

30/09/2005 | 13:14:08

Pesticide residue levels staying safe

A new report into the levels of pesticide residue in food has revealed that over two thirds of it is pesticide free.

The 2004 annual report of the independent Pesticide Residues Committee (PRC) also found that only one per cent of foods contained more pesticides than the maximum recommended levels (MRL).

This figure has remained roughly constant since 2000, suggesting that pesticide residues are not increasing in general.

No residues were found in corn on the cob, mini or baby sweetcorn, tinned sweetcorn, beef, cheese, milk, tinned tuna, turkey, coffee, marmalade or orange juice.

And refuting recent health scares that pesticide content is too high in children's food, only one of the 119 infant foods sampled contained residues above the MRL. A subsequent risk assessment revealed no concerns for infant health.

Dr Ian Brown, chairman of the PRC, said: "People should not be concerned by very low pesticide residues in our food.

"Our findings indicate that food suppliers are ensuring a high rate of compliance with legislation relating to use of pesticides and maximum residue levels."

The £2.2 million programme examined 3,800 samples of both imported and home produced food.

Of the products that exceeded pesticide MRL, full risk assessments were carried out on "most vulnerable people" such as the elderly and children, and none were found to present a risk to health.

Further information: <http://www.todayonline.com/articles/75431.asp>

30/09/2005 | 13:02:34

Herb and spice sales hotting up

New research has revealed that food seasoning is growing increasingly popular, with pepper and fresh herb sales experiencing particularly rapid growth.

Market analyst Mintel has announced that in the past five years fresh herb sales have more than doubled, increasing by approximately 124 per cent.

Pepper sales have also been spiced up, with sales for the same period increasing by 55 per cent.

The research has valued the 2005 pepper market at £31 million, driven, experts claim, by premium products such as whole peppercorns.

However, the growing demand for these seasonings appears to be at the expense of a more traditional flavouring: salt.

The salt market has fallen in value by £3 million since 2000, and many are blaming this on food guidelines suggesting consumers lower their intake of salt to stay healthy.

James McCoy, senior consumer analyst at Mintel makes the link between salt, health and the demand for herbs and pepper.

"Many consumers have been advised to cut salt intake and look to other means of flavouring food, maybe choosing pepper and herbs over salt," he said.

Further information: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/thehealthnews.html?in_article_id=363889&in_page_id=1797

30/09/2005 | 11:56:51

"Omega school" launched in Cumbria

Kirby Stephen Primary School in the Eden Valley, Cumbria, is one of the first in the country to take on the title of an "Omega school".

It has just received a visit from Dr Alex Richardson, who carried out a scientific study in Durham on behalf of Oxford University.

Included as part of a BBC documentary, Dr Richardson demonstrated a link between the consumption of oily fish, rich in the omega-3 fatty acid, and the behaviour and concentration of schoolchildren.

Now Dr Richardson has launched a scheme to offer information about healthy eating and give advice about food supplements to pupils, parents, teachers, and the local community.

The school also benefits financially, as whenever a parent buys an omega-3 product it receives 20 per cent of the purchase price.

The doctor was joined at the school by nutritionist, Babi Chana, who helped the children to make fruit smoothies, fortified with extra omega-3.

Dr Richardson told the Cumberland News: "The Omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil can help kids' brains develop helping them in school and at home."

Tuna, salmon, sardines, anchovies and trout are all good sources of omega-3, which is also known to protect against heart disease, cardiovascular problems and high blood pressure.

Further information: <http://www.cumbria-online.co.uk/viewarticle.asp?id=287308>

30/09/2005 | 11:50:51

Dairy UK concerned about FSA profiling

Dairy UK has expressed concern over the Food Standard Agency (FSA's) nutrition profiling system, developed in July this year.

Using zero as a neutral point, the system uses positive numbers to indicate the degree to which an item is unhealthy, and negative points to denote positive health benefits.

Points are awarded to foods based on a consideration of the quantities of various nutrients found in 100g, including energy, saturated fat, total sugar and sodium.

Fibre, protein and fruit and vegetable content are also taken into account.

However, at the end of a period of consultation on the measure, Dairy UK points out that whole, semi-skimmed and flavoured milk products have been given the same "0" ranking as diet fizzy drinks.

Technical director, Ed Komorowski, commented: "We question the omission of micronutrients such as protein quality, minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, potassium and magnesium, as well as vitamins A and B," according to [Nutraingredients.com](http://www.nutraingredients.com).

The organisation also questioned the decision to base the points on a 100g portion, rather than a standard serving to reflect pack sizes in supermarkets.

The FSA's profiling suggests that foods scoring four points or higher should be considered "high" in saturated fat, sugar or salt, with the boundary lowered to one point for drinks.

Further information: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/ng.asp?n=62912-dairy-uk-nutrition-health-benefits>

30/09/2005 | 10:18:13

EU "GM avoidance" policy unsustainable, says report

European food production costs will rise significantly over the next three years as a direct result of the EU's resistance to genetically modified (GM) ingredients, a new report claims.

This "avoidance" policy will hit the soybean industry and its derivatives particularly hard, says the Agricultural Biotechnology in Europe (ABE) study.

It states that the use of non-GM soymeal and oil for animal feed is more expensive than GM alternatives by approximately 10 and 13 per cent respectively, according to Dairyreporter.com.

