

More opportunities for steel food packaging

Date: Tue, 01 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new study that shows the economic benefits of including metal cans in kerbside collection schemes should help secure the future of steel cans in the food industry.

Research funded by the Department of Trade and Industry and conducted by Eco Alternatives concluded that those recycling schemes that include steel and aluminium tins and foil in their kerbside collections enjoy economic benefits.

The report gives clear guidance to local authorities to include metals in their collection schemes - whether they are already in place or yet to be established.

If steel is widely recycled, food producers would be able to continue to package their products in steel, the use of metal food packaging would be boosted and the opportunity for new designs would be created.

The steel packaging industry had looked set for a decline in the light of limited steel recycling opportunities and an EU directive which demands that 50 per cent of all metals are recycled by 2008.

The legislation attaches financial incentives for companies that meet their targets.

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Domino's pizza profits up

Date: Tue, 01 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Pizza delivery chain Domino's has reported record profits, but said it nonetheless fell short of its annual store-opening target.

The company, which runs 357 franchise outlets throughout Britain and Ireland, reported pre-tax profits that had risen by more than a third to £8.8 million in the 53 weeks before January 2nd.

Domino's said its strategy to open more stores to boost turnover was responsible for the leap, with total sales for 2004 up £31 million to £174.3 million after the launch of 40 new outlets.

But a shortage of new franchisees in the company's target regions has limited its plan to launch a total of 50 stores.

Chief executive Stephen Hemsley told Manchester Online that the company had since managed to find the right people to open most of the extra ten sites needed to hit the target, adding that like-for-like sales in the first six weeks of this year have risen by 6.6 percent.

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Pepsi makes pledge to stop targeting children

Date: Tue, 01 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

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Pepsi has made a voluntary commitment to stop targeting young children with some of its leading products.

The company has said it will no longer advertise its flagship cola brand to children under the age of 12, or its Cheeto chips to those under eight.

The move comes in response to concerns about the high and rising incidence of child obesity, and follows Kraft's high profile announcement in January that it will stop targeting kids for core products like Oreos.

In the US, Pepsi had previously replaced its fried Cheetos with a baked, lower-fat version, and limited snack serving sizes for all brands to 150 calories, rising to 300 calories in middle schools.

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New quality scheme launched for English beef and lamb

Date: Tue, 01 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new logo to help shoppers identify high-grade English beef and lamb has been launched.

Meat carrying the Quality Standard Mark will have to meet certain criteria to ensure that it is tender.

The rules exclude beef and lamb from old animals or breeding stock - which is considered tough - and insist that animals are born, raised and slaughtered in England.

Meat must also be hung for a minimum of 14 days before sale in order that it can mature properly.

Jane Ritchie-Smith, spokesperson for promotional body, the English Beef and Lamb Executive (Eblex), which is behind the scheme, said: "The measures we've put in place to ensure the eating quality of Quality Standard beef and lamb are, we believe, unparalleled within the UK industry schemes and should make for even greater consumer satisfaction as they enjoy great quality beef and lamb."

The logo - a patchwork combination of green fields and the George cross - will be launched with a £4.5m advertising campaign featuring animated versions of England cricketing personalities, Ian Botham and Allan Lamb.

A similar logo featuring the Union Jack will be launched for Scottish and Welsh meat that fulfils the same criteria for quality.

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Greggs appoints new non executive director

Date: Tue, 01 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The UK's biggest bakery group, Greggs, this morning announced the appointment of an additional non-executive director to its board.

Julie Baddeley will join the company - which has over 1,200 outlets trading under both the Greggs and Bakers Oven brands - with immediate effect.

Derek Netherton, Greggs chairman said: "We are delighted to welcome Julie to our board, where her extensive HR and IT experience will complement our existing strengths and skills, and enable her to make a valuable contribution to our discussions."

Ms Baddeley, 53, has held senior executive and non-executive roles across a number of banks and management consultancies. Her most recent executive position was at the Woolwich where she was responsible for IT and human resources.

Greggs is the UK's leading retailer specialising in sandwiches, savouries and other bakery products, and particularly focuses on takeaway food and catering.

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Organic food industry inspired by Oliver

Date: Tue, 01 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The organic food industry is using Jamie Oliver's televised campaign to improve school dinners to try and pitch for a bigger slice of the £1 billion market.

London's celebrity chef showed in an experiment at a school in Greenwich that he could drastically improve the quality of food served in schools - whilst sticking to the measly per-meal budget of 37p.

Oliver showed how schools could go it alone and source healthier, higher quality ingredients direct from local producers.

The experiment has convinced consumers for the first time that organic and high quality school meals can be produced at a reasonable price.

A handful of schools have followed Oliver's example and rejected the traditional slop in favour of locally sourced, organic meals.

However, the general consensus remains that the 84 per cent of schools that contract big companies or local authority caterers to supply school dinners will continue to do so.

Carl Morris, head of marketing at Sodexo's UK education services unit, told the FT online he had not noticed a "stampede" away from the big suppliers yet.

"It's all right if you are in rural areas with a local network of farms but if you are in the middle of Birmingham it is a rather different proposition," he claimed.

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Innovation taking over BBQ foods sector

Date: Wed, 02 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

This year's National BBQ campaign will focus on the increasing diversity of food cooked on British barbecues.

Traditional barbecue foods like sausages and chicken drumsticks are being pushed off the grill in favour of more unusual alternatives like turkey, prawns or swordfish steak.

Brian George, chairman of the National BBQ Association, says the trend towards innovative barbecue foods is driving outdoor cooking upmarket.

"People have become more adventurous in terms of barbecuing, which has led to an overall trend towards market premiumisation," he told the Publican.

National BBQ 2005 - which runs from early May to the end of August - will be sponsored by the British Turkey Sector Group and wine brand, Sutter Home.

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Profits up at Premier, despite Sudan impact

Date: Wed, 02 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Premier Foods has revealed that the recent Sudan I crisis has not had a negative impact on its finances.

The food group, at the centre of the recent food recall, which was said to be the largest ever in Britain, reported a 25.5 per cent increase in underlying annual profit.

Chief executive Robert Schofield, told Reuters: "The Sudan I issue has been an upheaval for the business in terms of time and effort.

"However, in financial terms, based upon our assessment of claims and our insurance position, we believe the company does not have a material financial exposure."

Additional results included an 8.8 per cent increase in turnover and operating profit of £107.4 million.

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Liquorice offers hope for 'herpes cancer' cure

Date: Wed, 02 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A compound found in liquorice may help prevent herpes sufferers from developing cancer, a new report suggests.

A team of scientists at New York University claim that the compound - glycyrrhizic acid - could stop herpes infections from triggering a form of cancer known as kaposi sarcoma.

Liquorice is derived from the root of the glycyrrhiza glabra plant and has been used in cooking for over 4,000 years.

Today it is widely used by food, drinks and tobacco manufacturers for flavouring their products.

According to the BBC, the virus is common among people with low immune systems and can lead to the development of tumours below the skin and in internal organs.

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Active herpes infections are easily treatable, but there is still little medicine available to combat latent infections.

Liquorice is also used as an alternative medicine for the treatment of gastric and duodenal ulcers, sore throat, bronchitis, cough, arthritis, adrenal insufficiency, and allergic diseases.

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Solbar develops full range of soy protein concentrates

Date: Wed, 02 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Soy protein manufacturer Solbar has completed its range of functional soy protein concentrates.

Using new technologies, the company has added to its flagship S-110 and S-200 products to form a full range of products known as the Solcon S family. The concentrates can be used across meat, poultry, fish and vegetarian dishes.

The company's marketing director Gary Brenner said: "Each of the Solcon S functional soy proteins are suited for specific manufacturer requirements, from strong emulsions and gels to high-speed injection.

"Solbar's goal is to find the exact ratio of functionality and price to answer our customer needs."

The new Solcon concentrates are S-220, S-117, S-118, S-121 and S-300.

Solbar recently opened its first specialty proteins factory outside Israel. A production facility in Ningbo, China, produces Solcon S for China and Asia/Pacific markets.

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Fairtrade boosted by children

Date: Wed, 02 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food producers who use and sell Fairtrade items have new opportunities before them in the shape of youth markets.

A recent study of UK consumers showed young people are most aware of fair trade, and according to the executive director of the Fairtrade Foundation, Harriet Lamb, their enthusiasm will result in industry growth.

Speaking on BBC One's Breakfast, Ms Lamb said fair-trade inspires young children, and added: "The kids are actually the educators here.

"They are going into the staffroom and saying to their teachers: Well why don't you have fair trade tea and coffee in your breaks? And they are saying the canteen: Can we have some fair trade products and can we have some vending machines with fair trade products in them?"

Fairtrade Foundation predicts a knock-on effect from the interest young people are showing.

"As young people grow up and do more and more of the shopping actually this is just going to explode and more and more companies are going to really do fair trade right throughout all their product range," said Ms Lamb.

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Fairtrade receives more funding

Date: Wed, 02 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A huge £750,000 has been given to the Fairtrade Foundation, following increased consumer demand for products.

According to Reuters, the funding, from the Department for International Development (DfID), is to be used over the next three years to help the products, which guarantee a better price for Third World farmers.

This means the department has now given over £1 million to the sector over six years.

Paul Boateng, chief secretary to the Treasury, said: "The UK's joint presidency of the EU and the G8 presents us as a country with a unique opportunity to make a difference and we owe it to a wider world that suffers from unfair trade."

Retailers including Tesco and Sainsbury's can now use the Fairtrade label to show they paid a premium aimed at protecting farmers when buying their food and drink.

In addition, Harriet Lamb, the foundation's executive director told Reuters that the organisation hopes to increase UK sales by 40 to 50 per cent again this year.

New products set to be added to the scheme include rice and seafood.

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Water bottles get compostable

Date: Wed, 02 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The first compostable bottle has been developed, in a joint venture between Biota Brands of America, Cargill Dow, SIG Coroplast and production equipment provider, Husky.

The groundbreaking new bottle is made out from NatureWorks corn-based resin - a product made from carbon harvested by the plant during photosynthesis and stored in its natural sugars.

Biota plans to launch the bottle with their new line of Colorado spring water and it is compatible with all municipal and industrial composting facilities, according to Cargill Dow.

Mike Urquhart, Husky PET vice president told Food Production Daily: "One of our core values is proactive environmental responsibility, which is why we're thrilled to be

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involved in such a project. This is a great example of how it's possible to combine commercial success with environmental sustainability."

The environmental benefits of the new resin seem all the more achievable after research suggests an infrared machine can easily separate the NatureWorks bottles from standard PET alternatives.

Biota Brands of America CEO David Zutler said: "Biota is changing the face of the beverage industry with its compostable bottle. Consumers ultimately want a planet-friendly option."

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Fyffes reports record results

Date: Thu, 03 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Irish fresh fruit and vegetable supplier, Fyffes, today reported a 32 per cent per cent rise in profits in 2004.

According to Just Food, the company made £65.1 million pounds in the year ending January 1st 2005, up nearly a third from £49.2 million in 2003.

Fyffes chairman, Carl McCann, attributed the record results to "strong performances in continental Europe, together with first time contributions from acquisitions."

The company also reported "satisfactory" trading in the first two months of 2005 - with the strongest performance once again from the Europe mainland.

Outlining plans for 2005, Mr McCann said: "The group continues to pursue the price increases necessary to compensate for the significant increases that have occurred in shipping, transport and fuel costs.

"Fyffes continues to seek opportunities to apply its substantial resources to further develop the group through acquisitions and alliances."

Company turnover for 2004 stood at £1.476 billion compared to £1.324 billion in the previous year.

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Parmalat to return to stock market

Date: Thu, 03 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Italian dairy company Parmalat is reportedly planning to return to the Italian stock exchange in July.

The firm gained protection from creditors in 2003 after revealing debts of €14 billion (£9.6 billion), eight times higher than initially stated, following an accounting scandal. An Italian judge later ruled that Parmalat had to accept around €20 billion in credit claims, rather than the €14 billion that administrators had sought.

In a statement issued on Wednesday night, Parmalat Finanziaria detailed administrators'
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latest plans for re-listing the group.

Under the plans, creditors' debts are expected to be converted into shares and creditors will be asked to vote on two rights issues, totalling more than two billion euros, later this year.

The plan is likely to give creditors of Parmalat Finanziaria shares worth about 5.7 per cent of the debts they are owed, far lower than the 11.3 per cent they had initially hoped to receive. The debt-to-equity swap rate for credit backed by Parmalat SpA, the main operating company, was shaved to 6.9 per cent from 7.3 per cent.

Several former top executives from Parmalat are among those under investigation over the fraud scandal.

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ASA demands scientific proof for organic claims

Date: Thu, 03 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Soil Association has been forced to withdraw claims that organic food is "healthy" and "more humane to animals", after the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld two complaints that there was no scientific proof to back them.

The UK body is responsible for certifying foods and farmers as organic and published a leaflet last year in which would-be members were told: "Organic farming produces healthy food with a more environmentally friendly approach that is more humane to animals."

Although the ASA has ruled the blurb must be changed, the association has since told the BBC it still thinks organic feed is better for you, and that no other system of farming has higher standards of animal welfare.

It says it recently submitted new evidence to the ASA, which will substantiate claims that organic produce has higher amounts of beneficial minerals and vitamins than any other food.

The organic food industry has grown tenfold over the last decade, thought to be due to concern over animal welfare and the perceived health benefits of organic produce.

A recent study on rats supports consumer perception: those fed on organic fruit and vegetables were slimmer, slept better and had stronger immune systems.

In addition, another report suggests organic milk could boost the immune system, with higher levels of antioxidants as well as vitamin E, omega 3 essential fatty acids.

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Innovation boosts artificial sweeteners industry

Date: Thu, 03 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

British consumers are giving up sugar in favour of artificial sweeteners, a new survey has revealed.

Research by Mintel shows that by-volume sugar sales dropped by as much as ten per cent over the last six years, from 431,000 tonnes in 1999 to 390,000 tonnes in 2004.

Meanwhile artificial sweeteners appear to have mopped up some of sugar's losses, volume sales grew by a healthy 12 per cent between 2000 and 2004, and almost a quarter of consumers currently use the sugar alternatives.

David Bird, senior market analyst at Mintel, attributed the shift to a change of dietary fads and concerns among Britons: "Rising concern about health and levels of obesity... are clearly encouraging consumers to cut back on their sugar intake.

"What is more, recent diets such as Atkins and GI have also had a negative impact on sugar consumption, as sugar is a real no-go for anyone following these diets."

