from the outset, and then waited to see who developed the disease, did not find a link.

However, the JAMA study has not succeeded in entirely dismissing the argument that chewing through high fibre food is beneficial.

A spokeswoman for Bowel Cancer UK told the BBC that two recent large-scale studies show high fibre diets do protect against cancer.

More information:

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/294/22/2849>

Malnutrition costing UK more than obesity

Date

14/12/2005

Article Text

Malnutrition in the UK costs the health service £7.3 billion every year, double the cost of obesity, a new charity report has said.

The report estimates three million people are malnourished at any one time in the UK, while almost a third of patients in nursing homes and hospitals suffer from malnutrition.

The elderly are most at risk from the condition, with over ten per cent of people in the community aged over 65 years thought to be malnourished.

Yet despite these findings, the British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN) has warned that malnutrition is given a lower priority by the government than obesity.

BAPEN found that it costs £3.8 billion a year to treat sufferers in hospital and £2.6 billion to treat them in long-term care facilities.

Outpatient and GP visits costs another £750 million, according to the report.

The charity says people, particularly the elderly, need to be screened for malnutrition so they can receive appropriate treatment.

Chairman of BAPEN, Professor Marinos Elia, said: "It is surprising that in England it has not been made mandatory for all patients to be screened for malnutrition on admission to hospital as it has in Scotland.

"It takes a period of time for an individual to become clinically malnourished, often starting in the community, but if at least it is picked up in hospital a great deal of suffering of patients and their families can be avoided.

"But as importantly significant costs can also be saved - creating a win-win situation for both individuals and health authorities."

BAPEN has developed a screening tool called MUST (Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool) to enable doctors in all different settings to identify those at risk from malnutrition.

Professor Elia also said extra resources must be made available to train hospital and care staff to identify and treat malnourished patients and residents.

More information:

<http://www.bapen.org.uk/pressrelease19.htm>

Flavour-free yeast extract launched

Date

14/12/2005

Article Text

A new flavour-free yeast extract has been launched by the ingredients company DSM, as part of its nucleotide yeast extract range.

The product, Maxarome Select, guarantees to improve taste in a wide variety of food goods, and is aimed at manufacturers looking to reduce salt levels or replace monosodium glutamate (MSG) in their produce.

According to DSM Food Specialties product manager Iwan Brandsma, Maxarome Select represents "an evolution" in the food ingredients sector.

He told FoodNavigator: "It is completely taste neutral, this is what makes it innovative. It is a completely natural taste enhancer. And manufacturers can label it as yeast extract.

"Maxarome Select is really a performance ingredient. It can deliver taste improvement, balance flavour, mask off-notes and round off flavour."

DSM says the extract can be used in a wide range of conventional foods, such as soups, crisps and ready meals. But Mr Brandsma said that because Maxarome Select is flavour-free it can now be used in other foods such as salad dressings.

"This opens up new possibilities," he said. "Beforehand, yeast extracts could not be used in such applications because they would impact unfavourably on the flavour. Now we can add yeast without a negative flavour, such as in Thousand Island dressing, and contribute to mouthfeel and fullness."

He also added that whilst Maxarome Select is not being sold as a salt substitute, it can be used to eliminate other flavours that would usually have required sodium.

More information:

<http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=64551&m=1FNED14&c=shiejmytihncgz>

Scientists produce drought-resistant tomatoes

Date

14/12/2005

Article Text

Scientists in the United States have discovered a way to create drought-resistant tomatoes, which may lead to considerably bigger yields.

Researchers found that manipulating tomato plants to over-produce the AVP1 gene resulted in stronger root systems, which were able to make better use of what little water was available to them.

Dr Kendal Hirschi, a researcher at Texas A&M University's vegetable and fruit improvement centre and Baylor's college of medicine, explained that tomatoes with

better root systems could handle drought stress better than regular tomatoes, and therefore grow better.

He said experimentation on regular and modified plants found that tomatoes expressing normal levels of the gene deteriorated after five days without water, whilst the transgenic fruits lasted for 13 days.

Once watered however, they quickly recovered.

A lead author of the study, Dr Roberto Gaxiola, a plant biologist at the University of Connecticut, said that this new technology can now be applied to all crops, since the AVP1 is common among all plants.

He said it will "revolutionise" agriculture, improve the production of food worldwide, and help tackle the growing global problem of water shortage.

More information:

www.foodnavigator.com

www.sciencedaily.com

Lecithin replacement developed for use in chocolate production

Date

14/12/2005

Article Text

Palsgaard, the Danish food ingredients manufacturer, has developed a new emulsifier to replace lecithin in chocolate.

Soy lecithin is the most common ingredient used to reduce the viscosity of liquid chocolate during processing, but obtaining non-GM soy lecithin with a full Identity Preserved (IP) status is becoming a problem, as supplies on the world market are diminishing fast.

But according to Palsgaard, its 4201 ester is non-GM, thus solving the problem.

It also says that it is free of hydrogenated fats, which produce trans fatty acids during production.

These have been linked to high cholesterol levels and increased risk of heart disease.

Palsgaard also claims that its new product has many practical benefits.

Lecithin doses higher than 0.4 per cent add to the yield value of the chocolate, meaning that making extra cocoa butter or PGPR must be added to the chocolate.

Palsgaard group manager Hans Henrik Wikman said: "Palsgaard 4201 has the unique property that it lowers both the viscosity of the chocolate mass and the yield value.

"This means that the chocolate industry can further reduce total fat content by using this new 'double function' emulsifier.

"Due to its special chemical composition, the ability of Palsgaard 4201 to lower the viscosity in chocolate systems is much improved by comparison with the standard citric acid esters otherwise found on the market."

More information:
www.foodnavigator.com

Consumers looking for sustainable fish

Date

15/12/2005

Article Text

European consumers like their fish to come from environmentally responsible sources, a new study has found.

The poll of European consumers, chefs, restaurateurs and supermarkets, found that 79 per cent of people said the environmental impact of seafood is an important consideration when purchasing.