In both cases, this difference could increase to 25 per cent over the next three years, and could lead to significant consumer price hikes in meat, milk and dairy products, such as margarine.

Earlier this month the European Council of Ministers failed to reach an agreement concerning the European Commission's proposal to permit the use of GM maize 1507 in feed.

This situation means the Commission can itself make the decision to implement the policy.

"To date, consumers have rarely been given the option of a choice between GM and non-GM alternatives of the same product or faced price differentials between the two," the ABE report says.

Further information: <http://www.dairyreporter.com/news/ng.asp?n=62875-eu-gm-raw-materials-costs>

30/09/2005 | 10:14:43

Pepsi performance shows health and energy

PepsiCo has announced that a good performance in the third quarter was driven by US consumer demand for non-carbonated soft drinks.

In the US, as in the UK, energy drinks and healthier alternatives to carbonates are proving an area of growth, as consumers show greater concern for their general health and wellbeing.

In particular, the dominant North American market saw beverage sales increase by eight per cent, spurred by 24 per cent growth in products such as the Gatorade energy drink, Propel bottled water, Aquafina water and the Tropicana fruit juice range.

Gatorade claims to be able to replenish key minerals in the body faster than water during exercise.

However, the firm's flagship Pepsi product experienced low single digit declines, slightly offset by growth in diet varieties of fizzy brands.

Partly attributed to a particularly hot US summer this year, analysts were nevertheless impressed with the growth in the sector.

"You just have to be impressed", said Christopher Meeker, analyst with Farr Miller & Washington, according to Bloomberg.

"Relative to Coca-Cola, Pepsi has a much better beverage portfolio."

Further information: <http://quote.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=10000006&sid=ahpnjRmpK5L4&refer=home>

29/09/2005 | 15:24:56

Annual pub guide published

Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria are among the regions serving the cheapest pints of real ale in the UK, according to the "Good Pub Guide 2006", published today.

While the average price nationwide has risen by four per cent to £2.24, Lancashire represents best value for money at an average £2.

Cheshire and Nottinghamshire are charging £2.03, and Cumbria is only slightly more expensive at £2.08.

At the other end of the spectrum, pubs in the southern county of Surrey charge customers an average £2.51 a pint.

This year's guide also lists three times as many non-smoking pubs as last year, and warns customers that wine measures are growing larger.

Glasses containing a standard 125ml are being replaced with 175ml vessels in an increasing number of pubs, meaning drinkers may be consuming more than they realise.

The guide's editor, Alistair Aird, commented: "People are unwittingly putting themselves over the limit and also having to spend more for wine which they perhaps don't want."

The 2006 guide lists some 5,000 pubs, and 1,100 were visited to ascertain the cheapest pints.

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/uk.cfm?id=2009882005>

29/09/2005 | 15:17:30

Slider clip developed for overwrap packaging

Zip-Pak, provider of resealable packaging solutions, has launched a new slider for overwrap packages, allowing products containing a number of servings to stay fresher for longer.

The Zip-Pak slider is designed to be applied by horizontal form, film and seal machines, such as the RT 2000 packaging system from Hayssen Packaging Technologies.

This is a high-speed system that uses hermetic sealing to ensure oxygen does not enter a package prior to the initial opening.

Available in single or dual lane format, there is also the option of incorporating the company's Veltron high-speed infeed system, and the addition of the new Zip-Pak slider means that packages of sliced or blocked foods, such as processed cheese or bacon, can be opened and resealed with ease.

Zip-Pak states that it is the first company to offer such a device for overwrap packaging.

It says it "offers all the benefits of slider technology to a new package format, allowing brand owners to differentiate their overwrap packages".

Hayssen's RT 2000 was recently demonstrated at the Pack Expo exhibition in Las Vegas, US.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62877-zip-pak-hayssen-overwrap>

29/09/2005 | 11:52:20

Flowmeters for fluids launched

Endress+Hauser has launched two new high speed flowmeters, particularly well suited to polyethylene terephthalate (PET) filling and bottling applications.

This is because the Dosimass Coriolis and Dosimag electromagnetic flowmeters are "lightweight and compact", the company said in a statement.

Consisting of a sensor and a transmitter, they also meet the industry's demand for high accuracy, preventing product waste and ensuring the operation runs at an optimum efficiency level.

Dosimass is able to measure both mass flow and volume flow, for a range of industries, with maximum repeatability, says FoodProductionDaily.

Dosimag, on the other hand, is only suitable for applications involving liquids, including water-based beverages.

Both include self-monitoring and diagnostic functions, and can either be cleaned using clean-in-place (CIP) or sterilisation in place (SIP) processes.

"Even the smallest quantities of certain products are expensive and so precision flow metering is the key to future savings," the Australian firm said.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62850-endress-hauser-flowmeter-filling>

29/09/2005 | 10:13:56

Blossom Hill range set to sparkle

The Blossom Hill wine range has announced it plans to add two sparkling wines to its UK collection.

The Sparkling Rose and Sparkling White are expected to hit the shelves in October, and will bring the total number of products in the range to 18.

The launches will also be supported by a marketing campaign that will target women's interest specifically, as well as national, regional and online media.