He added: "The artificial sweetener market continues to gain acceptance with consumers. Manufacturers have dynamised this sector with a raft of new product developments, while investing heavily in improving the taste of their product."

The biggest drops in sugar use were in deserts and home baking - although UK

consumers are as happy as ever to add sugar to their tea and coffee.

All the same, the sugar industry has enjoyed a boost in by-value sales since 1999.

Consumers are heading for higher-end and speciality sugars like Demerara and Muscavado - helping sales figures for 2004 reach £262 million - a 12 per cent rise on 1999.

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Food producers come under fire for inaccurate labels

Date: Thu, 03 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The food industry came under new attack today after a Which? survey concluded its labels are "wildly inaccurate".

The consumer magazine found that levels of salt, fat, calories or carbohydrates in 93 per cent of products tested did not match figures on the packaging, after its scientists ran tests for 570 nutrients listed in 70 processed foods.

The Food Standards Agency responded in a statement, in which it stressed the onus was on manufacturers and retailers to ensure that the products they sell do not mislead.

But the Food and Drink Federation defended the industry. A spokesperson said: "Any suggestion that food manufacturers set out to confuse or hoodwink consumers is just not true."

There is currently no law that dictates how accurate food labels should be, but the Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (Lacors) - the body which advises trading standards officers about enforcing food laws - accepts an error margin of 20 per cent.

Some 17 per cent of labels fell outside the Lacors margin of error, whilst just seven per cent of labels proved totally accurate.

The FDF explained it was impossible for labels to be 100 per cent accurate all of the time, because ingredients varied: "Nutrients such as fat and sugars come from a number of ingredients within a product, and their levels will vary for a number of reasons, including the variety of ingredient used or the season in which it was grown.

"Because of this, the law allows manufacturers to use average figures to give consumers a good indication of what the 'typical' nutrient content is for each product."

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Local food could save billions

Date: Thu, 03 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Research released yesterday could bode well for local producers and suppliers, as experts make an appeal to shops to stop overspending on "food miles".

The report, published in Food policy journal, reveals that distributing produce hundreds
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of miles is costing an unnecessary £4 billion every year.

Professors Jules Pretty of Essex University and Tim Lang of London's City University conducted the study, to assess the added expense of bringing food to supermarket shelves from around the UK and the rest of the world.

Food now travels 65 per cent further by road than it did two decades ago due to centralised storage, and 28 per cent of all freight on British roads is agricultural produce.

The scientists looked at foodstuffs, farming methods and transport policies and concluded that if everything we ate came from within a 20km radius of our homes, £2.1 billion could be saved every year from environmental costs alone.

"Food miles by road are far more important than we had thought. In environmental cost terms, buying local is even more important than buying green -- although we would like people to do both," Professor Pretty said.

Their report suggests if farmers grow organically, farming subsidies are abolished and consumers shop for local produce - leaving their cars at home - millions of miles and billions of pounds could be saved.

At the same time, Britain would probably eat healthier and local industries would see huge benefits.

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UK supermarkets give local sourcing commitment

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

Analysis

Britain's biggest supermarkets have publicly declared their commitment to sourcing local foods

Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Morrisons took a united stand against a report by Food Policy published yesterday, which said that the environmental damage caused by transporting food long distances means it is greener to buy produce made locally.

The big four told the BBC they have policies in place to encourage and increase their supplies of local produce.

A spokesman for Tesco said the company was "committed to trying to source locally whenever possible, the seasons allow and there is customer demand". The supermarket claims it stocks around 7,000 locally produced products, and has two dedicated local buyers in Scotland and Wales.

Asda claimed it is supermarket policy for all stores to stock more goods from the region they serve. A spokesman said: "Across the UK we have 200 local suppliers, many of which are very small indeed, employing less than 20 people. We try and make it as easy as possible for small firms to supply to us."

Sainsbury's said it is aware of the consumer demand for local produce - for which reason they run a local sourcing program, with a dedicated team to search for regional

producers.

A spokeswoman for Morrisons said it was a "keen supporter of small, local and regional producers and have a number of local producers supplying our stores".

The report's authors - Professor Jules Petty and Tim Lang from City University - say that people should try to buy food from within a 12-mile radius. If all foods were sourced like this, they calculated, environmental congestion costs would shrink from £2.3 billion to just £230 million.

Meanwhile Waitrose is running an awards scheme for small producers, as well as trials at selected branches in Kent and Gloucestershire to give customers the chance to purchase locally farmed fruit and vegetables.

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UK firm launches authentic US products

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

Analysis

Britain is to get a taste of authentic US food, with the set up of a new UK company producing Wild West-style, barbecue-smoked meat.

Husband and wife team, Brian and Linda Bradley have branched out from their existing business in Kansas, America to bring a range of cuts - including smoked brisket, loin of pork, turkey and venison - to British shores.

Instead of a conventional barbecue, the company will prepare its produce on a smoker designed to cook meat slowly in a wood-fired, metal-lined oven.

Mr Bradley said: "The great thing about this slow way of cooking is that the meat becomes moist and tender and the smoking acts as a natural preservative."

The couple has also developed ranch-style beans in a tangy sauce, as well as pate dishes to complete the range.

Although the firm will be based in Bedlington in the North East of England, Mr Bradley plans to adopt a nomadic approach to business, visiting food shows with his "chuck wagon" and branding himself Mr BBQ.

The meat will be available in vacuum packs and the couple, who are part of regional food and drinks group the Northumbria Larder, are currently recruiting stockists.

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Chilling system promises freeze on costs for food firms

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

Analysis

New refrigeration technology that promises to halve carbon emissions and slash energy costs by a third could help food producers meet tough regulations and stop costs spiralling.

The combined heat, power and refrigeration system (CHRP) would allow manufacturers
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to harness waste heat from generators in an "absorption chiller" - which could provide the necessary temperatures for chilled or frozen produce.

With the system - which runs on small gas turbines - companies would also be able to generate heat and electricity for other uses in house.

The innovation promises to drive down costs in the face of stringent environmental regulations.

Researchers at Brunel University said initial feasibility tests were "very encouraging", and expect the project to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in energy usage within two years.

The system also has the potential to compete on price with carbon, and its environmental sustainability should make it exempt from the 2001 Climate Change Levy on UK-based companies' coal, electricity and gas bills. The charge alone pushed energy costs up by ten per cent in 2003.

Food processors and retailers currently consume 15 per cent of the national energy supply in Britain and, in the wake of the Kyoto treaty on climate change, face stern governmental and international pressure to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

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Food firms call for acrylamide analysis

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

Analysis

Food company stakeholders have called for a risk/benefits analysis of acrylamide - a harmful chemical recently identified in certain carbohydrate-rich foods.

Europe's food industry leaders said at a Brussels conference, hosted by the EC to discuss reduction of use of the chemical, that measures to minimise acrylamide levels could have negative effects on the nutritional quality of food.

Instead they backed the ongoing analysis of the ingredient, using a "toolbox" of parameters put forward by the Confederation of Food and Drink Industries.

Under the plan, manufacturers would keep close tabs on controlling agronomic factors, product composition and process controls, and constantly reassess levels of the chemical accordingly.

Acrylamide came to the attention of the food industry in 2002, after Swedish scientists reported unexpectedly high amounts in fried, baked, grilled, toasted or microwaved carbohydrate-rich foods, notably chips, roast potatoes, crisps and bread.

Since then more than 200 projects have been launched to investigate what effects acrylamide may have.

Results have confirmed that the chemical causes neurotoxicity in humans who are exposed to it at length during plastic production, and animal studies show that the chemical can lead to reproductive problems and cancer.

Scientists believe acrylamide occurs naturally when high-carbohydrate foods are exposed to temperatures above 100 C.

Among the Brussels conference attendees were representatives from the European Food Safety Authority(EFSA) and European research project Heatox.

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New opportunities for healthy fast food

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

Analysis

The healthy fast food sector offers big opportunities that remain untapped, research by Datamonitor revealed today.

The independent market research firm concluded in a study of the UK's fast food market, that consumer demands for healthy food "on the go" are not yet being met.

An average British consumer ate on the move a total of 372 times last year, but less than half of these - just 119 - were healthy meals.

The figure came a surprise in the light of recent healthy eating trends, and a survey conducted by Datamonitor last year, which revealed 83 per cent of UK residents agree that it is "important to improve health through diet".

Author of the report, Daniel Bone, said that fast food consumers were inhibited from eating healthily by a lack of conveniently placed outlets, as well as the perceived expense of healthier options.

The gap in the market will provide new growth opportunities for food firms - part of a burgeoning market: the total number of on-the-go consumption occasions in the UK looks set to rise to 401 by 2009.

According to the report, the UK has a lower percentage of healthy options in the fast food sector than any other European country.

Datamonitor also predicts that the trend of fad dieting will gradually give way to more permanent healthy eating habits. Mr Bone said there will be "a further move from 'nutritionally curious' to 'nutritionally active' consumers whereby fad dieting and mis-informed dietary habits will give way to more nutritionally aware and sustained healthy eating habits."

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Solar cooking breakthrough

Date: Mon, 07 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A German inventor has come up with a new solar cooking device that experts hope will transform cooking in the developing world.

The technology, featured on BBC news, uses a dish to track the sun by clockwork and focus a concentrated beam onto the bottom of a cooking pot.

Using the technology, a 1.5 metre square solar dish could produce a power output of 600 watts, similar to a large gas ring.

Inventor Wolfgang Scheffler says he has designed the dish so it can be made from steel and mirrors in any village metalworks.

He is currently collaborating with Atmosfair, a German NGO which is working to promote the technology.

The scheme has been applauded by Defra, which plans to use money from new government payments to offset air emissions to fund the scheme in India.

"This is obviously a great idea if we can help people in developing countries live a healthier and more economically productive life while also minimising pollution," said a Defra official.

The solar dishes emit no pollution, a major health risk with wood fires, and can also be used for water purification and air conditioning.

"They are a fantastic development tool. A woman can take a loan to buy one then soon pay it off with the extra money she makes from the free heat throughout the day by selling clean water or doing extra baking," said Deepak Gadhia, an Indian environmentalist who manufactures some of the dishes.

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Apples could hold breast cancer fighting benefits

Date: Mon, 07 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Eating apples can cut the risk of developing breast cancer, according to American food scientists.

Researchers at Cornell University who fed the fruit to rats injected with a known mammary carcinogen, found that tumour incidence fell dramatically the more apple the animals ate.

Rui Hai Liu, author of the study, published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, said that the complex health-giving properties of fresh fruit "cannot simply be mimicked" by dietary supplements.

Rats that were fed the human equivalent of one apple a day were 17 per cent less likely to develop cancer, rising to 39 per cent for those that ate an equivalent of three apples, and 44 per cent for rats on six.

The study also found that the number of tumours was reduced by 25 per cent for one or three apples and by 61 per cent in rats fed the equivalent of six apples a day.

Professor Hai Lui said: "Our findings suggest that consumers may gain more significant health benefits by eating more fruits and vegetables and whole grain foods than in consuming expensive dietary supplements, which do not contain the same array of balanced, complex components.

"Studies increasingly provide evidence that it is the additive and synergistic effects of the phytochemicals present in fruits and vegetables that are responsible for their potent antioxidant and anticancer activities."

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Worcestershire sauce in special status bid

Date: Mon, 07 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Worcester MP Michael Foster is backing a campaign to secure protected geographical status to protect its Worcestershire sauce.

The move comes amid fears that traditional brand Lea & Perrins has suffered because of bad press for Premier Foods' Worcester sauce - the condiment at the centre of the Sudan I scandal.

Lea & Perrins plans to lobby the European Commission for the special status - in a bid to prevent imitation sauces from cashing in on or undermining the reputation of their traditional brand again.

If their application is successful, food producers outside Worcestershire would no longer be allowed to sell their sauce under the Worcester or Worcestershire names.

Mr Foster said he would be writing to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and will today call on the government to back the petition.

"If the French can protect their champagne, we should be able to protect our sauce," he said. "This is an important step to keep it safe from unfair competition and to give consumers confidence in the quality of what they buy."

The application for protected geographical status - which will take six months to process - follows the success of food producers in Lancashire to protect their Melton Mowbray pies last week.

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Dairies show colour coding system red light

Date: Mon, 07 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The dairy industry has warned that proposals to colour code foods according to the levels of certain nutrients could backfire.

Dairy UK urged the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to rethink its "traffic light" system amid fears that certain nutritional foods with high levels of fat would be stigmatised, according to Farming Life.

Under the proposed system, foods would be graded green, amber or red depending on the levels of a range of nutrients.

Sir Don Curry, chairman of Dairy UK: "There is widespread acceptance that cheese is an important source of protein, calcium and other nutrients and can constitute an excellent

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nutritious snack. How can that merit a red light as it would under the proposed system?"

Mr Curry said that stigmatising foods like cheese would "compromise the nation's health rather than improve it."

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Experts unsure of new diet pill

Date: Mon, 07 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Experts have expressed doubts about a new pill which claims to enable sufferers of diabetes and coeliac disease to eat foods normally "off-limits" to them.

Diabetics need to watch their intake of foods with high sugar levels, whilst people with coeliac disease should avoid wheat if they are to manage their conditions.

Scientists at Baltimore University say their pill gives these patients the freedom to eat whatever they want by making the gut more watertight: the controversial AT-1001 acts by blocking the production of zonulin - a natural protein which regulates the permeability of the intestine.

Lead investigator Dr Alessio Fazano said: "If everything goes to plan, we could have a product on the market by the end of 2006."

But experts have since questioned the conclusions drawn from early studies of the pill, which were carried out on rats, according to the BBC. They argue that the best way to manage food intolerance is to cut out problem foods, maintain a healthy diet and take regular exercise.

The pill developers found that diabetes and coeliac disease patients tend to produce too much zonulin making their guts are too permeable, but the rat experiments of AT-1001 show it can restore that permeability to normal levels.

Dr Angela Wilson, director of research at Diabetes UK, said: "The development of this pill is a long way off. The focus should be on a combination of a healthy diet and regular physical activity. This will help to control diabetes in those who have the condition and will reduce the risk in others who may go on to develop Type 2 diabetes."

However, Professor Peter Howdle of Coeliac UK's medical advisory council said: "The research findings are encouraging and Coeliac UK will be following developments closely."

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Farmers could help public sector food

Date: Mon, 07 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Farmers could help schools, hospitals and prisons supply healthier food, a Westminster conference will hear today.

Food and farming minister, Larry Whitty, will meet food farmers, wholesalers and manufacturers to highlight ways they can bid to supply the public sector and cash in on a
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£2 billion-a-year market.