A massive 86 per cent of consumers said they would prefer to buy seafood that is labelled as environmentally responsible. Furthermore, 40 per cent of consumers said the environmental impact was more important than price and would be willing to pay between five and ten per cent extra for sustainable and environmentally sound produce.

"These findings highlight the leading role that European seafood professionals and consumers are playing to preserve the ocean through the choices they bring to the dinner table," said Michael Boots, director of the Seafood Choices Alliance.

The study also highlighted the growing concern among consumers about the state of the seas with 88 per cent of respondents saying they were quite or very concerned. It was carried out in the UK, Germany and France using focus groups and telephone calls.

More Information:
<http://www.seafoodchoices.com/europeanmarketresearch/>

Processing equipment prices to continue to fall

Date

15/12/2005

Article Text

Prices for processing equipment are continuing to fall, Food Production Daily (FDP) has reported.

Analysts Frost and Sullivan said that the fall in prices can be expected to continue for the next three years. The prices will benefit the food processing industry, which is increasingly demanding quicker and more automated systems to boost output.

Analyst Alok Tiku told FDP that equipment producers which focus on innovation and improving quality were the most likely to stay dominant within the market. But prices are currently falling whilst food producers struggle to invest in equipment.

He said: "An increasing number of consolidations between major processing firms has negatively impacted the price."

"Due to the consolidation of the customer base there has been severe price pressure and to remain competitive there has been only a marginal increase, no increase or in some cases a decrease in price. The prices are however expected to stabilise after 2008."

In the US, prices for processing equipment are not expected to rise until the wider economy recovers. Prices in Europe have remained static and are expected to increase.

No further information

Food safety monitored on the internet

Date

15/12/2005

Article Text

Two companies have announced that they will team up to provide wireless monitoring system which will allow food producers to track food safety over the internet.

Comtech Holdings and Invisible Systems said that would co-operate to provide the system, which will help producers track and store safety information, including an automatic temperature monitoring system to enable conformity with Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) regulations.

Whilst Comtech will provide the communication infrastructure through its uWeave systems, Invisible will offer the components to conduct the monitoring and distribute the data over the internet.

"We looked at creating our own solution for monitoring remotes sites via the Internet, but soon discovered the complexity of an end-to-end solution that would have taken us 18-months to develop," said Pete Thompson of Invisible.

"We realised that this would have been a distraction to our business and delayed getting our product to market. Within 3 weeks of working with Comtech, we had a demonstration system completed."

Comtech's uWeave system provides web based management software and a GSM/GPRS gateway for remote sites.

More information:

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2005/12/prweb320641.htm>

New EU law to prevent ink contamination

Date

15/12/2005

Article Text

A proposal designed to reduce ink contamination has been introduced by the European Commission, Food Production Daily has reported.

The proposal was prompted by a controversy regarding a printing chemical which had been used on a Tetra Pak had been found to have contaminated a Nestle baby milk product.

The EC will make the suggestion to the EU states as an implementing measure on current EU regulations regarding materials in contact with food. As a result, it will not require a vote in the Parliament to be passed. The new regulation would proscribe food processing companies to follow good practice.

Philip Tod, spokesperson for health and consumer protection, said: "All companies would be required to change their production methods so that is no possibility of ink or other chemical printing substances on the outside of a package being found on the inside."

Earlier, the European Food Safety Authority had said that the printing chemical isopropylthioxanthone (ITX) had been shown to pose a health risk in food.

The agency had begun studies into the chemical after traces of it had been found by Italian regulators in Nestle products.

More information:

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64568-tetra-pak-nestle-itx>

Tropicana launches fibre product

Date

15/12/2005

Article Text

Fruit juice maker Tropicana has introduced an orange juice with added fibre to the US market.

The juice, dubbed Tropicana Pure Premium Essentials, provides three grams of fibre in each glass of juice – the same as that found in a medium sized orange, the company claims.

Tropicana, which is owned by Pepsico, said that nine out of ten US adults are not eating or drinking the recommended daily amount of fibre – usually 25 grams for women aged between 19 and 50 and 38 grams for men of the same age.

"Tropicana orange juice with fibre is an easy way to incorporate more fibre with something they already love", said Rich Gomez, vice-president of marketing at the company.

Debra DeMuth, senior nutrition fellow at Tropicana products, added: "While whole fruit remains an important source of fibre, we wanted to offer another great tasting option for the many people who find it challenging to meet the daily recommendation for fibre."

The company also provides several other products with nutritional benefits, including juices which claim to build up drinkers' immunity, drinks which have a low acid content and juices with added calcium.

No further information.

Apples 'may be up to a year old'

Date

15/12/2005

Article Text

Apples sold on the shelves of major UK supermarkets may have been harvested several seasons ago, newspapers have claimed.

Sainsbury's, the UK's second biggest food retailer, has admitted treating its apples with chemical 1-methylcyclopropene (1-MCP) - sold as SmartFresh - which inhibits the production of ripening agents which cause the fruit to soften and go bad.

Although SmartFresh has been approved for use in the EU, it has been found to contain very low levels of impurities that are carcinogenic in animals.

Food experts have called on supermarkets to label their fruit accordingly if it has been treated with the chemical.

Tim Lang, professor of food policy at City University, London, said: "The golden rule is that 'good food goes bad' and if it doesn't you have to ask what has been done to it."

"The food may look fresh but it isn't," he added.

"The problem is that companies don't tell us this is being done."

AgroFresh, the manufacturer of SmartFresh, maintains that the chemical is used in quantities so tiny it is not even detectable on treated fruit.

The news comes at a bad time for the European apple market, which is already experiencing problems with surplus stock.

Pesticide-free fruits on offer from SFVS

Date

16/12/2005

Article Text

Fruits and vegetables supplied to school children are largely free of pesticides and contaminants, a new study has found.

The Pesticide Residues Committee's (PRC) has conducted a test of produce provided under the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS).

It found that the majority of samples tested had no detectable residues or contained residues below the maximum residue level. Any residues found were unlikely to affect the health of consumers.