Senior brand manager, Helen Wright, told just-drinks.com: "The new range allows Blossom Hill to build on its reputation for quality while remaining accessible for consumers.

"With the addition of the new Sparkling range, Blossom Hill is broadening its offering but its affordable price of £6.99 will encourage consumers to enjoy the wines with life's little celebrations."

Launched in the UK more than 10 years ago, Blossom Hill claims its Red is the country's best selling wine, with its White following in second place.

The Blossom Hill winery is located south of San Francisco, in Paicines, California.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28654

29/09/2005 | 09:50:24

School's vending policy posed a problem

A school that implemented its own ban on "junk" food sold to students in vending machines has admitted the scheme did not meet expectations.

Queensbury School in Dunstable, Bedfordshire, announced that they were going to stock healthier alternatives to the usual crisps and chocolate bars, including cereal bars, rice cakes, fair trade chocolate, and organic crisps and juices.

After 18 months, however, the organic vending machines have now been removed "because students were not using them", head teacher, Nigel Hill, told the Daily Telegraph.

This was "despite the extensive programme of health education and nutrition that we introduced at the same time", he added.

There were 14 vending machines throughout the school, and staff thought that "fizzy" drinks, in particular, were having a negative effect on pupil behaviour and concentration.

The school has now arrived at a middle ground, with four machines stocking the usual chocolate and crisps, but with fizzy drinks replaced by water and juice drinks.

The school has sustained a financial loss from the switch, but argues the improvement in behaviour made it a worthwhile investment.

Education secretary, Ruth Kelly, yesterday told the annual Labour Party conference that school vending machines would be outlawed as of the next school year.

Further information: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/09/29/nfood229.xml&sSheet=/news/2005/09/29/ixhome.html>

29/09/2005 | 09:13:49

Scientists make botulism breakthrough

Scientists have come a step closer to predicting the activation of potentially fatal foodborne botulism.

The Institute of Food Research (IFR) has discovered that the "lag time" between the germination of a spore of *Clostridium botulinum* and the start of actual toxin production, is variable.

Product microbial risk assessments for food companies will now be able to take this into account.

It had previously been thought that the first spore to germinate would also be the first to show signs of cell activity.

The IFR's research involved a close examination of each successive stage of lag time using microscopy and image analysis.

Lead author of the study, Dr Sandra Stringer, explained that the team "developed a novel imaging system and made microscopic observations of 1,739 spores".

Images of activity were recorded at five minute intervals for 15 hours in an attempt to understand the relationship between the various phases.

"We found that each stage from germination to growth is variable between individual spores and none of the stages are related," Dr Stinger said.

"Germination is therefore not a good predictor to use in risk assessment work as it underestimates the time to growth and toxin production," she concluded.

IFR scientist, Gary Barker, commented: "This fundamental science can be incorporated into real risk assessments for real products."

Further information: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=31230>

28/09/2005 | 16:20:37

Allergen-free apple identified

Swedish scientists have announced they are in the process of developing an apple containing reduced amounts of a protein that can cause allergic reactions when consumed.

Mal d 1 protein is a common cause of allergy in Europeans, causing the tongue, mouth and lips to swell up when ingested, reports FoodProductionDaily.com.

It is mainly found in plant-based foods such as strawberries, apples, carrots and nuts.

However, researchers at SLU in Balsgard, Sweden, say that further tests need to be carried out, and the apple will not be ready to hit the shelves for at least another five years.

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations estimates that four per cent of adults in the EU suffer from this type of allergy, along with eight per cent of children, driving research and development teams to provide sufferers with food alternatives.

Food producers are also increasingly facing calls for clearer labelling of food ingredients that could potentially cause allergy, suggesting that Mal d 1-free products would be well received in the industry.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62804-apple-allergy-protein>

28/09/2005 | 16:07:51

Kelly cracks down on school food

Education secretary Ruth Kelly has announced a complete ban on the sale of junk food and drink in schools.

In her keynote speech at the Labour party conference in Brighton, the minister said that food with high fat, salt or sugar contents will be banned from school meals and vending machines across Britain from next September.

The decision to impose a ban follows an investigation by a school meals review panel, which was also asked to create a set of nutritional standards for schools.

The panel will announce these standards next week, and is also rumoured to be calling for a limit to the number of days a week a school serves chips and other such options.

"I am absolutely clear," Ms Kelly said. "The scandal of junk food served every day by school canteens must end.

"Today I can announce that we will ban cheap bangers and burgers served in schools from next September."

She added: "No school will be allowed to have vending machines selling crisps, chocolate or fizzy drinks from next September."

A three-month consultation on the review panel's standards of nutrition in schools will now be conducted.

Shadow education secretary, David Cameron, welcomed the announcement, but described it as a "U-turn", also calling for adequate funds for extra staff and kitchen facilities in schools.

Further information: http://www.manchestersonline.co.uk/men/news/education/s/175/175857_all_schools_to_ban_junk_food.html

28/09/2005 | 10:47:50

EU BSE report found "favourable"

The European Commission has called an EU report on success at BSE prevention in the UK "favourable".

The verdict means that a nine-year ban on exports of British beef could soon be lifted, as the two criteria given for such a move have now been met.

Indeed, the report was referred to as "the beginning of the end" by a commission spokesman, according to the BBC.