The move comes as part of a Defra initiative to improve the quality of food served by public institutions.

Mr Whitty has told public sector buyers they need to be more "innovative" in the way they buy food and help local producers become part of the supply chain.

He highlighted the current School Fruit and Vegetable scheme that has already boosted demand for local farm produce, but added: "We want to support more uptake of fresh produce, which should increase the opportunities for local farmers and growers.

"It should not just be an issue of buying the cheapest food available. Better quality food need not cost the earth. Seasonal produce is generally cheaper, and tastier food is likely to mean less waste from leftovers.

"Cutting food and catering budgets is counterproductive if less healthy and nutritious food costs the NHS millions treating obesity and diet-related illnesses."

The organised move towards healthier institution food comes in the wake of TV chef Jamie Oliver's high profile crusade to transform the dinners served in a Greenwich school.

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Egg replacement brings cost and health benefits

Date: Tue, 08 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A high-protein, low-fat, no-cholesterol egg alternative has been launched, bringing relief to food manufacturers worried about the threat of salmonella or looking to develop healthier products.

Scientists at Unilever, who developed Alleggra with joint backing from Tate & Lyle, have described the product as a "fully functional replacer of egg" and claim it has 75 per cent less saturated fat than an egg, with ten per cent extra protein.

The innovative ingredient is made from soy and whey proteins, as well as vegetable oil (usually sunflower) and egg white.

"Alleggra has clear advantages in terms of cost and health," chief executive Gavin Hays told Food Navigator.

The product was originally devised as an anti-cholesterol egg replacer to be used in Unilever products, and as such actively lowers cholesterol.

Aleggra also promises more stable finances to food producers impacted by the volatile egg market. The price of eggs has fluctuated wildly over the last 18 months following the loss of millions of hens due to avian flue.

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Napier Brown in buyout talks

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Date: Tue, 08 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK sugar firm Napier Brown has confirmed it is in talks with a potential bidder, after its share price hit a record high yesterday.

The company said in a statement this morning: "The board of Napier Brown has noted the recent price movement in its shares and today's press speculation. It confirms that Napier Brown is in discussions with a third party, which may or may not lead to an offer being made for the share capital of the company."

The company - which produces a range of sugars including fair-trade brands - is set to become the UK's leading sugar manufacturer provided competition authorities approve its recent purchase of James Budgett Sugars.

Napier boasts a turnover in excess of £200 million and employs over 250 people at its production sites in Normanton and Runcorn.

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Technology breakthrough for pig-water problem

Date: Tue, 08 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Scientists have developed a new method for treating swine-production wastewater, which could help pork processors meet environmental targets.

The system is capable of turning brown wastewater from manufacturing plants into clean, blue, aerated water, its developers the Agricultural Research Service told Food Production Daily.

Swine-producers are set to welcome the move since they face tough government legislation to minimise the impact of livestock waste.

Soil scientist, Matias Vanotti, said: "The innovation can soften the effect of the new demands regarding modern swine production and environmental sustainability."

The system removes more than 97 per cent of total suspended solids from wastewater, as well as 95 per cent of phosphorus, 99 per cent of ammonia and more than 97 per cent of "odour-causing components".

Soil scientists who conducted a year long study of the technology say they were impressed with the system, which comprises staging areas laid out over 200 feet, and a patent is now pending.

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New solutions for production line analysis

Date: Tue, 08 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Food analysis firm Foss has launched four new evaluation solutions aimed at providing more accurate information on processing techniques.

The new technology will make food process monitoring more cost-effective by targeting
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calibration transferability and making it easier to use, the company claims.

It hopes the new systems will help make product analysis routine, making products more consistent and reducing the risk of having to rework them in production.

According to Food Production Daily, Foss' new systems will harness its existing near infrared (NIR) based technology.

They will be able to automatically select the appropriate calibrations, as well as trace samples using a programmable sample ID chip in the sample cup. Foss claims the technology is also IP-65 certified for use in harsh production environments, and results can also be transferred to LIMS software in real time.

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Icelandic turn for Geest

Date: Tue, 08 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK fresh convenience foods supplier, Geest, has been bought out by an Icelandic food firm for £485 million.

Bakkover Group reported this morning that it will pay 655 pence a share for Geest - some 1.4 per cent over the salad giant's share price at close of market yesterday - and also give share holders a special dividend of seven pence a share as part of the deal.

Bakkover aims to increase its share of the UK convenience food market, as competition among food retailers forces prices down.

Geest, which has a solid grip on the fresh prepared foods market with contracts to supply both Tesco and Asda, said today that annual profit fell 2.9 percent as its retail customers negotiated lower prices.

The company's chief executive, Gareth Voyle, said in a statement: "The food-retailing market has changed dramatically in the last two years and, whilst Geest is well-positioned, there is no doubt that price competition will continue to dominate the day-to-day grocery trade."

Bakkover executive chairman, Agust Gudmundsson, said: "Together we believe we have the strength to open up new opportunities in existing and new markets both in the UK and overseas."

The Reykjavik-based company currently runs four factories and employs around 2,500 people in the UK.

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Profits rise for Geest

Date: Tue, 08 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK fresh produce and convenience food supplier, Geest, this morning reported a 22 per cent rise in total profits for 2004 to £36.4 million - up from £29.6 million in 2003.

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Sales fell however, with figures for the year ending January 1st standing at £830.6 million - down 2.9 per cent on the previous year's figure of £867.5 million.

Chairman, Sir John Banham, said Geest was pleased with the figures - especially when accounting for loss of sales incurred by a fire at the company's Tilbrook production plant and the negotiation of lower prices by some of its biggest retail customers.

"These results are a good achievement in a difficult year in which there was an unprecedented level of competition between food retailers," he said. "In response, we accelerated our improvement programme and made savings of £24m, which helped to maintain our margins and improve our cash flow."

He added: "Geest remains in good shape to continue to manage market pressures in the food retail environment, which is expected to remain challenging, and to fulfil strong consumer demand for fresh prepared foods in the UK and on the continent."

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Eat vegetables for healthy bones

Date: Wed, 09 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Green vegetables and tofu are the best ways of protecting children's bones, a new report has claimed.

US scientists who reviewed 37 studies examining the impact of calcium bone health in children over seven, said there was no real evidence to support the claim that milk is the best source of calcium - and that regular exercise and other calcium sources like green vegetables and tofu were more effective in protecting against osteoporosis.

The findings contradict government recommendations that children should eat more dairy products to help protect against osteoporosis, and undermines current legislation which allows food manufacturers to include make bone health claims on dairy packaging.

Author of the report, Dr Amy Lanou, said: "A clear majority of the studies we examined for this review found no relationship between dairy or dietary calcium intake and measures of bone health. In the remaining reports, the evidence was sketchy."

Dr Lanou added that some results were confounded by vitamin D intake from artificially fortified milk.

However, the study was carried out by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, a group known to advocate vegetarianism.

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Coffee set to smell even better

Date: Wed, 09 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A breakthrough by Swiss scientists promises to help drinks manufacturers make coffee smell even better.

Researchers at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich have developed
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technology that can gravimetrically measure the way carbon dioxide changes in different roast processes.

It is hoped the new technology will shed some light on the complex process we associate with delicious coffee smells, according to Food Navigator.

The smell of brewing coffee has a significant positive effect on sales of products made with its beans, and drinks manufacturers stand to gain even more if they are able to identify and refine the best possible ways of producing the coffee scent.

The world coffee industry is valued at £37 billion, with Nestle dominating the market.
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Children perform better on healthy school dinners

Date: Wed, 09 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Schools pupils who are given healthy school dinners perform better in national tests, government-backed research has revealed.

Commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the study showed that children at primary schools belonging to the healthy schools programme have outperformed those at other primaries in national English, maths and science tests.

The news brings a further boost to celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's campaign to get the government to raise spending on school dinners from 37 pence to at least 50 pence a meal.

The healthy schools programme provides children with a healthy regime, including good quality, nutritious meals and high levels of exercise.

Early indications from the project have suggested that there is a link between healthy living and educational achievement.

Although the achievement was relatively small, with results just 1.5 per cent above the previous year's figures across all three subjects, it is the fact that the improvement was universal to all of the 496 schools involved in the research and have achieved healthy status.

The results will increase the pressure on the government to improve the quality of school meals and raise the funding available to schools to produce high-quality dinners for pupils.

"These results clearly demonstrate that investment in the healthy schools programme brings educational benefits as well as health-oriented ones," claimed acting head of the national healthy schools programme Colin Noble.

Government targets require half of all schools to achieve the healthy schools status by December 2006, and so far around 7,300 have achieved this.

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Healthy deal for Happy Meal

Date: Wed, 09 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Fast food giant McDonald's has unveiled radical plans for its children's "happy meals" in a bid to shake off their unhealthy image and entice diet-concerned parents back to the hamburger chain.

McDonalds chiefs say the number of meal combinations will double from 54 to 108, nearly three-quarters of which would include at least one fruit or vegetable option.

The shake-up, which will set the restaurant back £7.4 million, constitutes the biggest change to Happy Meals since they were launched in the UK 21 years ago.

Instead of fat-laden fries, parents will be able to order carrot sticks for their children, according to a report on the Mail Online, a healthy addition to the bags of grapes and sliced apple already served by the chain.

McDonalds also plans to boost customer awareness of the nutritional value of its foods, with new leaflets listing the fat, sugar, salt and calorie content of each meal combination. In addition, the restaurant will give away 1.2 million step-o-meters with children's meals in May.

Health campaigners have welcomed the changes, but nevertheless expressed concern that parents may opt for the unhealthy options. Some of the meal combinations still contain more sugar and salt than young children should eat in an entire day.

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School meals provide boost for Compass shareholders

Date: Wed, 09 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Shares in Compass Group, the world's largest contract caterer worth £5.4 billion, have risen four pence to 254 pence, as dealers speculate the government may boost the budget for school meals from 37 pence per child to 57 pence.

A healthy 25.6 million Compass shares were traded yesterday after a speech by chief executive Mike Bailey in which he said the catering industry would lobby parliament for an extra 20 pence per child school dinner budget.

School dinner spending is a hot topic in Westminster at the moment, following celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's televised crusade against the poor quality of food served to pupils.

Compass Group caters for an impressive portfolio of blue chip clients, including Microsoft, Boeing and IBM.

The jump in share price will help renew investor confidence after the company's shock profits warning in September last year.

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Pomegranate juice is next big thing

Date: Thu, 10 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

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Analysis

American juice producer POM Wonderful is poised to launch a pomegranate juice drink in British supermarkets next week.

The move will help raise the profile of pomegranate juice which is already billed as "the new cranberry" and set to become the last word in supermarket chic.

But the launch spells competition for the Pomegreat brand, produced by smaller concern RJA Food, which currently holds a virtual monopoly on the UK market.

Pomegreat shifts more than 180,000 litres of juice each month, through contracts with Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Boots and health food chain Holland & Barrett.

It was short-listed in the World Juice Innovation Awards last October, according to a Daily Telegraph report.

But RJA's founder, Adam Pritchard, believes his smaller-scale juice business will hold out against competition. Although it will not be able to offer POM Wonderful's discounts or the clout, he believes the quality of his brand will secure a significant market share.

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Pig boom boosts pork production

Date: Thu, 10 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK pig farmers are expecting a five per cent increase in animal numbers in 2005, after favourable weather conditions last summer boosted fertility rates.

The Meat and Livestock Commission (MLC) said they expected the total pig count this year to come close to 9.86 million, because good weather in 2004 restored fertility rates after a dip in the previous two years.

The increase in pig supplies will lead to higher slaughter rates, which should in turn boost up pork production by four per cent to 614,000 tonnes.

According to a report by Farming Life, the average sow productivity estimate for 2005 is 18.5, compared to 17.4 last year.

Experts say pork production will also benefit from projected lower feed costs for 2005, after a bumper cereal and soya crop last year.

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EC untangles traceability laws

Date: Thu, 10 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Brussels has stepped in to help the food industry understand new traceability guidelines.

A group of scientists from the European Commission has issued a document to help food industry professionals find their way through the labyrinthine traceability laws introduced last January.

The new legislation requires that food and feed products are traceable, that operators take responsibility, and that unsafe food or feed is withdrawn from the market with due notification to the correct authorities.

But the laws are causing confusion in the food industry.

"Their implementation has given rise to numerous questions in particular from EU food chain operators and third country trading partners," a spokesperson for the Commission said.

Traceability has become a key concern for the food industry, since the Sudan I scandal prompted the Food Standards Agency to recall nearly 600 affected products.

The document will address the following key areas: responsibilities, traceability, withdrawal, recall and notification for food and feed in relation to food and feed safety requirements, imports and exports.

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Costco squeezes competition with planning loophole

Date: Thu, 10 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

American "warehouse club" Costco is enjoying rapid growth in the UK thanks to a legal loophole.

The wholesale supermarket, which charges a £25 annual joining fee for the privilege of bulk shopping at knockdown prices, has been able to open new stores very easily because UK planning legislation has no category for "warehouse club" outlets that also open their doors to individuals.

But Costco's competitors are held back as town planners curtail large-scale supermarket developments to preserve smaller city centre shops.

London-based planning consultant Tony Bowhill told Bloomberg: "Costco's had an easy ride because it's found a loophole in the UK planning system. It's amazing it calls itself a wholesaler rather than a retailer, because around 30 percent of its sales come from individual customers rather than businesses."

Costco has 15 120,000-square-foot stores throughout Britain at the moment and plans to build a further 25 over the next five years.

The expansion is little surprise: the company reported an 83 per cent rise in net UK sales between 2000 and 2003, whilst British business accounted for 80 per cent of the £1.6 billion in sales generated by the company outside the US and Canada last year.

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Scientists point to 'healthy junk' future

Date: Thu, 10 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Scientists have predicted they will one day be able to create healthy versions of junk food.

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They will be able to produce grease-laden foods like pies, chips and burgers that taste like normal but are low in fat and sugar, they say.

Dr Gary Frost, head of nutrition at Hammersmith hospital, told the BBC he believes the development of 'healthy' processed foods is the only route to properly tackling obesity in the UK.

He said it was impossible to turn back the clock to a time when processed foods were not available and people prepared everything they ate from raw ingredients, but that new technologies could help develop a new generation of healthy processed foods.

Dr Frost also rejected government efforts to change the nation's eating habits, saying fruit and vegetable drives were doomed to failure.

The government outlined plans last November to educate the public to cut down on fatty, sugary and salty foods and take more exercise.

According to the Health Development Agency, there are nearly three times as many obese Britons as there were 20 years ago.