Dr Ian Brown, chairman of the PRC said: "Taking the results from this terms survey, together with previous recent SFVS, the findings indicate that pesticide residues in the

SFVS are broadly comparable with those which occur in these fruits and vegetables in the general supply chain.

"The results should reassure consumers that the food they eat continues to be safe. It is important to stress that the positive effects of eating fresh fruit and vegetables as part of a balanced healthy diet far outweigh any concern about pesticide residues."

The PRC is an independent body which advises government, the Pesticides Safety Directorate and the Food Standards Agency.

More information:

<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=182071&NewsAreaID=2>

Excessive metals found in food supplements

Date

16/12/2005

Article Text

Some nutritional supplements have been found to contain more metals than needed.

A survey into 200 supplements, conducted by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), found that the majority came within guidelines.

Eight, however, were found to contain levels of iron, zinc or manganese above amounts recommended by experts.

The FSA said that taking too much of the nutrients could cause problems in some people. Whilst there is no legislation governing nutrients in supplements, the agency wishes to look into maximum levels being regulated in future.

It said in a statement that it "has met with industry to agree a series of advisory statements for high dose products".

The statements will inform consumers of potential side-effects, and would "enable them to make informed choices about products they wish to buy".

It added that it "will be conducting a survey early next year to establish the extent to which advisory statements are being used by the supplements industry".

The supplements were purchased in pharmacists, supermarkets and health stores. The research monitored quantities of a range of metals including zinc, iron, arsenic, aluminium, cadmium and thallium.

More information:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2005/dec/metalfsis>

FSA to crackdown on water injected poultry

Date

16/12/2005

Article Text

The Food Standards Agency is to crackdown on the use of water retention agents in poultry after being censured by EU inspectors, according to Food Production Daily.

The European Commission's health and consumer directorate found that some poultry producers are not following guidelines set for the labelling of water retention agents. The agents are prohibited in fresh poultry goods but can be used in meat preparations and processed goods, with adequate labelling.

The report said: "The system in place has not prevented the placing on the market of incorrectly described poultry meat preparations as shown by the 2003 enforcement exercise.

"Labelling shortcomings were seen that should have already been instigated the imposition of corrective measures by the local food authorities."

The FSA responded by saying that it would look into any regulatory oversights, and would step up enforcement actions against firms who break the law. It said it would improve co-ordination in its control of food production.

The report noted that the FSA had not released approval codes for good practice in relation to water retention. It also found that one plant had allowed meat to thaw and refroze it after injecting water – illegal under EU regulations.

No Further information

Fish helps fight mental decline

Date

16/12/2005

Article Text

Eating fish regularly can reverse the negative mental effects of ageing, according to a new report.

A study carried out at Rush University Medical Centre in Chicago found that docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), which can be found in seafood, and which was already believed to help the development of the brain in early life, might be helpful in later life as well.

The study showed that eating fish once a week could reverse the mental age of an elderly person by three years, while eating it twice a week or more could reverse it by four years.

"It appears as if it's helping to keep the brain healthy," Dr Martha Clare, the study's lead author told Reuters.

She added that it does seem that DHA is important "in old age, or maybe just in general, for brain functioning".

She added that the study had however proved inconclusive on whether another acid found in fish, omega-3 fatty acid, had any sort of effect on mental function, and that she and her colleagues are to carry out another study looking specifically into this.

The initial study looked at 3,718 people aged 65 or over for six years, during which time they were interviewed at home three times.

More information:

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/category/story.cfm?c_id=204&ObjectID=10359967

Palm oil "reasonable alternative" to trans fats

Date

16/12/2005

Article Text

Palm oil could be a "reasonable" substitute for trans fatty acids, Food Production Daily has reported.

A roundtable investigation by independent nutrition, manufacturing and medical experts found that the oil was a functional replacement. Whilst unsaturated or polyunsaturated fats are preferred by the experts, saturated fats are sometimes required to maintain food stability and functionality.

However, the experts were not willing to wholeheartedly endorse the oil, which has in the past been linked to heart disease. They highlighted studies which showed the oil was linked to higher levels of LDL, or bad, cholesterol, whilst long-term risks were not known.

"Palm oil and iteresterified oils are the best replacements for trans fats, but we couldn't recommend the one over the other. When needed for the functionality of foods, we would suggest that both are reasonable options for consideration," said Dr Reyn Archer, project consultant.

Dr Gerald McNeill, head of R&D and marketing at palm oil manufacturer Loders Croklaan, said: "The results from the roundtable will put some of the concerns of the food industry to rest, and many more manufacturers will start using palm oil where appropriate."

The oil is already used in Europe as a replacement for trans fats, which has been associated with heart disease.

No further information

Palatinit hopes to target low sugar spreads with Isomalt GS

Date

16/12/2005

Article Text

Palatinit has said that its Isomalt GS product will help make reduced-sugar spreads healthier, Food Network Europe has reported.

The company said that the substance, which is made from pure beet sugar, has the same sweetness as sugar despite being less strong. As a result, products can be developed with a similar taste but with only half the calories.

Palatinit asserted that studies conducted by Sudzucker's laboratory ZAFES support its claims, and is in no doubt that the ingredient will allow manufacturers to access new markets with fruit spreads.

Tests with consumers found that many people believed products with Isomalt GS to be more "fruity" than those with conventional sugar. The product has no aftertaste, no cooling effect and no effect on blood sugar levels.

The ingredient is quick for food producers to process because of its optimal solubility, whilst it will not degrade in acidic situations.

In addition, foods with the ingredient do not lose their colour over long periods of time, with no browning occurring.

The sweetener market is expected to expand 8.3 per cent each year towards 2008, according to figures from Freedonia.

More information:

http://www.palatinit.com/en/Food_Ingredients/ISOMALT/

Significant markets in the UK for ethical food

Date

19/12/2005

Article Text

The market for ethical food, such as fair-trade goods, is growing according to a report.