A panel of veterinary experts carried out a routine inspection visit in June this year, and were able to confirm that sufficient progress had been made.

However, the report did express some reservations about the testing of animals that die on farms.

One of the Commission's criteria was a "favourable" EU report, and the second was the reduction of BSE cases to 200 per million cattle.

The latter requirement was met earlier this year, and the proposal to end the ban will now go before the EU member states.

British exports of beef have been restricted to cuts from animals between six and nine months old, following a possible link established between Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and human Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) in 1996.

The Commission's report follows the British government's own announcement ending the restriction of UK beef to cattle aged under 30 months, known as the 'over thirty months rule' (OTMR).

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=2005352005>

28/09/2005 | 10:08:13

Label detects product tampering

Stanelco has announced the availability of its anti-counterfeit label, PulsLine, after 10 years of continuous research and development.

With numerous possible applications, the label will allow those in the food retail industry to be certain of the authenticity of their products.

Currently on the market in the US and UK, it is able to test for evidence of tampering using a multi-layer laminate device.

Prior to PulsLine, criminals were able to cut under the security seal of a product and tamper with it undetected, but this launch means such a product could be scanned for the incision.

The product offers a security thread familiar from bank notes, which can be marked with a company's name or logo, revealed by detaching a special tab.

The label can also incorporate irreproducible biocodes, DNA, radio frequency identification and holograms, and it caters for the visually impaired by having a specially designed texture.

Product development director, David Edwards, said: "It took several years of research and testing, but now we are ready to launch PulsLine.

"The development of the PulsLine took years because the adhesive had to be strong."

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62823-stanelco-counterfeiting-tampering>

28/09/2005 | 09:31:41

Blavod to develop authentic Mexican tequilas

Blavod Extreme Spirits has announced it will develop and market a new range of tequilas for the international market.

Under the joint venture Diamante Spirits, 'El Diamante del Cielo' (Diamond in the sky) will initially be available in the US next year, but the firm hopes it will become "a highly competitive international brand within a short time frame", according to CEO Jeff Hopmayer.

The company is to develop three varieties of the tequila: Blanco, Reposado and Anejo, all of which will be manufactured with 100 per cent pure Blue Waeber Agave from Mexico's Jalisco region.

The agave is harvested by hand in the traditional manner, and will be bottled in Mexico.

The tequila will expand Blavod's presence in the international boutique drinks market, where its current portfolio includes its flagship Black Vodka and the Players Extreme range of vodkas and rums.

The spirits will be trialled in three undisclosed US markets this October.

Further information: http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20050926005587&newsLang=en

28/09/2005 | 09:25:02

Kiwi allergen is detectable

UK food analysis firm, Reading Scientific Services (RSSL), has announced that it is able to detect the allergen in kiwi fruit to a level of 10 mg/kg (10ppm) using polymerase chain reaction (PCR).

The fruit is one of the most potentially dangerous not yet included on the list to be labelled under the European Directive that is scheduled to come into effect in November this year.

Although more often found in adults than children, the intolerance can manifest itself on first encountering the fruit, which could be early in childhood.

At low levels, allergic responses include symptoms such as oral allergy syndrome (OAS), urticaria (or nettle-rash), dysphagia, nausea and vomiting.

However, in extreme cases it can also lead to the potentially fatal condition, anaphylaxis.

RSSL Food Services is conducting a seminar on Directive 2003/89/EC, including its implications for the industry, on October 5th.

"There is still some confusion about what's going to be required," said allergen consultant, Simon Flanagan.

Further information: <http://www.laboratorytalk.com/news/rea/rea143.html>

27/09/2005 | 16:42:52

Olibra set to reduce European appetites

Common plant extracts that have been developed as a food ingredient to satiate appetite will soon be offered to European consumers.

Olibra is likely to be used in slimming and supplement products, as demand for low fat, diet foods increases, writes NutraIngredients.com.

The ingredient is derived from natural foods such as oats and palm oil, and clinical trials showed that when eaten, consumers had a reduced appetite at mealtimes.

One study showed that when milk fat was replaced with Olibra, consumers demonstrated an intake of between 20 and 30 per cent fewer calories at meals.

However, the ingredient still needs to undergo further tests before it can be released onto the market.

It is expected to launch in France in November, and other European countries thereafter.

Lipid Technologies Provider (LTP), who manufacture the product, are convinced that the food market for Olibra will outstrip the supplements market.

"The number of companies working with the ingredient for food products is increasing," he told the website.

"We expect things to really increase volume-wise next spring."

Further information: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/ng.asp?n=62775-ltp-physcience-olibra>

27/09/2005 | 14:55:20

MBD launches limited spirits

Scottish whisky producer Morrison Bowmore Distillers (MBD) is launching the largest number of whiskies it has released simultaneously to date.

The four limited edition vintages include Bowmore 1971 34 years old, an Islay single malt that will cost approximately £375 for one of only 960 bottles.

There is also Auchentoshan 1973 32 years old lowland single malt, which is a 480 bottle run, priced at £350, and Bowmore 1989 16 years old, costing £49.99.

Finally, there is Auchentoshan 17 years old, which will sell for £59.99 a bottle, according to website just-drinks.com.