If current trends continue, at least one third of adults and one fifth of boys and a third of girls will be obese by 2020, it estimates.

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Aeroplane food poisoning is thing of the past

Date: Fri, 11 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The days of food poisoning from aeroplane dinners may well be behind us, new research has revealed.

The report by US scientists Dr Mark Gendreau and Dr Alexandra Mangili identified 41 in-flight food poisoning outbreaks over the last 58 years - but not one of these occurred after 1999.

Experts attribute the improvement in airline food to the increased use of pre-packaged frozen foods, as well as better food handling and inspection.

Secretary-general for the British Air Transport Association said: "Airlines do take all the regulations in this area very seriously and are continually monitoring their processes with their catering providers and improving their standards. So it is perhaps nice to hear that this has been recognised by this research."

Dr Gendreau and Dr Mangili said: "Good hand hygiene has been proven to reduce the risk of disease transmission, and air travellers should make it part of their normal travel routine."

The study revealed that salmonella accounting for most food poisoning outbreaks.

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Asda chief steps down

Date: Fri, 11 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The chief executive of Britain's second biggest supermarket, Asda, has resigned.

The Wal-mart-owned food retailer today announced that CEO Tony DeNunzio would leave after 12 years with the chain, in which he oversaw considerable growth and market share expansion.

Mr DeNunzio will take up a position as chairman of the executive board at Dutch retailer Vendex KBB.

A spokesperson for Asda told Reuters that the supermarket is still deciding who will step into the 44-year-old's shoes, and that an announcement will be made shortly.

In the past five years, Asda has overtaken Sainsbury's and become the UK's largest food retailer after Tesco. The growth - thanks in part to its "every day low price" policy and its George clothing brand - expanded its workforce from 100,000 to 140,000 during the same period.

John Menzer, president and chief executive of Wal-Mart's international division, said the company was "greatly appreciative" of Mr DeNunzio for his contribution to the company.

"ASDA is an extremely strong company and has a superb management team with the depth and expertise to continue our growth into the future," he said.

Vendex is the largest non-food retailer in the Netherlands.

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New look for Irn Bru

Date: Fri, 11 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The manufacturers of Irn-Bru have announced makeover plans in a bid to increase its share in today's health conscious market.

Drinks firm AG Barr will spend £2.5 million on revamping and relaunching the diet version of its core brand.

Diet Irn-Bru will be repackaged in a silver can targeted at consumers who want the taste but not the sugar.

This will be the third makeover for slimline Irn-Bru. The Glasgow-based company launched Low Calorie Irn-Bru in 1980, and repackaged it as Diet Irn-Bru in 1991.

AG Barr hopes the relaunch will help build on the product's recent surge in sales.

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'Healthy' foods described as same as 'junk'

Date: Fri, 11 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

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Analysis

Foods marketed as healthy options are often more jam-packed with calories than junk rivals, a new survey has revealed.

Nutritionists from the British Dietetic Association, which analysed a range of products for Good Housekeeping magazine, found that many foods are not as healthy as they first appear.

The survey slammed upmarket sandwich chain Pret a Manger, after it found that one of its cheese sandwiches contains more calories and higher fat levels than a Big Mac.

The More Than Mozzarella sandwich has 508.4 calories, 29.5g of fat and 4.2g of fibre, compared with the Big Mac's 493 calories, 22.9g of fat and 5.9g of beneficial fibre.

Other unhealthy findings included Ribena blackcurrant juice which has more calories and sugar than a can of Coca-Cola, and McVitie's Go Ahead! Cranberry and Orange Cookies which contain more salt, fat and calories than the company's Jaffa Cake brand.

"The food people perceive as 'healthy' isn't always what it seems," said the magazine's consumer editor, Judith Gubbay.

Pret-a-Manger said to defend itself: "All cheese sandwiches are fattening but our range of food offers lighter options such as salads."

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Northern Irish schools cook a better dinner

Date: Fri, 11 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Northern Irish school caterers have defended themselves from criticism by Jamie Oliver over the standard of food served to British pupils.

The TV chef received the sharp end of tongues as Northern Irish school cooks insisted the food produced by kitchens in his Channel Four programme does not reflect the standard of their own school dinners.

Jamie's School Dinners follows the chef replacing the processed 'rubbish' served at London schools with freshly cooked meals - but the Northern Ireland School Caterers Association (NISCA) says this kind of option is already available in schools in the province.

Janet McAllister, chair of NISCA, told BBC News that the association's staff were experts in providing a well-balanced meal.

"We would be somewhat concerned that parents in Northern Ireland would think we would have the same dependency on convenience foods that Mr Oliver has seen in his schools so far," Ms McAllister said.

She admitted that some 'convenience foods' like fish fingers and burgers may be on the menu in schools, but they are complemented by freshly-cooked stews, curries and soups.

NISCA has invited Mr Oliver to come and see for himself in Northern Irish schools.
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School caterers will reject below-55p contracts

Date: Fri, 11 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The two largest catering firms in the UK have both announced they will stop bidding for school dinner contracts worth less than 55 pence a meal.

Scolarest and Sodexho made separate moves to set the same lower limit levels for future contracts.

The news follows celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's high profile campaign to increase school dinner spending - a crusade which has sparked furious government debate in the lead up to elections.

Mike Bailey, chief executive of Scolarest parent company Compass, told Caterer Online: "Setting the limit is not the end of the debate but it's a bloody good start. You've got to aim high - if you don't ask, you don't get."

A spokesperson for the group added: "More money buys fresher produce and pays staff to stay in the kitchen longer and spend more time cooking."

Stephen Thorns, director of Sodexho's education division, said: "We realised that there was a gap between expectations and the cost of ingredients. Contract extensions won't necessarily be included in that 55p figure - they will be judged on their individual merits."

But the Local Authority Caterers Association, which represents public-sector caterers, believes the industry needs more than a minimum-spend pledge.

Chairman Neil Porter said that there needed to be a broader rethink about contract specifications. "There needs to be a greater understanding of the issues involved, such as increased staff hours, higher wages, training and kitchen improvements," he said.

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Sweet new bid for European sugar-alternatives market

Date: Mon, 14 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The European sweetener market is set to face new competition, as Arla Food Ingredients bids for EU approval of its low-calorie sugar alternative, tagatose.

The milk-derived sugar alternative already has clearance for US, Australian, New Zealand and Korean markets, where it is popular with manufacturers of a diverse range of foods and drinks.

The Denmark-based company has not yet had tagatose approved for the European market, but has applied to the UK's Food Standards Agency for clearance which Arla expects to come "within this year".

Tagatose - which was originally developed in the US - is designed for use with other high
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intensity sweeteners like aspartame, acesulfame-K or sucralose and costs approximately three times as much as ordinary sugar.

It joins a new generation of sweeteners which allow food producers to cash in on the burgeoning market for healthier foods.

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Sainsbury's names new financial chief

Date: Mon, 14 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Britain's third largest supermarket chain, Sainsbury's, today announced it has appointed Darren Shapland as its chief financial officer.

Mr Shapland, 38, replaces Roger Matthews, who resigned in October last year to pursue interests in both the private and public sectors. Mr Matthews will leave the supermarket after preliminary results in May, although the effective date of Mr Shapland's appointment has not yet been settled.

Chief executive, Justin King, told Just Food: "I'm delighted that Darren will be joining Sainsbury's. He has excellent experience in the retail sector and has undertaken a number of hands-on and broad financial roles. He will be a great asset to Sainsbury's and the company's management team as we continue to implement the plans outlined last October."

"I believe the Sainsbury's brand has great potential and look forward to being able to play a key role in the company's future plans," Mr Shapland said.

Philip Hampton, chairman of Sainsbury's, said he was looking forward to working with Mr Shapland and thanked Mr Matthews for his "significant contribution" to the company.

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Creamy super-potato is consumer hit

Date: Mon, 14 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Sainsbury's is struggling to keep up with demand for an exclusive "built-in-butter" baking potato.

The supermarket claims its specially bred Vivaldi potato is so creamy in texture, most people feel they do not need butter with it.

A new-potato-sized version of the designer vegetable has been on shelves since 2002, but Sainsbury's introduced Vivaldis that are big enough for baking on an exclusive basis last month.

The potato appeals to low-fat diet trends and Sainsbury's has been struggling to keep up with consumer demand.

John Maylam, Sainsbury's senior buyer, told the Mail Online: "The potato industry has been trying to develop this potato for years and we've finally got it."

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"A variety like Vivaldi only ever appears once in a blue moon. It's the perfect dish for everyone on a low-fat diet and tastes so good that adding anything to it isn't necessary."

The Vivaldi is the results of breeding between two existing potato varieties, both known for their creamy characteristics.

Sainsbury's charges £2.49 for a 2.5kg bag of the baking-sized version.

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Shrinkwrap gets easier

Date: Mon, 14 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Stretch-wrapping developer, Lantech, has launched a shrink-wrapping machine that can deliver perfect lap seals without the need for adjustment.

A new self-threading head on the SW-5000 machine perfectly centres the lap seal every time, without any adjustments being made to the set up, Lantech claims.

"This machine breaks new ground in shrink packaging by eliminating operator intervention in setup of the lap-seal," Jean-Louis Limousin, Lantech's shrink packaging design leader told Food Production Daily.

The news will be of particular interest to the meat industry, which packs its products with oxygen-permeable film so meat retains its desired red look.

The SW-5000 offers 75 packages per minute and has been designed as a zero-maintenance machine.

It also promises to cut costs for food manufacturers, by using flat film that costs between eight and 13 per cent less than centre-folded film.

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Greggs toasts strong results

Date: Mon, 14 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK bakery chain Greggs announced record returns today, with pre-tax profits for 2004 up over 15 per cent on the previous year.

The company, which sells bakery goods and sandwiches in 1,250 Greggs and Bakers Oven stores, made £46.7 million in the year ending January 1st, compared with £40.5 million the year before.

Turnover for the same period rose to £504 million, up from £457m in 2003.

The strong performance follows a year of reshuffle and expansion for Greggs, which opened 56 new shops in 2004 - a net addition of 32 following re-sites and closures. Two new stores in Belgium doubled the bakery chain's portfolio in that country and helped consolidate its European presence.

"Our good progress during 2004 reflects the benefits of increasing core volumes through our established shops, the addition of a net 32 new units, and our continued focus on controlling costs," managing director, Sir Michael Darrington, told Just Food.

"A good consumer response to our marketing campaigns and generally favourable weather helped us to achieve better than expected like-for-like sales growth in the final quarter, despite the widely reported weakness of high street retailing over the christmas period."

Chairman Derek Netherton announced plans to expand the chain further. "During 2005 we plan to accelerate both the opening of new shops and the refurbishment of established outlets," he said.

"We will be supporting this retail development with substantial investment in our manufacturing facilities, including the construction of a new savouries plant in Newcastle upon Tyne."

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Farmers urge Brown for budget allowances

Date: Tue, 15 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

With the budget just a day away, the National Farmers' Union (NFU) believes more needs to be done to support the farming community.

The NFU wants to see more incentives rather than additional taxes and regulatory burdens.

There are signs that things are improving for farmers, but action is still needed to give them a sustainable future.

Farmers' incomes have improved in recent years, but last years' s rises were mainly due to the favourable exchange rate and the weather, neither of which form the basis for a sustainable recovery.

The NFU are therefore calling for production costs to be carefully managed, while the various forms of existing taxation relief are maintained.

Among the changes the NFU wishes to see is the development of the UK biofuel industry and it believes taxes on agricultural pesticides are adding to production costs too.

Therefore, the NFU believe that a voluntary supportive approach involving training, advice, education and positive action is the way forward.

First Year Capital Allowances on new pesticides items such as sprayers, specialist nozzles, and biobeds should be increased to 100 per cent to encourage business in their pursuit of environmental improvement, it claims.

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Cerestar expands soy product range

DeHavilland Global Knowledge Distribution plc, South Quay Plaza, 183 Marsh Wall, London E14 9SH

Date: Tue, 15 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Cerestar Food & Pharma Specialities Europe has launched a new range of functional soy flours for the bakery market.

The new soy products include C*Protall, whole bean soy flour (full fat soy flour), soy grits and the toasted and enzyme active soy flour, C*Prolia, defatted soy flour and C*Prosant, textured soy flour.

Cerestar hopes the new products will help expand the soy market, a burgeoning trend which saw European consumption of soy and dairy beverages rise by 20 per cent in 2002.

"In bakery products, healthy foods and many other food applications, soy flour offers proven advantages over animal proteins, including lower cost, increased functionality and greater shelf life," Cerestar marketing director, Mark Wastijn, told Food Ingredients First.

The soy flours are principally targeted for use in breads, muffins, doughnuts, whole-grain products, cereals and nutritional bars.

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Bioriginal prepares to unveil new nutritional supplements

Date: Tue, 15 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A leading producer of dietary supplements is set to unveil a new range of products with applications for health and functional foods.

Bioriginal Food & Science will launch a powdered Essential Fatty Acids (EFA) matrix as well as three new product concepts at a California trade show later this month.

The launches will present new opportunities to food manufacturers looking to develop healthier or value-added products.

The first new concept is Daily Kids DHA - a flavoured drink mix containing powdered Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) which helps boost brain development. The mix can be added to milk or water to enhance flavour and nutritional value.

Bioriginal will also launch a flavoured emulsion containing fish oil marketed as DHA Focus for Kids.

The third product to be unveiled is Omega Flavoured EFA Oils which, Bioriginal claims, have improved taste, smell and texture, and are available in flax, fish, borage and omega-3-6-9 formulas.

As well as producing its own capsules, the company supplies nutritional supplements to producers of sports nutrition bar, drinks and functional foods manufacturers.

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Scientists unlock green tea's anti-cancer secret

Date: Tue, 15 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

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Analysis

A chemical found in green tea could provide the basis of a new family of anti-cancer drugs, scientists have claimed.

Tests by UK and Spanish researchers have shown that polyphenol EGCG taken from green tea leaves inhibits cancer cell growth.

The effect was evident even at low concentrations equivalent to drinking two or three cups of green tea a day.

The naturally occurring chemical binds to the same enzyme targeted by chemotherapy drugs - dihydrofolate reductase (DHFR) - and stops it promoting synthesis in tumour cells.

Previous studies have suggested that green tea drinkers are less likely to suffer certain forms of cancer, but this is the first time scientists have been able to establish the reason why.

Researcher Professor Roger Thorneley said: "This is a very exciting discovery...we may be able to develop new anti-cancer drugs based on the structure of the EGCG molecule."