Research and Markets said that whilst such goods only form a small portion of consumer spending, it is growing fast - encouraged by consumer boycotts and effective campaigning.

The pressure on firms to produce ethically is becoming evident through the increase in non-financial reporting, which has encouraged companies to become more transparent and open up monitoring of production processes.

"In many senses, the emergent trend towards a convergence of the environmentalist and commercial agendas is replacing the focus on change through consumer boycotts alone," Research and Markets stated.

In some markets green versions of conventional products have not been successful because they cannot compete on price with less ethical competitors.

It stated that legislation is essential for environmental progress to be made, but claimed that the government has so far "soft-pedalled" measures in retailing and transport.

Meat and vegetable sectors 'likely to experience consolidation'

Date

19/12/2005

Article Text

The UK food industry's meat and vegetable sectors are likely to be heading towards consolidation, according to a new survey carried out by Grant Thornton business services.

Also moving in the same direction are poultry, fish and fruit sectors.

At the other end of the scale snacks, crisps, dessert and sweetener sectors could all be facing a shake-up.

David Cockburn, director of Grant Thornton corporate finance, pointed out that there are just four food companies listed in the FTSE 100.

"As external factors such as demographic changes, retailer price pressures and increased competition from overseas imports make themselves felt, food suppliers are having to make their business strategies increasingly innovative and cost-effective," he said.

He added: "These factors, combined with a very fragmented market means that the overall sector is expected to undergo considerable consolidation in the foreseeable future."

Last year the fruit and vegetable market accounted for sales of about £5.9 billion.

For more information go to

<http://business.scotsman.com/agriculture.cfm?id=2432062005>

Temperature versus taste discovery

Date

19/12/2005

Article Text

Researchers from the physiology section of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (K.U.Leuven, Belgium) together with Japanese and American scientists have discovered how the temperature of food affects its taste, leading journal Nature announced today.

They have discovered microscopic channels in the taste buds, dubbed TRPM5, which send electronic signals to the brain.

According to the researchers, when the temperature of food or fluid is increased the TRPM5 send more intense signals to the brain which are then converted into different tastes.

The findings could explain why beers and wines take on a bitter taste when consumed above the appropriate temperature, or why ice cream is sweeter when consumed warm.

Team leader Dr Karel Talavera explained the practical implications of the research.

"Taste perception could be modulated by adding something to the food that could enhance or inhibit the work of the TRPM5 channel, such as a particular chemical, or by changing the temperature of food," he said.

He added: "Bitter taste inhibitors could also help fulfil the nutritional requirements of sensitive sectors of the population, such as children."

Among other things it could be used to address issues such as salt intake, it was suggested.

For more information go to <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=64664-taste-temperature-bitter>

Waitrose predicts record Christmas

Date

19/12/2005

Article Text

Waitrose announced expectations of a record-breaking Christmas on Sunday, after reporting an increase of four per cent in like-for-like sales last week.

Total sales, including new retail space but excluding petrol, were up seven per cent in the week to December 16th, it was announced.

Waitrose typically outperforms lower budget competitors across the festive season as customers splash out on quality over price.

Managing director Steve Esom attributed this year's boom to the fact that people were shopping earlier than usual, with more mince pies sold already this year than in the entire 2003 season.

"All the signs are that we are in store for a very successful Christmas, both in new areas for the Waitrose brand and in our established heartlands," he said.

Data from research firm TNS attributes Waitrose with a market share of 3.6 per cent in the four weeks up to December 4th, while Tesco continues to dominate with a 30.6 per cent share.

For more information go to

http://www.checkoutmagazine.co.uk/market_update/market_update_story.ehtml?o=1567

Confectionary sales suffer as shoppers become health-conscious

Date

19/12/2005

Article Text

Chocolate and sweets sales are falling for the first time in years as shoppers increasingly plump for healthier alternatives, according to a new report by the Grocer magazine.

Particularly affected were Walkers Crisps, who lost £30 million in sales across its range of snacks over the 12 months up to October, while in contrast Innocent smoothies and Actimel probiotic yoghurts saw sales increases of 207 and 36 per cent respectively.

Among other things the shift has been attributed to a raised public awareness of impending obesity threat, with two thirds of adults announcing a drive to eat better and exercise more in a recent consumer poll for the National Consumer Council.

Claire Hu, marketing editor at the Grocer, said: "It's been a challenging year for the food and drink industry, as the nation's preoccupation with its expanding waistline starts to impact on categories such as crisps and confectionery."

She added: "Health is the number one issue for the industry at the moment and it is responding by investing heavily in innovations and lowering fat, sugar and salt levels in products."

Major snack producers such as Walkers and Cadbury are urgently reforming their product lines to include more health-conscious options.

For more information go to

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/dietfitness.html?in_article_id=372070&in_page_id=1798

One in four Brits 'clinically obese'

Date

19/12/2005

Article Text

The number of people suffering from obesity in the UK has almost doubled in ten years – with one in four British people now clinically overweight, according to a new report by the Health and Social Care Information Centre.

The rate of obesity in men has increased from 13.2 per cent in 1993 to 23.6 per cent in 2004, while in women it has increased from 16.4 per cent in 1993 to 23.8 per cent in 2004.

Doctors have warned that the UK could be sitting on a time-bomb, with future health consequences of obesity such as diabetes and related diseases expected to put a severe strain on the NHS.

The research also showed a slight increase in childhood obesity, saying: "This rise, although small, is nevertheless an indicator that children in England are on average getting bigger."

The study focused on about 8,000 adults and 200 children aged two to 15.

For more information go to

http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/health_medical/article333672.ece

Camembert recalled in E-coli scare

Date

20/12/2005

Article Text

A variety of Camembert cheese has been removed from shop shelves after fears it may be contaminated with the bacterium E-coli.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) expressed concerns over the particular cheese made in Laiterie Fromagerie du Val d'Ay-Etablissement Reaux after microbiological tests at the dairy yielded "unsatisfactory" results.

Several large UK supermarkets, including Waitrose, have removed the products from their shelves.