This latter is a Bordeaux wine finished lowland single malt, aged for nine Bordeaux wine casks.

Glen Moore, single malts brands director, commented: "These are some of our most innovative whiskies to date.

"We're highly confident that consumers are going to be eager to get their hands on these very special spirits."

All four whiskies are expected to have hit the shelves in certain specialist outlets by October.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28630

27/09/2005 | 12:07:16

Weight Watchers meals hit the market

Weight Watchers has launched the initial four products in a new range of chilled ready-to-cook meals.

Developed and supplied by Anthony Alan Foods, each involves a cut of meat with vegetables or an accompanying sauce that can be heated either in the oven or a saucepan.

The dishes are chicken with tomato and mixed peppers, pork medallions with a Dijon mustard sauce, chicken and chick pea dahl curry, and chicken with cheese and bacon.

In keeping with the aim of appealing to calorie-counting consumers, nutritional information will be clearly displayed, as will the number of Weight Watchers points per meal.

Sarah Morgan, marketing director at Anthony Alan Foods, explained: "Our research indicates there is huge potential for premium quality, healthy eating products that are quick and simple to cook," according to just-food.com.

This research also showed that the chilled raw added value (RAV) market had grown 14 per cent, to £442 million, last year, and was expected to grow by 15 per cent this year, she added.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61986

27/09/2005 | 10:17:08

Pomegranates help prostate cancer

Pomegranate juice could help fight prostate cancer, new research from the US has reported.

It is the latest health-boosting property to be associated with the increasingly popular Middle Eastern fruit, which was also recently found to have protective effects against heart disease in mice trials.

Scientists from Madison's University of Wisconsin Medical School first applied an extract of pomegranate to laboratory-grown cancer cells.

They found that the more pomegranate was added, the higher the probability the cancerous cells would die.

In a second phase, 24 mice were injected with human prostate cancer cells, which caused them to develop tumours.

The mice were then divided into three random groups, given plain water, and water solutions containing one per cent and two per cent pomegranate extract.

The progress of the mice was closely monitored, and those feeding on the two per cent extract exhibited a significantly slower rate of cancer progression, along with lower prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels.

Lead author Dr Hasan Mukhtar commented: "Our study adds to the growing evidence that pomegranates contain very powerful agents against cancer, particularly prostate cancer.

"There is good reason to test this fruit in humans – both for cancer prevention and for treatment."

Previous research has shown that pomegranates are rich in anti-oxidant activity, containing higher levels than both red wine and green tea.

The findings were published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Early Edition.

Further information: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/514799/>

27/09/2005 | 09:22:29

Mobile service offers recipe downloads

The UKTV Food channel has launched a new service allowing viewers to download recipes and cookery information straight to their mobile phones.

With an increasing number of people taking to home cooking alongside a growing general health-consciousness, the technology allows shoppers the convenience of referring to their mobile while shopping to pick up the ingredients for chef-endorsed dishes.

Developed by mobile content specialist Activefone, the UKTV Food mobile portal will include over 6,000 recipes, and a further 10 will be added each day as featured on the 'Great Food Live' programme.

At the end of each programme, a message invites viewers to text the name of an ingredient to receive a recipe that makes use of it.

Recipes can be browsed on the mobile site, and each can be bought and downloaded at a cost of 50p.

There are also short video demonstrations available for £1.50.

The billing platform, provided by Activefone and Bango, offers a clear payment page, as well as the option of cancelling a transaction prior to payment.

Bango marketing manager, Sarah Keefe, commented: "It's so handy to be able to download to your mobile a recipe featured on the TV and then have the required ingredients accessible when you're in the supermarket," according to Telephonyworld.com

Further information: <http://www.telephonyworld.com/cgi-bin/news/viewnews.cgi?category=all&id=1127771759>

27/09/2005 | 09:16:58

Dough divider delivers cost savings

The UK's APV Baker has launched a new dough divider designed to improve the quality of the final product by carefully controlling the operational speed.

The Accurist2 replaces a mechanically driven ram with a servo motor, which results in a better crumb structure and appearance, the company says.

Keith Graham, spokesperson for APV, said: "The primary advantage of controlling the speed of the dough divider according to the dough type or size is that the pressure on the dough is reduced," according to FoodProductionDaily.

"The more gentle dough handling minimises the amount of damage done to the dough cell structure and ultimately results in improved product quality."

Replacing the firm's current dough divider, which has been manufactured for 25 years, additional advantages include high scaling accuracy, a sharp reduction in dough leakage, and a new human machine interface (HMI).

These all result in lower loaf production costs, the machine's oil consumption having been cut from 1.5 to 1 litres per hour.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62759-apv-dough-divider-hmi>

26/09/2005 | 16:12:37

Adaptable crate keeps contents cool

A new polystyrene crate has been developed that keeps foods cold when in transit.

The manufacturer, Great Northern, claims that the crate is a cost-effective method of shipping, saving time and money, as well as helping food producers to meet growing demand for chilled produce.

"Shipping temperature-sensitive products has never been easier", sales manager, Dan Stubing, told FoodProductionDaily.

"The ability to ship a full pallet of product without the need to individually wrap each box will save time and reduce the amount of overall handling that's required."

Cool Crate can be adapted in shape to suit the packaging needs of most food companies, and can be used to ship beverages, cheeses, meats and vegetables.