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Sweet permission for Napier Brown

Date: Tue, 15 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Sugar giant Napier Brown Foods has been cleared to add James Budgett Sugars to its portfolio.

The UK's Competition Commission announced this morning that it is happy for Napier to fully integrate James Budgett into its group, after it formally acquired the company in a £17.5 million deal.

With James Budgett on board, Napier stands as the leading manufacturer of sugar in the UK. The company boasts a turnover in excess of £200 million and employs over 250 people at its production sites in Normanton and Runcorn.

"This is a very satisfactory outcome which we believe is good for our suppliers, customers, the industry as a whole and our shareholders," Napier chairman Pat Ridgwell told Just Food.

James Budgett imports and distributes refined and raw cane sugars from members of the European Union as well as African, Caribbean and Pacific 'sugar protocol' countries.

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Marmite adverts 'terrify' youngsters

Date: Wed, 16 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Adverts featuring a huge blob of Marmite have been pulled from children's viewing slots after the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) received complaints that it was terrifying

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youngsters.

The commercials show crowds either running away or diving into a building-high dollop of Marmite, in a pastiche of 1950s science fiction classic, The Blob.

They end with the yeast extract spread's longstanding slogan: "You either love it or hate it".

But Marmite manufacturers Unilever Bestfoods have had to push the ads back to a later slot after six viewers told the ASA that they had distressed their children when they were shown around programmes aimed at youth.

"All the viewers said that their children had been terrified by the advertisements," said a spokesperson for the ASA. "Four said their children refused to watch television after seeing it and a further two said their children had nightmares as a result."

Unilever Bestfoods criticised the ASA for being "unnecessarily prescriptive", arguing that only very young children were affected by the advertisements.

The organisation responsible for vetting ads before they are released, the Broadcast Advertising Clearance Centre, also backed the commercial series. They represent "very mild horror that was clearly over the top and comical", it said.

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Cheese packagers break new ground at Interpak

Date: Wed, 16 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

This year's Interpack show in Dusseldorf has kicked off with some important innovations for cheese producers.

Packaging firm Ilapak is revealing new machinery developments, as well as an extensive range of resealable packaging solutions.

The company's seal sachet machines are used by multi-national cheese producers in the UK, the US, and across Europe.

The stainless steel Delta 3000 HSR is an electronic horizontal flow-wrapper for high-speed modified atmosphere packaging, and uses a single jaw, long-dwell sealing system to ensure high production speed and integrity sealing.

It can produce high quality MAP packs at speeds of up to 160 per minute on products weighing between 150g and 1.5kg, and is marketed for producers of delicate, sticky or irregular-shaped cheeses in various formats.

Ilapak is also debuting the Strip-It system, an integrated resealable pack applicator designed to apply recloseable fastenings to hermetically sealed packs, and the Astra PC Alfa, a range of multi-head weighers offering fast and accurate weighing for processed cheeses.

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Fish, chips and peace of mind

Date: Wed, 16 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A contract caterer that supplies canteen meals to 120 of the UK's biggest businesses has made moves to protect endangered fish stocks with the withdrawal of cod from all its menus.

Reading-based Charlton House believes the change will save around nine million portions of Britain's favourite fish every year and is hoping other contract caterers will follow its lead.

The action follows conservation reports which say Atlantic cod stocks have fallen "outside safe biological limits".

The move to pull cod from the menu was backed by all of Charlton House's clients, including corporate names like BUPA, Sony, Lovells and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Workers will still be able to get their fix of fish and chips, but instead of battered cod, hake, haddock and pollock will be served.

Figures from the World Wildlife Fund says that numbers of mature cod in the North Sea have halved since the early 1960s.

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Common food additive could cut diabetes risk

Date: Wed, 16 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A common food additive could cut the risk of diabetes that comes with a high-fat diet, scientists have claimed.

The US Department of Agriculture has discovered that HPMC, a form of soluble cellulose already used to provide texture in many foods and drugs, slows down the rate at which the body absorbs fat.

Animal tests showed the slower rate of absorption cuts the risk of insulin resistance - a condition which often leads to type 2 diabetes.

The US chemists believe HPMC could help manufacturers develop junk foods without some of the health risks usually associated with them.

Just five grams of the tasteless, odourless compound would have a positive impact on health, they claim.

Researcher, Dr Wallace Yokoyama, said: "Obviously, the less fat you eat, the better off you are. But if you're going to eat high-fat foods, then adding HPMC to it might help limit the damage."

Amanda Vezey, from Diabetes UK, said: "Although this research is interesting it has only been tested so far on animals and much more work would need to be done before we

could draw any conclusions about its effect on humans."

The news comes less than a week after comments by prominent nutritionist Dr Gary Frost that the development of 'healthy' processed foods was the only real solution to Britain's burgeoning obesity problem.

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UK farmers want GM

Date: Wed, 16 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The president of the US firm Monsanto has claimed that the majority of UK farmers want to cultivate GM (genetically modified) crops, the BBC reports.

Hugh Grant, president of the biotechnology firm that pioneered GM, expressed his frustration with the pace of change in European countries on BBC Radio 4's Farming Today programme.

He claimed that contrary to a survey last year which revealed 90 per cent of Britons were against the development of GM in Britain, GM crops will appear on UK farmland within five to ten years, as most UK farmers wish to pursue GM cultivation.

The UK government currently allows the cultivation of one GM plant - herbicide-tolerant maize - but plans to grow the crop commercially have been abandoned by the German firm behind the project.

In 2008, a number of other companies including Monsanto will bid to grow other varieties of GM crops despite Monsanto's decision two years ago to end its European seed cereal business in the UK.

The Monsanto boss believes GM technology could help develop plants with specific health benefits in the future and he stressed the benefits a number of other countries are already reaping from GM cultivation.

However, a number of critics in the UK and Europe insist more research is required before the farming sector can switch to large-scale commercial GM cultivation.

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Acrylamide does not pose cancer risk

Date: Wed, 16 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Scientists have dismissed fears that acrylamide, a naturally occurring chemical in baked and fried foods, increases the risk of developing breast cancer.

Harvard School of Public Health and the Swedish Karolinska Institute jointly surveyed 43,000 women, but found that those who ate more acrylamide-rich foods were at no higher risk.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said soon after the chemical was first discovered in 2002 lab tests on animals suggested it was carcinogenic.

Acrylamide occurs in foods like chips, crisps and coffee as a result of a reaction between specific amino acids and sugars that occurs at high temperatures.

The research first assessed the diets of women from the Swedish Women's Lifestyle and Health Cohort in 1991, and then again in 2002 when it was found that 667 (1.6 per cent) had developed breast cancer.

There was no correlation between those that developed the cancer and those that consumed higher amounts of acrylamide. The average acrylamide intake was 25.9 micrograms per day.

Harvard researcher Loreli Mucci told the BBC: "It's reassuring to see that the study suggests that the amount of acrylamide consumed in the Swedish diet is not associated with an excess risk of breast cancer.

"Given the widespread public health implications of acrylamide, however, it is important to examine the risk associated with other cancers as well as neurological conditions"

Henry Scowcroft, science information officer at Cancer Research UK, said: "We welcome the results of this study, which suggest that acrylamide in food has no effect on human breast cancer rates."

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BSE worry warning

Date: Thu, 17 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Worry over mad cow disease has dropped by almost a quarter since 2000, a new survey has revealed.

The poll, carried out by MORI on behalf of the Food Standards Agency (FSA), showed that British shoppers are more concerned by the levels of salt and fat in their baskets than they are about BSE-infected meat.

Concerns about the brain-wasting affliction had fallen from 66 per cent in 2000 to 44 per cent in 2004.

The survey also reveals that the number of people who claim to eat the recommended five fruit and vegetable portions a day has grown from just over a quarter (26 per cent) in 2000 to half of all consumers (51 per cent) in 2004.

This result - which accounts for 3,329 people - is surprising in the light of Cancer Research UK findings that two thirds of women say they fall short of the five-a-day target. Cancer Research polled 2,300 women.

"Over the last five years, the trend among consumers has been towards healthier eating. People are more worried about levels of salt, fat and sugar in food and the accuracy of food labels and less concerned about issues like BSE," the FSA said in a statement.

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Gordon tucks into Big Apple

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Date: Thu, 17 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Hell's Kitchen's angry man Gordon Ramsay is set to take on America.

The celebrity gastronome will open his first US restaurant at New York's Marriott Righa Royal Hotel next year, and also has plans for a venture in Miami.

Mr Ramsay told Catering magazine: "It's the burning ambition of every top chef in the world to succeed in New York.

"To be there amongst the best in the world is so exciting. I thrive on competition and New York has restaurants from all the top chefs in the world, from Thomas Keller to Jean-George Vongerichten."

The New York restaurant will split food-lovers between a 100-seat fine-dining restaurant and a less formal dining area, but both will serve food that Mr Ramsay's spokeswoman said would be "Gordon Ramsay through and through".

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Tooth enamel protector presents ingredient breakthrough

Date: Thu, 17 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A Dutch whey ingredients producer has won a prize for a novel additive that helps protect tooth enamel from erosion by acidic drinks.

Borculo Domo, which has kept tight-lipped about the ingredient whilst it awaits a patent, claims its new whey isolate is the first product of its kind and presents the multi-billion-pound drinks industry with major opportunities.

The ingredient coats the enamel with a protective layer that fends off erosion caused by acidic fruit and carbonated drinks.

Its inventor, Borculo Dolo, joins a growing number of ingredients manufacturers looking to cash in on problems caused by erosion by developing new food additives that promote oral health.

"Traditionally the problem has been tooth decay because of the sugar in drinks but increasingly we are seeing erosion from the acid," head of research at the University of Birmingham's school of dentistry, Professor Tony Smith, told Nutra Ingredients Europe.

Whereas dental decay is localised, erosion by acidic drinks attacks the whole surface area of the tooth and is much harder to repair.

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UK women not hitting five-a-day target

Date: Thu, 17 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Only a third of British women eat the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables, a new study has revealed.

Cancer Research UK found that just 33 per cent of 2,300 women polled hit the government's five-a-day target, even though the overwhelming majority knew that doing so has an impact on health.

Diet is linked to around a third of all cancers.

The poll also found almost half of women (49 per cent) think they are overweight or obese - another factor that can contribute to cancer.

Dr Lesley Walker, director of cancer information at Cancer Research UK, told the Mail Online: "We are very concerned by the results of this survey which show that, in many areas, women are making lifestyle choices that are likely to increase their risk of cancer."

She added: "At least half of all cancers are preventable. We can reduce our own risk of cancer and we can do this throughout our lives."

Another Cancer Research study published earlier this week found that the British population is giving up its traditional fried breakfast in favour of healthier options like fruit and porridge.

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Tomatoes could help combat cancer

Date: Thu, 17 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The American Society for Clinical Nutrition has announced that including tomatoes as part of a balanced diet could play a significant role in preventing prostate cancer.

Lycopene, a carotenoid found in a small set of plant foods, is thought to reduce prostate cancer risk due to its high antioxidant activity. Research by the society has found that tomatoes have a significantly higher proportion of this component than other vegetables.

It found that lycopene was present in higher amounts in cooked tomatoes and thickened forms of the vegetable such as sauces and tomato paste.

Unlike other vegetables, which lose their vitamin potential during cooking, lycopene in tomatoes increases during cooking.

Suggested uses of tomatoes to promote reduced prostate cancer risk include combining tomatoes with garlic and onions in sauces, and reducing the amount of fats and oils used in preparing tomatoes to maximise the absorption of lycopene.

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New methods to combat unwanted allergen leaks

Date: Thu, 17 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A UK laboratory has developed new allergen tests that will make it easier for food manufacturers to adhere to tough labelling laws.

Reading Scientific Services claims to be the first UK lab to offer commercial testing for ingredients like pistachio, pecan, celery and mustard.

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The service would help slash the risk of potentially harmful allergens entering food manufacturers' product ranges - as well as the brand-destroying product recalls and costly lawsuits that could ensue.

Tougher European rules on allergen labelling and due diligence were introduced in November 2004, and are due for total enforcement by 25 November this year. They require food makers to provide a comprehensive ingredients listing on the label of potential food allergens.

According to Food Navigator, the test developed by Reading Scientific Services employs polymerase chain reaction techniques to amplify and detect specific morsels of DNA that relate to particular allergens.

Barbara Hirst, technical manager of the molecular biology department at RSSL, said: "The test is extremely sensitive to each allergen, but we do have a stated detection limit".

About four per cent of adults and eight per cent of children in the EU suffer from food allergies, according to the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations.

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Sizzling new ads for Danish bacon

Date: Fri, 18 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Danish Bacon and Meat Council is to spend £1 million on a new UK advertising campaign.

A new series of ads will feature larger-than-life bacon rashers - in a sandwich, on the plate, and sizzling in the pan. All the posters will bear the slogan, "For more bacon taste, look for the Danish sizzle on your supermarket's own packs".

"We're continuing the theme of our previous campaign - focusing consumers' attention on the Danish sizzle - but with a totally different creative approach," the council's marketing director, John Howard, told Meat News.

The bacon body will also post ads in London Underground stations for the first time, as part of a marketing strategy to target a different audience.

"It's designed to appeal to food-lovers - twenty- to forty-something consumers who love high quality bacon," Mr Howard said.

The Danish Bacon and Meat Council will launch the campaign in food magazines after Easter, and tube posters will appear at the middle of next month at 475 central London sites.

They will also release a series of humorous radio adverts featuring Green Wing comedy star Mark Heap and the slogan, "The big taste of Danisssshhhhhhh".

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IBS cookbook taps new trend

Date: Fri, 18 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A chef is tapping into the market for food that does help soothe Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

Sophie Braimbridge has published a cookery book, *Healthy Eating for IBS*, which offers sufferers of the chronic illness recipes they can tuck into without aggravating their symptoms.

The recipes are a range of low, medium and high fibre dishes, designed with advice from dietician Erica Jankovich to cater for the differing requirements of IBS patients.

About a fifth of people in the UK, mostly women, have suffered with the syndrome at some point in their lives. Symptoms include diarrhoea, constipation and bloating, as well as tiredness, backache and headaches.

The innovative cookery book is part of a growing trend of concern for the effects of specific foods upon the body, and signals a wealth of opportunities for food manufacturers to produce specialist IBS products.

Ms Braimbridge has written several healthy-eating recipe books and runs cookery classes in Wimbledon. She originally trained with the Roux brothers and has cooked at *La Gavroche* and the *River Cafe*.

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Andy Bond to head up Asda

Date: Fri, 18 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Wal-Mart has named Andy Bond as the new chief executive for its UK supermarket subsidiary, Asda.