In a statement, a spokesman from the FSA said simply: "People should not eat this cheese."

E-coli can cause fatal food poisoning in children and the elderly.

Common symptoms include vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal cramps, with complications potentially leading to kidney failure and long-term neurological problems.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64691-e-coli-fsa-unpasteurised>

Microencapsulation offers new possibilities for food industry

Date

20/12/2005

Article Text

Microencapsulation technologies traditionally used in the pharmaceuticals sector could help food manufacturers increase differentiation and enhance product value, according to a report by Frost & Sullivan.

As consumer trends continue to demonstrate the growth of functional food markets, the ability to incorporate health-giving nutrients has become more important to food suppliers.

Long considered to be too expensive for use in the food industry, microencapsulation has now become an affordable option for manufacturers looking to incorporate vitamins and minerals into their products.

Frost & Sullivan industry manager Kathy Brownlie said: "Microencapsulation has the ability to facilitate protected and targeted nutrition in a number of processed food products."

She added: "It has the ability to mask the undesirable tastes associated with some ingredients."

Microencapsulation will allow companies to incorporate vitamins and minerals into chewing gum and sweets, making them more appealing for certain market audiences.

For more information go to [http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-](http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/12-20-2005/0004236847&EDATE=)

[bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/12-20-2005/0004236847&EDATE=](http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/12-20-2005/0004236847&EDATE=)

MP calls for ban on 'dangerous' sweetener

Date

20/12/2005

Article Text

Liberal Democrat MP Roger Williams demanded the banning of artificial sweetener aspartame in an address to the House of Commons last week.

The product, which is 200 times sweeter than sugar, is used by one in 15 people every day and is commonly found in products such as Diet Coke and Lucozade.

A study conducted by the Ramazzini Foundation in Europe has linked the substance to the development of cancerous tumours in rats.

Mr Williams said: "There is solid evidence to suggest that its regular long-term use can cause cancer and a range of other health problems."

"A total ban is the only way to protect the British public," he added.

The UK's public health minister Caroline Flint replied, saying that "aspartame is not known to cause cancer in humans and the evidence does not indicate the potential for it to do so".

The European Food Safety Authority has promised to treat the Ramazzini findings as a "matter of high priority".

For more information go to

<http://www.upi.com/ConsumerHealthDaily/view.php?StoryID=20051219-105013-7796r>

Online surge catches supermarkets by surprise

Date

20/12/2005

Article Text

Leading supermarkets have been left reeling after a seasonal surge in online ordering.

Food and drink giants such as Tesco, J Sainsbury and Asda have stopped taking orders through their websites over fears that food will not arrive in time given the huge demand.

The use of the internet as a medium for food shopping has boomed over the last 12 months, with statistics from research group TNS indicating a rise of 17 per cent in the last three months.

Sainsbury's weekly deliveries have risen from 38,000 to 41,000 in the last week.

A spokesperson for J Sainsbury said: "We offered 30 per cent more delivery slots this year, but around 75 per cent of them had gone within a week after we announced them."

The announcement will come as bad news to last-minute shoppers.

According to TNS, 24 million customers are expected to spend about £5 billion in the month up to Christmas, a rise from £3.5 billion at the same time last year.

For more information go to

http://www.freshinfo.com/index.php?s=n&ss=nd&sid=37980&s_txt=&s_date=0&ms=&offset=0

Rudolf the deep-baked reindeer

Date

20/12/2005

Article Text

Reindeer meat, the staple diet of the Sami in Finland, is flying off the shelves in Europe according to online journal Food Production Daily.

Swedish furniture superstore IKEA has begun to offer the meat from its instore food market, with the French and Germans snapping it up and cafes from Italy to the far east ordering large quantities for festive reindeer roasts.

At €3-4 per 100g the meat is expensive, although it reportedly tends to be of a high quality as more than two thirds of the reindeer slaughtered for meat are fatty calves that have grazed on summer pastures.

Sabine Sempels, researcher at Sweden's university of agriculture, told Food Production Daily: "It has quite a high content of vitamin E. At 3-4 mcg per gram of meat, this is three times the amount in pork."

She added: "It is also quite lean, with a low amount of fat at one to two per cent."

Despite its success on the continent reindeer meat has yet to catch on in the UK.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64688-reindeer-game-christmas>

US organic market 'stunted by undersupply'

Date

20/12/2005

Article Text

The growth of the US' organic market is outstripping supply, resulting in empty shelves and companies either withdrawing from the market or looking to import from abroad, according to research firm Organic Monitor.

Increasingly products such as organic fruit, vegetables, seed and grain are being brought in from international sources, with finished products also being imported to meet growing demand.

In particular oranges are being sourced from abroad after hurricane Katrina demolished key cultivation areas in Florida.

Although more and more Americans are eating organic, with a 17 per cent rise in its popularity over the last 12 months, Organic Monitor suggests that undersupply is restricting its expansion.

An Organic Monitor spokesman commented: "Nearly all market sectors would grow at much higher rates if sufficient supply was available."

He added: "For instance, lack of organic milk has caused many retailers to have empty shelves throughout the year"

Unless US farmers adapt cultivation to satisfy the growing demand for organic produce, overseas exporters are expected to increasingly capitalise on the market.

For more information go to <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/news/ng.asp?n=64682-organic-monitor-organic-orange-juice>

Robots could cut food production outsourcing

Date

21/12/2005

Article Text

The use of robots in food manufacturing processes could save money on manpower and reduce the temptation for large manufacturers to outsource production from the UK to lower cost countries, online journal Food Production Daily has reported.

One cheese packing factory in Lincolnshire is already using RV6SL six-axis robots, developed and supplied under contract by UK group TEC Manufacturing.

The robots can do manual labour equivalent to four people's work for 16 hours a day, six days a week.

Their robotic arms work at 9,500 mm per second and are capable of dealing with a variety of cheeses.

Tony Jones, managing director of TEC, explained that he hoped the introduction of affordable robotics could help stem the flow of cheap overseas outsourcing.