Interlocking panels can be arranged to specifically fit around the food being transported, and the crate is sold in parts, so the manufacturer can identify the size of the container needed and build it accordingly.

"Not every product is the same shape as the inside of a corrugated carton", said the company.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62735-polystyrene-chilled-meat>

26/09/2005 | 16:04:20

Seaweed to replace fat in junk food

Scientists from the UK have hit upon another possible means of tackling the country's rising level of obesity, by replacing fat in junk foods with a fibrous seaweed extract called alginate.

The tasteless extract from the brown seaweed *Lessonia* and *Laminaria* is also able to slow the digestive process and the uptake of nutrients into the body.

It is already employed as a gelling agent, and to thicken the heads on premium lagers.

Professor Jeff Pearson, of Newcastle University's Institute for Cell and Molecular Biosciences, explained: "With a burger, for example, you would simply remove some of the fat and replace it with the seaweed extract, which is an entirely natural product from a sustainable resource.

"You'd have a healthier burger and it's unlikely to taste any different."

However, he added that the extract could also be used in other foods, including creams, yoghurts and pies.

The university's research team has also added the extract to loaves of bread, explaining the seaweed can significantly increase the fibre content of white bread.

As well as obesity, it could also help in the fight against diabetes and heart disease.

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/health.cfm?id=1996422005>

26/09/2005 | 14:51:33

Halewood woos drinkers with Eldorado

The UK's Halewood International has added two new brands to its portfolio of fortified wine.

Aimed at the over-45 age bracket, the introduction of Emva and Eldorado will seek to win back former drinkers of fortified wines and sherries, says just-drinks.com.

Distributed at the Tesco, Sainsburys and Morrisons chains, Emva will also have its current packaging revamped as part of the relaunch.

It comes from a sixth generation winery in Cyprus, manufactured from varieties of grape that include the Black Mavro and the White Xiniseri.

Having been fermented down to dryness and fortified with grape alcohol, the wine is then allowed to mature in oakwood barrels for three years.

The second wine, Eldorado, already enjoys a following in Scotland, but this is the first time it will be made available throughout the UK.

Richard Clark, Halewood's head of marketing, said: "Emva and Eldorado are both strong brands in their own right, they complement our strong portfolio of fortified wines and will enable us to provide a stronger range proposition to our customers."

With ABVs of 15 per cent and 17.5 per cent, they are both available in 70cl in the off-trade for £4.49.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28612

26/09/2005 | 14:17:49

Pigs to be exported to China

A new deal has been struck between Britain and China that will see UK pig breeders able to return to the Chinese market.

China has opted to grant certification to British pigs following a visit to the country by UK prime minister Tony Blair.

British pigs were banned from the Chinese market for five years following the outbreaks of swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease in 2000 and 2001.

The British Pig Executive (BPEX) now estimates that breeders from the UK could see as much as £1 million worth of business with China in the first year of trading, a significant boost to the annual £15 million UK live pigs export market.

The Chinese government recognised that the UK was free from classical swine fever in July 2005 after receiving extensive paperwork from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Britain has now been granted a health certificate for exports of live pigs to China.

Lord Bach, UK minister for sustainable farming and food, said: "I am delighted that working in partnership with the UK industry we have managed to open this important and potentially valuable export market with China."

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61976

26/09/2005 | 10:25:29

Plastics launched for temperature extremes

US-based Nova Chemicals has unveiled three new plastics for the food packaging industry, all aimed at reducing the incidence of leakage in the ready-to-eat convenience food market.

The Dylark FG 2500 styrenic copolymer is designed to keep microwavable containers and trays rigid in the freezer and when heated to high temperatures.

This makes it particularly suitable for pre-cooked food from supermarkets that needs to be reheated at home, or for takeaway food, minimising spillage.

It can be used for basic or intricate parts, turned into tinted, clear or foam containers.

Zylar EX 720 also targets the frozen foods market by offering low temperate toughness. It can be used for products such as frozen desserts, salad bowls and cold drink packaging.

Also introduced in an event held at New York's Culinary Loft was a new version of Nova's existing polyethylene plastic, Surpass.

Surpass IFs932-R will be used for the seals of lids, allowing products such as butter, ice cream and coffee, to stay fresher for longer.

"Food containers made with Dylark FG 2500 provide enhanced toughness in the freezer and superior stiffness at high temperatures - reducing the danger of leakage or spillage when hot food is removed from the microwave or brought home in the car," the company stated.

Tony Torres, vice president of Styrenics Business Development, said: "By leveraging our technology platforms and working closely with customers and end-users, we are delivering value throughout the chain."

Further information: <http://www.packagingessentials.com/news.asp?id=2005-09-21-18.14.47.000000>

26/09/2005 | 09:35:33

Aloe vera shows potential as preservative

Aloe vera could be used as a preservative for fruit and vegetables, new Spanish research has suggested.

Daniel Valero, and colleagues from the University of Miguel Hernandez in Alicante, coated a bunch of grapes in Aloe vera gel, storing them for five weeks at a low temperature.

A similar group of uncoated table grapes were subjected to the same experiment, and the differences were noted.

While the non-coated grapes proceeded to decay within around seven days, the gel-treated grapes remained in relatively good condition for 35 days.