Mr Bond has been promoted from his position as Asda's chief operating officer, to succeed Tony DeNunzio who announced his resignation on March 11th.

He will helm the company as it looks to boost earnings and close the gap on UK industry leader, Tesco.

Asda's share of the £105 billion food retail sector grew to 16.9 per cent in the 12 weeks to February 27th, up 16.7 per cent on the previous year.

"It is clear to us that Andy is the right person to lead the next phase of Asda's success," John Menzer, president and chief executive of parent company Wal-Mart, said in the statement.

"We are pleased to have the opportunity to appoint someone from inside the business."

Mr Bond joined the supermarket 11 years ago, in which time he has held various marketing positions as well as the COO role he began six months ago.

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Consumers ditch waif ideal

Date: Fri, 18 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The never-ending quest to be thin could soon become a thing of the past, new research has claimed.

The diet-related food industry raked in US\$86.8 billion in 2003 from sales in the US and Europe - and is expected to hit the \$100 billion mark by 2008 - but according to market analyst Datamonitor, the type of diet products consumers want is about to change.

More and more people aspire to a toned, muscular physique over a waifish figure, according to the report.

As a result, they are ditching low-carb eating regimes like the Atkins plan, and coupling more moderate, easy-to-follow diets with visits to the gym.

"This shift in perspective provides new opportunities for the food and beverage industry to provide consumers with more than simply meals - but with a lifestyle that they can buy into for years to come," said Datamonitor consumer analyst, Lawrence Gould.

The move away from fad diets follows deepening consumer disillusionment: Some 70 per cent of people who embark on a weight-loss eating plan give up within the first three months, and almost 90 per cent of dieters gain the weight back within a year.

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Robertson's relaunch

Date: Fri, 18 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK food producer RHM is gearing up to re-launch its traditional jam brand.

The company plans to revitalise its Robertson's preserves with new recipes, packaging and the slogan, "fruitier than ever".

The range includes recipes with higher fruit contents across seven-core jams, as well as two new flavours: strawberry and vanilla, and berries and cherries.

The jars will also be revamped, with a new, striped, twist-off cap and more modern labels.

"Our new products have been designed to give consumers their most loved jam flavours with an exciting twist," Robertson's head of marketing, Patrick Finlay, told Just Food.

"Robertson's is such an important consumer sign-post in the sector that, by investing in the brand, we can refresh the category and keep consumers excited about jam,"

The new Robertson's jars will hit stores at the end of this month, and in May the company will promote the jam with in-store promotions and TV sponsorship.

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Geographically protected status contravenes WTO rules

Date: Fri, 18 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The geographically protected status that stops producers making foods like champagne or Melton Mowbray pies outside their region of origin has come under fire from World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The WTO disputes panel has told the European Union (EU) to open the system to traditionally made foodstuffs from non-EU countries.

The panel said that by excluding non-EU products like Alberta beef or Florida oranges from geographical protection, the EU is breaking WTO rules.

The system currently protects EU products made by traditional methods in specific regions from being imitated and potentially undermined by non-regional competitors.

The case was brought before the WTO by Australia and the United States.

Geographically protected status has been awarded to products like Parma ham, Cornish clotted cream and Brie cheese - although its Cheddar counterpart was denied the status after it was ruled too generic.

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Scientists confirm oysters' aphrodisiac powers

Date: Mon, 21 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Oysters have long been associated with romance, and now scientists have confirmed they boost levels of sex hormones.

American and Italian researchers found that bivalve molluscs - the group of shellfish that includes oysters - contain high levels of rare amino acids that trigger the hormone increases associated with sexual arousal.

Dr George Fisher, who led the study at Barry University, Miami, said: "I'm amazed. For centuries, old wives' tales have said that eating raw molluscs - oysters in particular - would stimulate the libido but there has really been no scientific evidence as to why and if this occurs."

Previous speculation about the aphrodisiac effect of oysters has concentrated on their zinc content - a mineral found in high levels in human sperm.

The legendary 18th century lover Casanova is rumoured to have breakfasted on 50 oysters a day.

For more information visit:

<http://news.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?view=DETAILS&xml=/news/2005/03/20/noys20.xml>

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No Popeye effect for eight-day-old spinach

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Date: Mon, 21 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Fresh spinach needs to be eaten shortly after harvest if consumers are to benefit from its nutritional value, new research has revealed.

Scientists in the US have found that refrigerated spinach loses much of its folate and carotenoid content after just eight days - and un-refrigerated leaves lose them even faster.

Dr Luke LaBorde and Srilatha Pandrangi of Penn State University studied the nutritional content of spinach stored at four, ten and 20 degrees Celsius.

"This has implications in the shipping process," Dr LaBorde told the Journal of Food Science.

Spinach that is transported across the country often spends extended periods in un-refrigerated shipping trucks and loses much of its nutrient content by the time it reaches the consumer.

The findings mean that frozen and canned spinach are often higher in nutritional value than the fresh leaves often bought by more health conscious consumers.

For more information visit: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=58855-spinach-study-outlines>

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New regulation laws: fewer inspections but tougher fines

Date: Mon, 21 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The government has announced a pan-industry regulation overhaul that promises food sector firms fewer inspections, more incentives for good track records and tougher penalties for the rule-breakers.

Under the new legislation, 31 of the 63 national regulators currently governing UK industry will be absorbed into seven umbrella organisations, including the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The new system will come into force within the next two to four years.

The Cabinet Office will also establish a new Better Regulation Executive to oversee regulator performance.

Food company inspections will drop by a third, but those firms found in breach of food safety and quality laws will be subjected to heftier, risk-based fines which the government claims will benefit the industry.

"The benefits of a risk-based approach are that it focuses regulators' resources in those areas where the risks to society are greatest, ensuring inspections of riskier businesses that may not otherwise take place and substantially reducing the costs incurred by the majority of low-risk businesses," a government spokesperson said.

The proposals adhere to recommendations made by Sainsbury's chairman, Philip

Hampton in a report published last Friday, in which he advised government to increase fines so that they act as a real deterrent.

For more information visit: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=58868-fines-uk-clamp>

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Opportunities for foods that take the stress out of allergies

Date: Mon, 21 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

New research has highlighted manufacturing opportunities for allergen free food products.

Dr Rebecca Knibb of the University of Derby found that parents who are told their children suffer from food allergies suffer greater stress levels than people who learn they have cancer.

Over one third (36 per cent) of a sample of 120 parents at allergy centres showed clinical levels of anxiety.

"These figures reflect the anguish that parents go through when they discover their child has a food allergy," Dr Knibb told the Scotsman Online. "They suffer great anxiety at what this might entail for their child's health and welfare."

Food manufacturers could capitalise on the findings and ease anxiety by developing more allergen-free versions of those foods and drinks that traditionally contain problem ingredients.

Nuts and dairy products are among the foods most likely to produce an allergic reaction, with nut allergies sometimes causing potentially fatal anaphylactic shock.

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PM backs Jamie's School Dinners

Date: Mon, 21 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Tony Blair has pledged he will improve the quality of Britain's school dinners, following mounting pressure from celebrity chef Jamie Oliver.

Jamie's School Dinners programme, which has been running on Channel Four, has shown Mr Oliver trying to provide children with a healthy alternative at affordable prices in the school canteen, and now his efforts are to become the basis for a nationwide project.

Prime Minister Tony Blair has suggested that schools being given funding to refurbish their buildings could use the money to create better-equipped canteens and, writing in the Observer, said dinner ladies will be given better training to enable them to provide youngsters with more healthy options.

Instead of simply providing children with processed meals, food will be prepared from scratch, just like the TV chef has been doing as part of his scheme to promote healthy

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eating in London's schools.

Mr Blair promised to set up a new School Food Trust to "draw on the remarkable work of Jamie Oliver in schools, of the Soil Association in encouraging the use of organic and local produce in school meals, and on the best advice on nutrition and eliminating processed foods".

"It may take a little time to change children's tastes," he added, "but it will be worth the effort if we can get them enjoying healthy and good quality food at school."

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Hefty price tag for Quorn firm sale

Date: Mon, 21 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Europe's largest producer of the vegetarian Quorn brand is to be sold for around £250 million.

UK-based manufacturer Marlow Foods will be put to auction following an approach from a trade buyer.

The news comes two years after owner Montagu Private Equity backed a management buyout of the company from owner AstraZeneca for just £70m.

Marlow Foods has enjoyed steady growth since it launched its flagship meat substitute, Quorn, in 1985 - but profits have soared since the buyout in early 2003.

The firm's annual Quorn sales at the time of the deal stood at £100 million a year.

But since then, the company has grown at an average of 50 per cent per year, while profits for the year ending in December 2003 stood at £26 million, compared to £1.5 million in 2002.

The anticipated £250 million price tag has been regarded as something of a coup.

For more information visit:

http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/news/article.html?in_article_id=399068&in_page_id=2

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Research confirms love powers of oysters

Date: Tue, 22 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Oysters are a powerful aphrodisiac, a new survey claims.

A team of US and Italian chemists found that bivalve molluscs, the group of shellfish that includes oysters, contain compounds that have been shown to be effective in releasing sexual hormones such as testosterone and oestrogen.

Presenting the team's findings at the annual meeting of the American Chemical Society, George Fisher, a professor of chemistry at Barry University in Miami, said: "The supposition for centuries was that oysters, clams and mussels have been thought to have

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aphrodisiac properties, and they were eaten raw for that purpose.

"We found there might be a scientific basis for the aphrodisiac properties of these molluscs. We think that this could be the first scientific evidence of some substance."

The researchers claim that compounds such as D-aspartic acid and NMDA (N-methyl-D-aspartate) in shellfish stimulate the secretion of testosterone and oestrogen in humans.

Visit <http://www.chemistry.org/portal/a/c/s/1/home.html> for more information.
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Natural yoghurt combats bad breath

Date: Tue, 22 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Sugarless yoghurt could help beat bad breath, tooth decay and gum disease, a new study has revealed.

Research by Japanese scientists found eating yoghurt reduced levels of hydrogen sulphide, a major cause of bad breath, in 80 per cent of volunteers.

Active bacteria in the yoghurt, specifically *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*, are key to tackling bad breath, according to the researchers.

Presenting the findings at a meeting of the International Association for Dental Research, the team said 24 volunteers took part in the study and spent two weeks avoiding yoghurts and similar foods, like cheese. They were given strict instructions on oral hygiene, diet and medication intake.

The volunteers then ate 90 grams of yoghurt a day for six weeks and the study showed that hydrogen sulphide levels decreased in 80 per cent of participants. Levels of plaque and the gum disease gingivitis were also significantly lower among those eating yoghurt.

Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, said:

"Although this research is still in the early stages there is no doubt that sugar-free yoghurts provide a much healthier alternative to sweets and chocolate, and we would encourage snackers to incorporate them into their diet."

No further information.

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New ALA combination from Labochim

Date: Tue, 22 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Italian firm Labochim has introduced a new alpha-lipoic acid (ALA) chemically combined with the vitamin-like substance L-carnitine.

The company, which primarily manufactures active ingredients for the pharmaceutical industry, claims that the patented ALA combination both increases the antioxidant's solubility and improves the properties of L-carnitine.

ALA plays an important role in the body in maintaining healthy antioxidant levels and is believed to offer advantages over other antioxidants as it increases the level of glutathione, an antioxidant produced by the body, and can also regenerate other antioxidants such as vitamin C and E.

Formulating the ingredient in food and drinks has been severely limited by the product's low solubility and stability, which significantly declines under processing conditions like heat and powder blending, Food Navigator reports.

"We think we've succeeded in improving the solubility of ALA and reducing the highly hygroscopic nature of L-carnitine," said Annibale Salvi, vice president of Labochim.

Labochim claims that its new combination will be more cost effective than regular ALA as L-carnitine is a less expensive ingredient. Standard ALA costs between €180-200 per kg, but the combination raises the efficacy of the antioxidant making it a cost-effective option.

The firm has not investigated the health benefits of its new compound, although it is thought that adding an antioxidant to carnitine is beneficial, as it aids metabolism without causing a corresponding increase in the production of free radicals.

For more information visit <http://www.labochim.com>.

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Fast food giants use new way to woo customers

Date: Tue, 22 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A number of global fast food chains have responded to an increasing interest in healthy eating with salad ranges.

As concern grows about soaring levels of obesity, burger giant McDonald's and rival Burger King have both introduced ranges of salads, fruits and vegetables. McDonald's has launched a worldwide campaign to promote healthy eating to children, while Burger King is yet to unveil its marketing strategy.

The government is expected to announce a crackdown on junk food marketing, particularly to children, and fast food groups have embraced the current change in public opinion towards healthier foods.

However some have claimed the companies are still unhealthy and are using healthier advertising simply to woo customers

McDonald's executive vice-president and global chief marketing officer, Larry Light, heavily promoted the company's new healthier ranges at the annual Incorporated Society of British Advertisers conference this month.

"We're reinventing marketing to children... it can't be about blame, it must be about changing the game," Media Week quoted him as saying.

Mr Light said one of the big challenges was how to make vegetables "cool", adding that

the answer is in "compelling packaging and entertaining marketing". He stated that McDonald's is now a global leader in salad sales and said the firm was now serving up "healthy eating" dishes at its restaurants across the globe.

Dominic Stead, joint managing director at Media Planning Group, said that McDonald's new strategy is a necessity in the current climate of health awareness. "If you were McDonald's, this is a good reaction to that situation," he commented. "It's getting on the front foot, isn't it? I imagine others will follow in their wake."

Jeremy Preston, director of the Food Advertising Unit of the Advertising Association, said that McDonald's should be commended for responding to challenges from the government and the public.

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Further concerns raised about GM crops

Date: Tue, 22 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

GM trials for Britain's biggest crop show that wildlife and the environment would suffer if it was grown in the UK.

Bayer CropScience, the company that owns the patent on the GM oil seed rape being tested, has announced that it is not going ahead with its application to grow the crop in Europe.

The British government has been pushing to introduce GM crops but the results of the trial, published by the Royal Society, has scuppered plans to licence crops in the UK.

The crop of genetically modified winter oil seed rape formed part of the world's most comprehensive crop study. The extensive trial was launched ahead of the last election in an effort to calm public fears about the potential health and environmental dangers of GM food.

The trial tested the effects of GM and non-GM crops on bees, butterflies, beetles, weeds and other farmland wildlife in two farming regimes. Experts expected the GM crops, which use fewer applications of herbicide than conventional crops, to benefit wildlife, but for three out of the four crops tested the reverse was the case.