"The exodus was at its height say two or three years ago and many people were predicting the total demise of manufacturing in Britain.

"But we noted that the most switched-on companies were not so enamoured with the idea of trying to co-ordinate operations halfway around the world."

He continued: "They had the same cost pressures as everyone else but preferred to invest in on-site automation so that they kept all their activities physically close together."

He added that certain jobs, such as maintaining quality control checks on production lines, still required human accuracy.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64719-mitsubishi-electric-robots-efficiency>

Tesco announces range of cholesterol-lowering products

Date

21/12/2005

Article Text

Capitalising on the recent consumer trend for cholesterol-lowering foods, Tesco in collaboration with Forbes Medi-Tech is to launch an own-brand dairy range based on cholesterol-lowering ingredient Reducol.

Reducol, based on plant sterol and stanol, is guaranteed GM free and is said to lower cholesterol levels by up to 24 per cent if consumed daily in addition to a healthy diet.

The dairy range will include a spread, yoghurt drink and milk and will be priced to compete with pre-existing products by firms such as Unilever and Danone.

Forbes' marketing director Chris Swire said: "Our strategy is to mix innovative products with advantageous prices."

He added: "This will allow us to get the maximum range of products to consumers."

He went on to emphasise the advantage of launching the product range under the single Tesco badge.

Cholesterol is believed to be the largest single avoidable factor in heart disease, which kills 120,000 people in the UK annually.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/news/ng.asp?n=64705-tesco-fayrefield-reducol-cholesterol-plant-sterol>

New EU feed hygiene regulations impending

Date

21/12/2005

Article Text

Livestock and fish farmers who produce feed for products that end up being consumed by humans have been reminded that from January 1st 2006 new European feed hygiene regulations will come into place.

The legislation lays down general hygiene rules, with specific rules for meat and meat products, bivalve molluscs, fishery products, milk and dairy products, eggs and egg products, frogs' legs and snails, animal fats, gelatine and collagen.

Certain businesses may be asked to put into effect written procedures, and feed businesses will have to ensure that hazards are appropriately controlled.

The regulation will apply to feed businesses defined as "any undertaking, whether for profit or not and whether public or private, carrying out any operation of production, manufacture, processing, storage, transport or distribution of feed, including any producer producing, processing or storing feed for feeding to animals on his own holding".

Although the package was agreed in 2004, the legislation has not come into effect until now to allow EU member states and countries dealing with the EU time to implement changes.

For more information go to

http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/3572/EU:_New_Feed_Hygiene_Regulations_due_to_come_into_force.html

Vacuum microwave technology could revolutionise fruit drying

Date

21/12/2005

Article Text

Research teams from the Friedrich-Schiller-Universitat Jena and the Technische Universitat Dresden believe they may have found a way of drying fruit while preserving its healthy qualities.

Vacuum microwave puffing technology dries the fruit gently so as to preserve as many vitamin and secondary plant compounds as possible.

In tests, subjects who consumed the dried fruit were observed to have increased anti-oxidative capacity in their bloodstreams and strengthened immune systems, attributed to the high vitamin levels still present in the food.

The research team reported that several manufacturers in France and Germany have registered an interest in the process.

For more information go to http://www.innovations-report.com/html/reports/medicine_health/report-53194.html

ASDA to join palm oil discussion

Date

21/12/2005

Article Text

The ASDA supermarket chain announced yesterday that it is to join the Roundtable on Palm Oil discussion group, an association that looks to promote and investigate renewable sources of palm oil.

Palm oil has recently been mentioned as a long-term alternative to more unhealthy hydrogenated fats, and is already found in one in ten supermarket products.

Friends of the Earth have claimed that its production is often related to deforestation in rain forest areas and to human rights abuses in south-east Asia, two issues the roundtable intends to look into.

An ASDA spokesman said: "We recognise how important it is to address this issue and we're looking forward to playing an active role within the group."

He added: "We also hope other retailers will now follow our lead."

Over 500 companies in the UK buy, sell and use palm oil products.

No further information available.

Coated foods to enjoy continued growth

Date

21/12/2005

Article Text

Despite having an unhealthy image sales of foods and snacks coated in breadcrumbs will continue to grow steadily throughout the next four years, according to research conducted by Leatherhead Food.

The predicted growth is attributed to the enduring popularity of convenience foods in the UK, coupled with misinformation about nutritional values of certain coated foods.

For example, while snacks such as chicken nuggets have received negative publicity over the last few years, products including coated fish and coated cheese are not perceived as being unhealthy.

Leatherhead analyst Jonathan Thomas said: "Generally people eat coated foods once or twice a week, mostly for their convenience, although they are also viewed as good children's food."

He added that most consumers "didn't foresee any drastic change in consumption levels over coming years".

In efforts to improve the nutritional values of these products manufacturers have begun to use non-fried coatings and lighter flour-based marinates to cut down on trans-fats.

For more information go to <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=64713-coatings-breadcrumbs-batter>

New caramel production system for Healy

Date

22/12/2005

Article Text

The Healy food group has commissioned a new caramel filling system from Weightron Bilanciai, the UK's foremost manufacturer of weighbridges.

The new system was developed following increased demand for smaller quantities of caramel in more dynamic formats.

The filling machine, which operates from a central pillar with a 360 degree reach over two metres, operates at dual speeds to ensure accuracy of filling.

Depending on the consistency of particular batches of caramel, containers of different sizes can be filled in up to 20 seconds.

Specialists DD Williams of Manchester currently use the machines to manufacture up to 100 different types of caramel.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=64742-healy-group-weightron-bilanciai-caramel>

UK's organic market valued at £1 billion

Date

22/12/2005

Article Text

Sales of organic food and drink have almost doubled in the last five years, research group Mintel has reported.

The survey said that organic food has lost its elitist image and product-wise the market is now "wide open" for new entrants.

Most popular were organic fruit and vegetables, accounting alone for £442 million in sales this year, with organic meat the next best selling product.