They were also firmer, and had changed less in terms of colour and weight, which suggests greater freshness.

Moreover, the gel did not appear to adversely affect taste, with a panel of 10 concluding that the gel-coated sample was generally better in terms of taste.

The gel was developed by the scientists using a technique that increased its number of active compounds, primarily polysaccharides.

As well as acting as a barrier to oxygen, it is thought to contain compounds that hinder microorganisms responsible for both foodborne illness and decay.

Additional potential advantages are that it provides a healthier, more environmentally-friendly, alternative to other food preservatives in use.

The study will be published in the October issue of the American Chemical Society Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry.

Further information: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=30968>

26/09/2005 | 09:32:11

School vending machines to stop selling sweets

A law has been introduced banning the sale of "junk" food from state schools' vending machines, reports have stated.

The move comes as food served to children in the UK's schools has come under fresh scrutiny, with the establishment of the school meals review panel.

A member of the panel told the Sunday Times: "Unless you stop selling the highly branded sugary snacks and drinks they will always be chosen by children," according to United Press International.

The measure, which follows a televised report that called the quality of children's food into question, will also see teachers keep regular track of students' intake of carbohydrates, fats, and other nutrients.

A similar ban is currently in force in France.

School meals hit the headlines when celebrity chef, Jamie Oliver, delivered a signed petition to 10 Downing Street in person.

The government has since pledged a number of measures to help remedy the situation, including raising the amount of money spent preparing each individual dinner in primary and secondary schools.

Further information: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/upi/?feed=TopNews&article=UPI-1-20050925-16520300-bc-britain-vending.xml>

23/09/2005 | 15:09:52

Sunny D cuts sugar from new flavour

The UK's largest chilled fruit-based drinks firm, Sunny D, has launched a new, "Caribbean" flavour drink, with no added sugar.

Responding to consumer demand for healthier products that are lower in sugars and fats, the product's launch has been timed to coincide with a £6.3 million advertising campaign, reports the Grocer.

The company says that the product has been a success in taste trials, and they are optimistic of a good consumer reception following the launch.

"We are continuing to create profit opportunities for retailers", said Martin Jones, trade marketing manager with Gerber Foods.

"We are committed to developing and improving the Sunny D range and are delighted with the positive results Caribbean has received in pre-launch consumer research."

The new stocks are now available in bottles of 1.5l, 500ml and 8x200ml.

Sunny D claims that one glass of its juice will give children their recommended daily allowance (RDA) of vitamin C, as well as containing vitamins A, B1 and B6.

No further information.

23/09/2005 | 14:46:44

Supersonic technology brings benefits to brewers

The early results of a new shockwave technology adapted for the brewing business support the manufacturer's claims that it saves both time and money.

PDX Sonic Technology, developed by Pursuit Dynamics, is a process that combines heating, mixing and pumping operations, and switches to continuous processing.

Steam is injected into the process flow at greater than the speed of sound, leading to a supersonic shockwave that also causes condensation to form.

Processors are therefore able to control the mixing process in a unique supersonic zone.

The system is also notably compact, with diameters ranging from 25mm to 63mm.

UK brewer, Greene King, has reported a significant reduction in the energy required for heating, and Pursuit Dynamics says it can accelerate the brewing process by up to 15 times.

Professor Richard Sharpe, technical director of Brewing Research International (BRI), who has been adapting the technology for the brewing industry for the last year, told Beveragedaily.com that brewers "think there may be savings for £1.5 million in energy bills alone".

The PDX won the 2005 "Technological Development of the Year" award at this year's Food Processing Awards.

Further information: <http://www.beveragedaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62751-pursuit-dynamics-pdx-margins>

23/09/2005 | 11:08:00

Meat firm loses business from school meal overhaul

Hull-based Canterbury Foods has reported a £2.7 million drop in the sale of meat products such as sausages and burgers for the first six months of the year, blaming the attention being focused on "healthy" school meals.

However, chief executive, Paul Ainsworth, admitted: "It's a trend in the marketplace that won't change", adding "we have got to come to terms with it and find other products".

Meat products account for approximately 57 per cent of Canterbury's total revenues, with the remainder generated by a food ingredients and pastry division.

However, this is also showing signs of being impacted by publicity such as Jamie Oliver's "Jamie's School Dinners" TV series and the subsequent campaign that succeeded in affecting government policy.

Canterbury Foods indirectly supplies schools through wholesalers, as well as pub brands and in-store restaurants.

"Schools are looking to change the way they are doing things and that obviously does have a knock-on effect on food manufacturers such as ourselves," Mr Ainsworth said.

The firm has sites in Bridgend in South Wales, Hull, Kent, Stoke-on-Trent and Bristol, employing 600 people.

Further information: http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0300business/0100news/tm_objectid=16162302&method=full&siteid=50082&headline=firm-blames-jamie-as-profits-plummet-name_page.html

23/09/2005 | 10:39:28

New lubricants launched

ExxonMobil has launched a series of multi-purpose greases for lubricating food processing equipment.

Replacing the FM 100 series, which will be discontinued, the FM 220 series offers "pumpability, water and fluid resistance, mechanical shear stability and rust inhibition to ensure the performance of valuable equipment", the company said.