Mark Avery, of the RSPB, said: "Six years ago, before the farm-scale trials, we were told that GM crops were good for wildlife and good for farmers' profits. Now, against all expectations, we are told they are bad for both. It is bad news for the biotech industry."

Conservative environment spokesman, Tim Yeo, said that the party would not allow GM crops to be grown in Britain unless it could be proved they were safe for people and the environment.

Elliot Morley, the environment minister, said the trials demonstrated the government's "precautionary approach on GM crops".

No further information.

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Changes to turkey product help boost sales

Date: Tue, 22 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Bernard Matthews Turkey Twizzlers have seen a steep rise in sales in spite of a televised attack by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver.

Mr Oliver, 29, is currently running a nationwide campaign to improve school meals and criticised the turkey twists on his Channel 4 show Jamie's School Dinners.

Twizzlers have now been banned from many schools, but the Norfolk-based company has leapt to the defence of its product and claims sales have gone up, partly due to increased publicity. The sales increase is believed to be around a third.

Managing director, David Joll, said: "A Twizzler has much less fat than a sausage... yet we don't hear Jamie Oliver telling people not to eat sausages."

Mr Joll said the company had no plans to withdraw its product and insisted that the Turkey Twizzlers recipe was changed last year. The product now has seven per cent fat per 100g cooked, well within the ten per cent allowed in schools.

Firm Scholarest, which supplies more than 2000 schools with meals, has removed Twizzlers from all its menus.

The government this week unveiled a new mini manifesto on better school meals for children. Education secretary Ruth Kelly announced that a School Meals Trust would be set up and more money provided for the school meals service.

No further information.

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Morrisons chases Safeway potential with big board revamp

Date: Wed, 23 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK supermarket group, Morrisons, has announced a major shake up to its executive board in a bid to release the full potential value of the company's Safeway acquisition.

Joint managing director Bob Stott is promoted to chief executive and Marie Melnyk has assumed responsibility for trading and marketing in her role as managing director.

Meanwhile, finance director Martin Ackroyd will step down from the board at the annual meeting in May, although he will continue to oversee financial function at the company until a successor is appointed.

Next chairman David Jones has been appointed non-executive deputy chairman, and will work with chairman Sir Kenneth Morrison and Mr Stott "to ensure that succession plans are in place for all board positions and that additional non-executive directors are appointed".

Sir Morrison said: "The appointment of Bob Stott and Marie Melnyk to their new roles

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and the appointment of David Jones as deputy chairman are significant steps in the development of Morrisons. Together with my continuing commitment and the addition of a new finance director and suitable non executive directors, I believe that we will have the right team to deliver the full benefits from the Safeway acquisition to shareholders and customers alike."

He also thanked Mr Ackroyd for his loyalty and hard work during 31-years with the supermarket group saying, "I respect his decision to seek a less public life".

Morrisons' big board revamp follows pressure from City shareholders after the company received two profit warnings this year.

For more details visit:

<http://www.theretailbulletin.com/index.php?page=5&id=6184&cat=news>

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Yoghurt may help beat obesity

Date: Wed, 23 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Yoghurt may help obese people slim down better than just limiting calorie intake, new research suggests.

The US-led study, published in the International Journal of Obesity, found that obese dieters who included three servings of yoghurt a day in a calorie-restricted regime shed more fat from their waists than those that consumed little to no dairy produce and low amounts of calcium.

Scientists at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville studied 34 obese men and women on calorie-reduced diets over a period of 12 weeks.

Dr Michael Zemel who led the research speculated that the high levels of calcium in yoghurt help regulate the breakdown of fat cells, while a high concentration of specific bioactive compounds may promote fat loss while preserving muscle.

The findings help support dairy health claims that could help manufacturers better market products like milk, yoghurt and cheese.

Previous research has shown that children and teenagers who consume the recommended amounts of dairy products tend to be slimmer than peers who avoid them.

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Food habits fixed in infancy

Date: Wed, 23 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Children's tastes in food are formed in infancy, a new study has revealed.

Psychologists at the University of Birmingham claims that very young children establish a "visual prototype" of favoured foods after they found that babies weaned on rusks were more likely to prefer beige foods like crisps and chips in later life.

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Infants who are exposed to a more diverse range of foods including fresh fruit and vegetables before the age of one are more likely to enjoy a varied, healthy diet later on.

According to the BBC, the study also found that children who reject dishes without tasting them probably do so because the foods do not look like the visual prototype they have already formed of the things they like to eat.

Dr Gillian Harris, a clinical psychologist at the university, said: "There is uncertainty and a lack of education about how children should be fed and this can lead to children's preferences being set at a very early age."

She expressed concern for parents who lacked the confidence to give babies food not manufactured specifically for babies and recommended that they try to introduce children to new colours, textures and shapes, with lots of fruits and vegetables, to help establish healthy eating habits for life.

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Fresh fruit shortfall in prison food

Date: Wed, 23 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK jail inmates are not being given enough fresh fruit or vegetables, according to prison inspectors.

Convicts at Shotts prison in Lanarkshire, Scotland, eat just two portions of fresh fruit a week - a figure that has not risen for eight years according to Scotland's chief inspector of prisons, Dr Andrew McLellan.

According to the report, "catering staff said they found it impossible to increase the number of pieces of fresh fruit a week from two to three per week and still remain within the budget of £1.57 per day."

The finding follows public and parliamentary concern over the low quality and cost of school dinners - a debate in which the slightly higher per-meal spend for prisoners became a central issue.

Two of the UK's biggest contract caterers, Scolarest and Sodexo, subsequently resolved to reject new school-dinner contracts with a budget of less than 55 pence per meal.

Inspectors at Shotts had advised in an earlier report that more fruit be given to inmates, but found that their recommendations had not been met.

For more information visit: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/4372635.stm>

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Coca-cola to launch zero calorie brand in the US

Date: Wed, 23 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

American cola lovers will be able to guzzle their favourite drink without piling on the pounds come June, when Coca-Cola launches the no-calorie version of its flagship

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brand.

Coca-Cola Zero will be sweetened with a mix of aspartame and acesulfame potassium and offers consumers the taste of the original drink without a single calorie, the company claims.

It follows the launch of rival PepsiCo's Pepsi One, a one-calorie cola formulated with the low-calorie sweetener known as sucralose or Splenda.

Pepsi One is expected to have full distribution throughout the US by the end of next month, and will be swiftly followed in May by the launch of Coca-Cola's own Splenda-sweetened drink and then Coca-Cola Zero in June.

Coca-Cola spokesman Scott Williamson told Dow Jones the company expects Diet Coke Sweetened with Splenda and Coca-Cola Zero to target different audiences than its traditional low-calorie cola, Diet Coke.

"Young people today do not want to compromise on flavour or calories and we think Coca-Cola Zero's taste and personality will appeal to them," said Dan Dillon, vice president of Coca Cola's diet portfolio in the US.

In America, non-diet soft drinks still account for 70 per cent of the industry's sales but with figures in decline, diet brands represent the real growth sector.

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Indian scientists develop 'tea pill'

Date: Wed, 23 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Indian scientists have come up with a solution for those moments when you crave a cup of tea but need to dash out of the door.

Researchers at the Tocklai tea research centre in Assam have invented a "tea pill" that they claim mimics the taste and refreshing feel of real tea without the need to brew a cuppa.

"The tea tablet is something that you will be able to drink normally or put on your tongue as you go into work and it will freshen you up for the day ahead just like a real cup does," said the centre's director Dr Mridul Hazarika.

"You can suck it, chew it or dissolve it in water the way you like to have it and still feel the taste of a real cup of tea."

The small brown tablet weighs 0.3 grams and contains 80 per cent real tea and 20 percent other flavours.

Dr Hazarika confirmed the centre has applied for a patent and expects a more finely tuned version of the pill to hit the market in six months.

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Dark chocolate helps improve heart health

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Date: Thu, 24 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Dark chocolate can help improve heart health, a new study has revealed.

According to Food Navigator, scientists at the University of L'Aquila in Italy found that eating 100g of dark chocolate a day boosts glucose metabolism and brings down blood pressure.

The findings lend weight to food manufacturers who want to make heart health claims on dark chocolate packaging.

The research team gave 15 adults a typical Italian diet supplemented by white or dark chocolate for 15 days, no chocolate for a week, and then the opposite colour chocolate for a subsequent 15 days.

Assessments revealed dark chocolate improved insulin resistance and sensitivity and decreased systolic blood pressure. White chocolate had no recorded health impact.

The experiment forms part of a wider scientific movement to stem rising figures for cardiovascular disease by identifying foods that promote heart health.

According to the World Health Organisation, heart disease was responsible for nearly 30 per cent of global deaths in 2003.

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Hungry for Success scheme to include under-fives

Date: Thu, 24 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A healthy eating initiative in Scotland may be extended to include nursery and pre-school children.

The Scottish Executive wants to include under-fives in its Hungry for Success scheme, which aims at getting school children to eat more fruit and vegetables and cut back on sugary, fizzy drinks.

The proposed guidance document is up for consultation until the end of June, with a view to being published later this year.

It will be designed for local authority nurseries, partnership nurseries, childminders, toddler groups, family centres and playgroups and include nutritional information and recommendations on meals and snacks.

The proposal to extend the scheme comes in response to parliamentary pressure by Jamie Oliver's to improve the quality of food served in schools.

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Blavod extends Italian distribution portfolio

Date: Thu, 24 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

International spirits firm, Blavod Extreme Spirits, today announced it has sealed a new DeHavilland Global Knowledge Distribution plc, South Quay Plaza, 183 Marsh Wall, London E14 9SH

deal to distribute a range of Italian wines.

According to Just Drinks, the US-based company has signed an agreement with the Moretti family to distribute the produce of its Petra wineries in Tuscany.

Petra's portfolio comprises four wines: EBO Val di Cornia DocSuvereto, Quercegobbe Merlot IGT Toscana, Zingari IGT Toscana, and Petra IGT Toscana. The business is a joint venture between Vittorio Moretti and his daughter Francesca.

Blavod's existing range of exclusive Italian wines includes Baroncini, Bruno Rocca, L'Illuminata by Guido Folonari, Davide Feresin, Campo Bargello, Franco Terpin, Carron,, Corbera and Vinae Italiae by Wine & Food.

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Prospects improve for Sainsbury's

Date: Thu, 24 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK supermarket Sainsbury's today announced its end-of-quarter results show an "improving trend", marking what may be a turnaround in the supermarket's ailing fortunes.

Sales for the fourth quarter ending March 26th are up 7.2 per cent on the same period last year, whilst sales for the year as a whole have experienced a solid five per cent growth.

Sainsbury's chief executive Justin King said: "We are pleased with the quarter four sales numbers reported today which continue to show an improving trend.

"The competitive environment continues to be fierce but we are committed to ensuring that our customer offer is not compromised while we continue with our plans."

Sainsbury's market share has fallen dramatically over recent years, pushing the one-time market leader into third position behind Wal-Mart-owned Asda and Tesco, which holds first place by some way.

Mr King attributed the improvement in sales to price cuts throughout the supermarket and an increase in warehouse space which enables staff to stock shelves sooner.

"Overall we are pleased with our progress during the quarter. However we are still only six months into implementing the plans we outlined last October," he said.

"The outlook remains competitive but we are confident that by continuing to do a better job for our customers every day we will reach our objective of market levels of sales growth by the end of 2005/06."

The results include actual figures for the 11 weeks to March 19th and an forecast for the final week to 26 March. Sainsbury's will publish its official results for the period on May 18th.

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Couture chocolate marks new cocoa high

Date: Thu, 24 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Consumers may have started ditching Cadbury's for Green & Blacks some time ago, but the trend for upmarket cocoa products has reached new highs.

Couture chocolate marks a new niche in the luxury foods industry, and the top designers are beginning to attract the same sort of furore as their catwalk counterparts.

Chantal Coady, Gerard Coleman and Bertrand Espouy are among a burgeoning crop of highly skilled chocolate artisans whose progressive, designer bon bons are painted miniatures infused with Szechuan pepper, saffron and star anise.

Chocolate couturiers even have a cocoa-driven version of New York Fashion Week, with the Big Apple's Next Generation Chocolatiers Competition where designers can showcase their most intricate and innovative designs.

All elite chocolate couturiers produce exquisitely hand-painted sweets like miniature works of art, but the craft is more than just decorative. Cocoa artisans are employing new, unexpected flavours like salt, chilli pepper and even tobacco harvested from the highest quality of ingredients.

US chocolatier Christopher Elbow, who has won five prizes at the Next Generation competition, told the Scotsman: "The visual is obviously what attracts people's interest, but the quality of the ingredients has to keep it."

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Cornish pasty name too generic for protcted status, objectors claim

Date: Thu, 24 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A Cornish bid to secure Protected Geographical Status for the region's famous pasties has come under fire from competitors who fear their businesses may suffer.

If the EU accepts the submission put forward by St Ives MP Andrew George, pasty makers outside Cornwall will not be able to sell their produce under the Cornish pasty flag.

But food minister Lord Whitty said objections had been raised that "Cornish" is a "general term for pasties" and would have to be considered before any ruling was made.

The Protected Geographical Status initiative is designed to protect traditional, locally produced foods from being imitated and potentially undermined by non-regional manufacturers.

Mr George claims the need to "establish a distinctive Cornish brand image is very important to the Cornish economy" and has urged local residents to back him in his campaign to stop the name being "stolen".

According to the BBC, Cornwall's fast food industry earns Britain more than £150 every year.

Famous regional brands safeguarded by Protected Geographical Status include Melton Mowbray, Newcastle Brown Ale and Stilton cheese - although Cheddar has judged to be too generic.

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New 'golden rice' promotes vitamin A

Date: Tue, 29 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK scientists have produced a genetically modified strain of rice that could help reduce vitamin A deficiency and childhood blindness in developing countries.

The new "golden rice" produces around 20 times as much beta-carotene as normal varieties - a nutrient that the human body converts into vitamin A.

According to the World Health Organization, vitamin A deficiency causes around half a million children to go blind every year.

Swiss laboratories developed the grain originally hailed as "golden rice" five years ago, but it did not produce sufficient beta-carotene for normal portions to meet daily requirements.

The new variety, developed by biotechnology company Syngenta, will be made free to research centres across Asia so that they can begin field trials as soon as their governments give the go-ahead.

For more information visit: www.news.bbc.co.uk

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Britons' £5000-a-year food spend

Date: Tue, 29 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

UK consumers spend a fifth of their income on food, new research has revealed.

The survey by fresh food giant, Geest, found that spending has increased in line with concerns about the quality of food we eat.