TV chefs such as Jamie Oliver and Rick Stein have helped raise organic food's profile, leading to a market where just one in three adults now say they never buy organic.

Julie Sloan, Mintel's senior market analyst, said: "Although the organics market is now reasonably mature, sales are being driven by consumer interest in healthy eating, locally sourced produce and concern for the environment and food safety."

She added: "Despite the fact that organic products account for little more than one per cent of overall food and drink sales, there is no doubt that these products have 'joined the mainstream'."

Mintel forecasted that the organic market will almost double again in the next five years, with predictions of 72 per cent growth.

For more information go to <http://www.retail-week.com/nav?page=retailweek.news.food.detail&resource=3910264>

Universal labelling for organic produce

Date

22/12/2005

Article Text

The European Commission has agreed a proposal specifying that all organic foodstuffs throughout the EU should be labelled either with the European organic badge or with the wording 'EU organic'.

The new legislation aims at making product choice clearer for consumers, as at the moment many organic foods simply bear the badge of that particular country or are unlabelled.

At least 95 per cent of the finished product must be organic for it to qualify for labelling.

Mariann Fischer Boel, EU commissioner for agriculture and rural development, said: "It will become much easier now for consumers to recognize organic products and understand their environmental and animal welfare benefits."

She added: "The current rules will be replaced by simpler, more transparent ones."

The news came amid various reports saying that the UK's organic market is continuing to grow at an almost exponential rate.

For more information go to <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=64751-organic-eu-soil-association>

Kangaroo meat to get makeover

Date

22/12/2005

Article Text

A Sydney-based food and drink magazine launched a competition to find a new name for kangaroo meat, after fears that squeamishness over eating a national symbol could be harming sales.

The winner, 'Australus', was announced last week and submitted to the Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia (KIAA).

Mel Nathan, Food Companion International magazine editor, said: "The new name may be a huge breakthrough for the kangaroo meat industry."

KIAA however dismissed the name as being 'too pompous'.

Surprisingly, Australian kangaroo meat sales largely come from exports, with Russia consuming the largest amount annually.

No further information.

Scottish fishermen called to back EU legislation

Date

22/12/2005

Article Text

Scottish fishermen must comply with new restrictions on cod fishing in order to regenerate stocks, the Scottish White Fish Producers Association (SWFPA) has advised.

Under new laws set by the EU this morning, UK fishermen must reduce their cod fishing days by five per cent.

Although this is seen as a significant cut it is nonetheless milder than the proposed 15 per cent restriction.

Mike Park, chairman of the SWFPA, told BBC One's Breakfast: "Until we get that stock back up to sensible levels we know our life will never be the same again."

He added: "We are trying to play our part in bringing these whole things up so that we can get back to a normal life, and that's what this process is all about."

The modest restrictions were agreed in recognition of the severe cutbacks the industry has suffered in the last five years, with half the UK's white fish catching fleet now on the scrapheap.

No further information.

Melton pork pie firm wins ruling

Date

22/12/2005

Article Text

A high court judge decided yesterday that only companies operating in the Melton Mowbray area would be able to brand their pork pies 'Melton' pies.

Local producers welcomed the decision, saying it was a "great day for British food".

Matthew O'Callaghan, chairman of the Melton Mowbray Pork Pie Association, said that he was "delighted", adding: "The High Court's decision sends a positive signal to other regional food producers and may well encourage more applications to be made to preserve Britain's rich food heritage."

The makers of Cumberland sausages and Cornish pasties were said to have been following the case with interest.

No further information.

BioGaia research proves fruitless

Date

23/12/2005

Article Text

A two-year research project undertaken by BioGaia in collaboration with the Centre for Allergy Research at the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden has ended with inconclusive results.

The study, which followed 232 newborn infants for two years, was an attempt to see whether regular dietary supplements of BioGaia's patented bacteria Reuteri could reduce incidences of allergies such as eczema and asthma if taken from birth.

Although babies treated with the bacteria showed a reduced tendency to wheezing, the incidence of asthma did not decrease with the application of the supplement.

Peter Rothschild, managing director of BioGaia, told NutraIngredients.com: "It is of course a disappointment that the study did not show the results we expected."

He underlined the positive outcomes of the research however, saying: "We are optimistic that a possible follow-up of the study at a later stage will show reduced incidences of asthma and hay fever."

The results will come as a disappointment to other firms currently investigating the allergy reducing properties of probiotic bacteria.

For more information go to <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=64749-biogaia-probiotic-allergy>

Organic labelling meets with controversy

Date

23/12/2005

Article Text

The new labelling of organic foods is to include products accidentally affected by GM materials provided that material does not comprise more than 0.9 per cent of the finished product.

The threshold is the same for conventional foods.

Organic farmers have reacted angrily, claiming that although it is a negligible amount consumer confidence will be undermined if customers feel unsure of the GM-free integrity of organic produce.

Richard Jacobs of Organic Farmers and Growers told BBC Radio Four's Farming Today programme: "We have got to protect what people expect of organic food."

"I think a lot of people who buy organic food do so because they want it, and expect it, to be GM free," he said.

The EU agricultural commission responded that the labelling legislation is not a carte blanche to allow GM materials into organic food, saying that it has been developed to allow for the 'real world' conditions of food production.

"We have to think of the organic farmer," spokesman Michael Mann told Radio Four.

"Does he want to be put out of business because somebody's farm down the road has contaminated his crops?"

The 0.9 per cent allowance only applies when crops have been unintentionally affected by GM materials, and is not valid when farmers have used them intentionally.

No further information.

'Superfruits' beginning to cause stir in US

Date

23/12/2005

Article Text

So-called 'superfruits' such as the little-known mangosteen fruit from south Asia are attracting growing attention from experts and consumers in the US.

The fruits are rich in an active anti-oxidant agent called xanthone, which is thought to help reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels if consumed regularly.

Datamonitor's director Tom Vierhile told NutraIngredients-USA.com that there has been "some interest in the benefits of superfruits like mangosteen and pomegranate, so we are seeing companies turn these into headline products".