Britons part with an average of £65 in supermarkets every week, with a further £32 going on lunches, snacks and meals out - adding up to an average per-person food bill of £5,000 every year.

And more consumers are opting for top-quality food produce. Sales of supermarkets' own premium ranges rose 40 per cent during 2004.

The survey questioned 1,000 people and forms part of ongoing research by Geest into consumer eating habits.

It learned that over 40s are the biggest food buyers, spending £132 a week compared to £89 by those in their 20s.

It also found that UK shoppers prefer to buy fresh fruit and vegetable produce as and when it is needed, as opposed to stocking up at longish intervals.

Geest's head of marketing, Adrian Pickett, said: "With so many scare stories out there, it's great to find that most Brits are simply looking for quality and enjoyment in their food."
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Parents willing to pay for better school dinners

Date: Tue, 29 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A new survey has revealed that the vast majority of parents would be happy to pay more for school dinners if they included better quality food.

While a third of parents polled said that they believe dinners to be "acceptable", three quarters revealed that they would be willing to contribute more money if the school offered more fresh produce.

Parents who had seen Jamie Oliver's Channel Four programme charting his attempts to introduce healthy food into school meals were discovered to be more likely to rate their child's school dinners as poor or very poor.

Carried out by the British Market Research Bureau, the study also revealed worrying trends in the way youngsters eat, with one in seven preferring to spend their dinner money on food from vending machines or shops instead of eating meals prepared by the school.

Saying that such a trend is "not good news", the bureau's Melanie Jugdev added that it is a habit that "has to be stopped".

The results discovered that most parents blame the government or their local education authority (LEA) for the lack of funds to provide high quality meals in school.

That statistic comes as the prime minister set out in the Observer his plans to improve school meals and provide schools with the resources to offer more freshly prepared options.

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Raw food veggies are thin but healthy

Date: Tue, 29 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Raw food vegans may be thin but they have surprisingly strong bones, new research has revealed.

Scientists at Washington University found that the bones of people who only eat uncooked, plant-derived foods are lighter than normal but appear just as healthy.

Raw food vegetarians tend to have a low body mass index and low body fat content - two factors commonly associated with an increased bone-fracture risk and osteoporosis.

But Dr Luigi Fontana, who led the study, said: "We think it's possible these people don't
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have increased risk of fracture but that their low bone mass is related to the fact that they are lighter because they take in fewer calories."

Dr Fontana's team ran tests on the bones of 18 strict raw food vegetarians aged between 33 and 85 with an equal number of more average Americans.

Nutritionists had previously warned that diets without dairy foods may lead to unhealthy bones and the onset of osteoporosis.

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Bread is back: sales recover from low-carb craze

Date: Tue, 29 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The demise of Atkins has given a boost to bread sales and wholemeal options are taking the biggest slice.

According to the Federation of Bakers, Britons bought two billion brown loaves in 2004, pushing sales figures up ten per cent on the year before.

The organisation attributes the figures to a return to healthy carbs by ex-Atkins dieters.

Andrew Brown, director of the federation, said: "Consumers are getting wise to faddy diets and are reverting back to their favourite foods.

"Brown bread has always been popular but this latest surge in sales indicates that they are now making more of their own decisions and are not waiting for someone else to dictate to them, which was clearly apparent with the Atkins diet."

The no-carb plan was endorsed by celebrity followers including Jennifer Aniston, Renee Zellweger and Robbie Williams.

Britain's £3 billion bread industry suffered as a result of the craze, with volume sales in 2003 dropping to 2.7 million tonnes - 200,000 tonnes down on 2000.

The plan has since lost popularity in favour of the unrefined-food GI diet.

For more information visit: www.bakersfederation.org.uk

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New film presents branding opportunities for PET packaging

Date: Tue, 29 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Toray Plastics, the leading manufacturer of polyester and polypropylene films, has launched a new PET label material that promises better streamlined packaging processes and new branding opportunities.

The new, FDA-compliant, co-extruded PET Lumirror PS10 film sticks better to packaging surfaces and does not require corona treatment or chemical priming processes.

It also has excellent peel strength and release speed and can be used for sophisticated
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labels to elevate brand awareness, the company claims. It can be laminated, printed or vacuum metalised.

Toray Plastics' director of new business development told Food Production Daily: "Value-added label film technology helps converters drive business.

"Label converters who must meet stringent silicone bonding requirements, or who seek entry into profitable label markets, can gain significant production and economic advantages with this unique co-extruded technology."

PS10 film comprises a thin layer of an amorphous material co-extruded over a thicker layer of crystalline polyester.

Toray Plastics claims it offers excellent cure stability, resistance to rub off, and thermal stability, as well as superior mechanical properties, including high strength, dimensional stability, and optical clarity.

According to market analyst Canadean, PET packaging enjoys a 40 per cent market share - nearly double that of its nearest rival.

For more information visit: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com>
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Scotland's big spenders: AG Barr

Date: Wed, 30 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Scots soft drinks producer AG Barr, whose portfolio includes Irn Bru and Tizer, has announced it will plough a massive £17 million into its production and warehousing facilities.

The investment plans account for the equivalent of ten per cent of the company's stock market value, marking a bold departure for the traditionally thrifty firm.

AG Barr's chief executive Roger White claims the outlay will save £2.5 million a year and follows "rigorous" planning.

"It will provide the company with a modern, flexible and efficient selling, administration and supply chain operation, capable of sustained growth," he said in a statement.

The drinks firm enjoyed healthy trade last year, with pre-tax profits for the year to January 29th up 13 per cent to £15.6 million.

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Beer on the menu with Hydes' pub grub

Date: Wed, 30 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Manchester pubs are serving up student creations after regional brewery, Hydes, challenged City College catering apprentices to devise a new dish around its brews.

The competition was whittled down to four finalists whose recipes incorporate the
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brewer's flagship brands and now appear on Hydes pub menus across the city.

Hydes' initiative is part of an industry wide move to popularise beer as a cooking ingredient.

The top choice was Johan Lemmer's Brewer's Stew with Mustard Grain Mash, closely followed by Peter Irlam's meat loaf with golden shallots and three beers, Jamie Ward's beer braised Barnsley chop and Don Kinsey's breast of turkey with orange, apricot and beer stuffing.

Hydes catering manager Jimmy Cooke told the Publican: "We take great care in the selection of dishes for our pub menus, and look forward to seeing what our customers think of these new additions."

"The brewery has an ongoing relationship with (City College) and has been delighted with the quality of the competition entrants. It is wonderful to see such talent coming through the college as it is this local talent that will be essential to our business moving forward.

The winning students were awarded personalised chef whites and knives, as well as Hydes pubs dining vouchers.

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Dutch brewer goes for cleaner grain

Date: Wed, 30 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A Dutch brewer has fitted its new production plant with a state-of-the art grain separator that improves safety without compromising speed.

Holland Malt has installed the 200/8, a larger version of the Buhler PRIMUS high-capacity grain cleaner which offers a sieving area approximately ten times bigger than standard separators.

The beer firm was established only recently as a joint venture between Netherlands brewer Bavaria and agricultural cooperative Agrifirm.

Its Buhler cleaner has 30 square metres of sand sieve and will be able to remove both fine and coarse impurities from 200 metric tons of grain per hour, according to Food Production Daily.

Properly cleaned grain reduces wear and tear on processing and storage equipment, and can be stored for longer without damage.

It also diminishes the hazard of grain dust igniting and causing an explosion.

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Government pledges to up school dinner spend

Date: Wed, 30 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Jamie Oliver's campaign to improve the quality of school meals appears to be paying off, DeHavilland Global Knowledge Distribution plc, South Quay Plaza, 183 Marsh Wall, London E14 9SH

as the government has announced that it will spend £220 million on school dinners.

To be paid to schools over the next three years, the investment comes as the celebrity chef delivers a petition to Downing Street calling on the government to put more money into school dinners.

It is understood that the extra funds will be directed to ensure that all primary schools will spend at least 50p per meal, which is the amount Oliver had been asking for, with secondary schools being forced to pay 60p on every meal.

On top of the money allocated to schools, the new School Food Trust will also be given £60 million to help it establish itself and regulate school dinners effectively.

The move appears to be a reaction to a recent study from the British Market Research Bureau, which found that most parents blame the government or their local education authority (LEA) for the lack of funds available for school dinners, despite the fact that schools are in fact allowed to spend as much as they want on meals.

Ministers have also been accused of jumping on the bandwagon, as many campaigners have pointed out that it was not until Oliver's Channel Four programme began to air that the government started taking the matter seriously.

The extra funds are welcome but it's sad that it's taken a celebrity chef to get the government to act when they've had eight years to improve the sorry state of school dinners," argued Liberal Democrat spokesman Phil Willis.

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HP Sauce on the table

Date: Wed, 30 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

HP and Lea & Perrins sauces are on the look out for a new buyer.

The quintessentially British condiments have been put up for sale by their French owner Danone.

The food group has asked investment bank Lazard to seek potential buyers for its HP Foods subsidiary, which makes both sauces, in what is tipped to be a £500 million deal.

Lazard has declined to comment but analysts expect offers from American rivals Kraft and Heinz as well as UK conglomerates, Associated British Foods, Unilever and Premier Foods.

In 1988, Danone acquired HP Foods from industrial corporation, Hanson, for £199 million.

Its flagship sauce was invented in 1900 and dubbed HP after it was spotted on a table at the Houses of Parliament.

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KFC hits back against ad critics

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Date: Wed, 30 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Fast food chain KFC has defended itself against critics who say its Mini Fillet advert is misleading.

Five consumers complained to the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) that the chicken burger used in the TV commercial was larger than in real life.

But the company claims the Mini Fillet used was within the "standard range of dimensions", and that its name clearly indicates its size.

It also suggested that the woman filmed eating the sandwich may have had small hands, making the product appear slightly larger than it was.

Nevertheless, the ASA upheld the complaints against KFC and has pulled the ads.

"Even though the product was called a mini chicken fillet burger, we do not think this was sufficient to alert consumers to the fact the product was smaller than appeared in the advertisement," the ASA said.

The controversial ad shows a group of people eating KFC's Mini Fillets at a railway station.

KFC is owned by US fast-food giant, Yum Brands, which also owns Pizza Hut and Taco Bell.

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Dame Deidre Hutton named as FSA chair

Date: Thu, 31 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has appointed Dame Deidre Hutton as its new chairperson.

Dame Deidre is currently deputy chair at the Financial Services Authority, a member of the Better Regulation Task Force, Chair of the National Consumer Council and deputy chair of the European Food Standards Agency.

Making the announcement, secretary of state for health John Reid said: "I am delighted that Deirdre Hutton is taking on this role. She brings with her considerable experience of corporate governance and risk-based regulation and a very well developed understanding of consumer related issues.

Dame Deirdre said: "I am delighted to be taking on this challenge... the agency is now entering a new phase. Diet, health and public protection are central to our aspirations. That will continue to develop according to the scientific and evidence base. My priority will be to take forward government, consumers and the food industry in partnership so that we can succeed together."

Current chairperson, Sir John Krebs, will leave the FSA April 10th. Dame deidre will assume the role in late July leaving her deputy, Julia Unwin, to act as chair for the

intervening period.

The Food Standards Agency was set up in April 2000, operating at arm's length from ministers to help monitor the food industry.

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Nanotechnology grant promises food industry breakthroughs

Date: Thu, 31 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

A £3.5 million grant has been earmarked for a new UK research centre for nanotechnology, whose findings experts believe may transform the food industry.

The Nottingham Micro Nano Technology (MNT) Centre will be a state-of-the-art development facility for new microscopic technologies.

UK science and innovation minister, Lord Sainsbury, announced today that the grant will help provide open access to the cutting-edge resource for companies across all sectors.

"The facility aims to act as a focal point for regional, national and global developments in nanotechnology commercialisation working at the interface with the private sector," said Dr Richard Masterman, director of research innovation services at the University of Nottingham.

"The expertise and techniques available through the facility will bring significant benefits to the healthcare sector, including pharmaceuticals and food."

Scientists predict that nanotechnology will help further agriculture and food systems security, as well as pathogen detection and even new forms of packaging.

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Oliver approval for new school meal plan

Date: Thu, 31 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

Television chef and school dinners campaigner Jamie Oliver has given his backing to the government's new plans to improve the funding of school meals.

Speaking outside Downing Street following his meeting with the prime minister, Oliver said the investment was "the right sort of money", but lamented the fact that it had come "20 years too late".

However, while he welcomed the government's announcement, the celebrity chef said he was not endorsing any political party ahead of the expected general election, commenting that he wants to "remain the voice of the dinner lady and the parent".

Education secretary Ruth Kelly announced a package of new measures to increase the spending of central government on school dinners, in an effort to help beat childhood obesity.

Although he admitted to being "very excited" about the proposals, Oliver sounded a note of caution over where the money will be spent, commenting that "the devil's in the

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detail".

The chef admitted some concerns over how the government would regulate the private sector - which supplies food and dinner services to the majority of secondary schools - to stop contractors charging more for the same poor quality meals.

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Sweet future for gum with new mannitol method

Date: Thu, 31 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

US scientists have patented a new and more efficient method to produce mannitol - a low-calorie sweetener commonly used in chewing gum.

The pioneering system uses *Lactobacillus intermedius* bacteria to convert fructose and sucrose into the sugar alcohol ingredient.

Traditional methods subject the sugars to a nickel catalyst and high-pressure hydrogenation but only convert about 25 per cent of the fructose/glucose mix.

By comparison, the newly patented method turns some 72 per cent of sugars into mannitol, suggesting lower costs for food manufacturers.

America's mannitol scientists will exploit the new method with US firm zuChem who estimate annual global sales for the ingredient are \$100 million and look set to grow.

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Cash-for-lyrics: McDonald's new advertising approach

Date: Thu, 31 Mar 05 **Type:** DirectNews Item

Analysis

McDonald's is offering rappers cash to write words like "Big Mac" into their songs.

The fast-food giant follows in the footsteps of Seagram's Gin, which broke new advertising ground when it persuaded five US rap stars to include the product name in their lyrics last year.

McDonald's has offered rap stars up to £2.70 for every time a song name-checking one of their key products in played.

The move is an extension of the on-film product placement permitted in cinema and on US television.

But perhaps McDonald's chiefs are hoping for a more subtle name-drop than Seagram's achieved with one of the cash-for-lyrics singers.

Petey Pablo sang in his Freek-a-Leek hit: "Now I got to give a shout out to Seagram's gin/Cause I drink it, and they payin' for it."

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