Two companies in particular have increased their range of mangosteen-derived ingredients.

Renaissance Herbs has increased the mangosteen content of its XanoMax line to 95 per cent, while Martin Bauer North America has upped production of its raw mangosteen-based ingredients for use in dietary supplements and drinks.

For more information go to <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=64736-mangosteen-orac-antioxidant>

Kraft slashes trans fat content

Date

23/12/2005

Article Text

Kraft USA has announced the reduction of trans fats in 650 of its products in time for January 1st, which will see all foods carrying labels specifying the amount of hydrogenated fats they carry under new FDA (Food and Drug Administration) legislation.

The firm claims to have invested 100,000 man-hours in the project that will see major lines such as the Kraft Easy Mac, DiGiorno Thin Crust Crispy Pizza and Oreo cookies all carry a 0g trans fat per serving label.

The company announced that just 2.5 per cent of its produce will be required to wear a trans fat label when the new FDA initiative comes into place in the New Year.

Jean Spence, the company's global technology executive vice president, said: "In some cases, we even had to develop proprietary blends of oils to help meet our goal of ensuring that the combined level of saturated fat plus trans fat did not increase as a result of the reformulation."

Food production firms across the US are desperately working to reduce the trans fat contents of their goods in time for the introduction of the nutritional labels.

The soaring fat contents of convenience food was first brought to public attention in 2003 when Californian lawyer Stephen Joseph took Kraft and MacDonald's to court over the levels of trans fats in their products.

In the UK Marks & Spencer has led the way by announcing major cuts in the use of trans fats.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/news/ng.asp?n=64779-kraft-trans-fat-labeling>

E-coli alert widened as other cheeses feared infected

Date

23/12/2005

Article Text

Anthony Rowcliffe & Son, the firm that distributes French producer Val D'Ay-Etablissement Reaux's cheeses in the UK has ordered a complete recall for all unpasteurised milk products made by the dairy, including cheese and butter.

The FSA alerted the UK firm that the foods could be contaminated with E-coli 026 bacteria, which can cause potentially lethal food poisoning in children and the elderly.

At first fears were confined to Val D'Ay-Etablissement Reaux's camembert, but the FSA has now judged that all unpasteurised product lines could pose a risk.

The dangerous batch of products can be identified by health mark F 50.267.01 CEE.

In a statement the FSA assured consumers that the withdrawal of the goods was "precautionary" and that no cases of E-coli had yet been discovered in the UK.

For more information go to

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2005/dec/rawmilk>

Ready-made food to boom in 2006, says Datamonitor

Date

23/12/2005

Article Text

Less and less Brits will make home-cooked meals in 2006 with more and more opting for convenience foods and eating out, according to figures released by research group Datamonitor.

The ready-made food industry's sales are set to grow to £8 billion, with the average person spending £170 a year eating on the go.

The ethnic food sector is also set for a boom, with Indian cuisine leading the charge.

Foods claiming to be 'all natural' are also capitalising on a public haziness over the precise nature of organic and healthy labels.

Mintel analyst David Jago told FoodAndDrinkEurope.com: "We've started to see a slow, steady build in the number of ['natural'] launches over the last 24 months, and this suggests a longer-lasting trend than fad products."

He added that these products were trading on the "grey area" in public perception regarding the nutritional values of different products.

Organic food is already predicted to double in sales growth over the next five years.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/news/ng.asp?n=64777-tesco-cadburys-asda>

New guide to chilled food legislation

Date

28/12/2005

Article Text

With the advent of new EU legislation on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs on January 1st the Chilled Food Association (CFA) and the British Retail Consortium (BRC) have produced a guide for manufacturers and retailers.

The booklet, *Guidance on the Practical Implementation of the EC Regulation on Microbiological Criteria for Foodstuffs*, is split into two sections and includes both an overview of the regulations and an interpretation.

The CFA said that confusion has been caused by some testing laboratories and kit manufacturers promoting services to the industry on the basis that the new legislation requires more testing, when in fact this is not the case.

For more information go to www.chilledfood.org/content/guidance.asp

Scientists challenge 'proof' that vitamin D cuts risk of cancer

Date

29/12/2005

Article Text

The scientific community has called for proof from US researchers who claim to have established the positive properties of vitamin D in reducing the risk of cancer.

The study by cancer specialists at the University of California found that patients consuming 1,000 international units of vitamin D3 daily had up to 50 per cent less chance of developing certain types of cancer.

The results, soon to be published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, are based on a review of 63 studies that examined the relationship between blood levels of vitamin D and cancer risk.

A spokesman for the Association for International Cancer Research told BBC Radio Four's PM: "We have been doing research on Vitamin D and cancer for 30 or 40 years and there is no doubt there is a correlation between people who have higher levels of vitamin D in their blood or their diet and a lower risk of cancer for those people."

However he went on to say: "It is not proof; it is only a correlation."

Also speaking to BBC Radio Four Oliver Gillie, author of the *Sunlight Robbery* report, emphasised the lack of vitamin D supplements currently available over the counter and urged the public to campaign with the government to push for increased fortification of food.

Britons ditching fad diets in favour of balanced lifestyle

Date

30/12/2005

Article Text

UK consumers are increasingly turning away from quick-fix diets such as the Atkins plan, instead concentrating on healthy eating and keeping fit, according to a poll of 1,000 people by Marks & Spencer.

Two thirds of those interviewed ate a balanced diet, with just seven per cent opting for strict dietary schemes.

This is compared to 2000's results, when only 50 per cent believed they ate healthily and one in five Britons was on a diet of some kind.

Marks & Spencer dietician Lyndel Costain welcomed the news, saying that "deep down people realise there's no such thing as a quick fix".

Jackie Lowdon, spokeswoman for the British Dietetic Association, commented: "For a long time we've been saying that instead of dieting the emphasis should be on healthy eating and lifestyle.

"Fad diets often fail but if you change your lifestyle so that you eat more healthily the weight stays off."

For more information go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4566308.stm>