Made with advanced, aluminium complex thickener technology, they will protect against the range of load, speed, temperature and environment conditions that characterise food and beverage equipment.

FM 221 and FM 222 are both available in US National Lubricant Grease Institute (NLGI) grades one and two, hold NSF H1 registration, and have been approved as Kosher and Halal.

Michael Dionisio, grease advisor for Americas, ExxonMobil Lubricants & Specialities, said: "Across the food processing industry and related market sectors, such as beverage and pharmaceuticals, there is a great need for food grade lubricants that meet and exceed the latest industry standards and deliver exceptional protection for today's advanced food processing equipment."

Further information: <http://news.thomasnet.com/fullstory/467314>

23/09/2005 | 10:16:13

Kettle Foods launch "light" range

US-based Kettle Foods has announced the launch of a new range of "better for you" products, containing 65 per cent less fat than their well-known potato chips.

The announcement comes as consumers' eating habits are shifting towards options that are perceived as healthier, with the much publicised "obesity crisis" in the back of their minds.

With manufacturing sites in Salem, Oregon, and Norwich in the UK, Kettle "Bakes" will initially come in three flavours: lightly salted, aged white cheddar and hickory honey barbeque.

Carolyn Richards, chief flavour architect, explained: "We've crafted a reduced-fat potato chip that delivers on Kettle Foods' reputation for great flavour, and that's a pretty significant development in this category."

The company also states that the new chip range will be made with fresh potato slices rather than compressed potato flakes.

The "better for you" bakes will be followed by organic baked pretzels, expected to be ready by early next year.

Further information: <http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/news/ng.asp?n=62728-kettle-foods-potato-chips-bakes>

23/09/2005 | 10:12:03

Big name brands cutting down on salt

Key names in the food industry, including Heinz, Kellogg's and Nestle, have said their brands will contain significantly less sugar, fat and salt, in line with consumers' expectations.

They say 15 per cent of their products will contain less fat, 10 per cent less sugar, and an impressive 36 per cent less salt, by 2006.

Furthermore, 23 per cent of their current products are officially "low salt", the same proportion lower fat, and 32 per cent lower sugar.

The report from the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) shows that Heinz cut its salt use by 19 per cent this year, with its baked beans now containing 14 per cent less than they did a year ago.

In general, the survey predicted that 97 per cent of products would display full nutritional information, and 58 per cent recommended daily allowance (RDA) guidelines, by 2006.

FDF president, Gavin Neath, said: "We should not under-estimate the effort and resource which has gone into these changes."

However, he also warned that salt levels could not be cut much further without impacting on business.

"It is a waste of time for us to bring salt levels down to zero and then for consumers to give up a brand and move to a salted imported product," he said.

Further information: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/thehealthnews.html?in_article_id=363177&in_page_id=1797

22/09/2005 | 14:47:25

Shops lose out if not online

Food retailers are missing out on large segments of the consumer food market by failing to trade online, a new report claims.

The research from Barclaycard indicates that 70 per cent of consumers now expect to be able to make payments online.

The survey polled consumers to find out how they would respond if a retailer did not accept online payments.

Over two thirds (68 per cent) said they would opt to spend their money on a food site that did do business online, and four per cent would not make the purchase at all.

However, only a quarter of UK consumers said that they would make the necessary trip to the high street store instead.

Half of the UK's population has access to the internet today, and the report highlights that online credit card payments have risen to five times their 1999 level.

"It is clear that food and drink retailers not allowing customers to purchase products from the comfort of their own home are losing out to their competitors," said Brendan Rogers, head of acquiring at Barclaycard Business.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61937

22/09/2005 | 14:27:25

Functional juices to forge ahead

A representative of the Juice Beverage Applications division of Cargill is to tell this year's Anuga event that "fruit and vegetable juices are excellent carriers for functional food ingredients that, until now, were primarily used in the dairy industry", according to Beveragedaily.com.

However, Dr Fred Brouns will also inform those assembled that the juice industry will have to meet certain requirements pertaining to consumer confidence in functional foods, which it may be unused to.

In particular, producers must ensure that any claims made are met, that the drinks are safe, and that they meet any stipulated regulations.

On the consumer side, they must also meet criteria of taste, convenience and suitability to drink "on-the-go", amongst others.

The Anuga trade fair will run from October 8th to 12th in the German city of Cologne.

Based on the 2003 event, it anticipates more than 6,000 suppliers and 161,000 visitors attending, drawn from 157 countries around the world.

Special topics to be covered this year include organic products and health and functional food.

Further information: <http://www.beveragedaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62721-cargill-juice-functional>

22/09/2005 | 10:20:27

Smirnoff Norsk hits the shelves

The latest addition to the Smirnoff vodka brand, Smirnoff Norsk, is to be rolled out in the UK's off-trade from the end of September.

Priced at £13.29, the pale blue vodka is a mix of the popular red Smirnoff and Nordic berries, and is designed to be drunk with ice.

The launch follows a successful trial in the on-trade last year, and will be supported by a £400,000 marketing campaign, says just-drinks.com, citing Marketing Magazine.

With an ABV of 37.5 per cent, the beverage has joined other Smirnoff varieties, including Smirnoff Ice and Smirnoff Black Ice, both available in the UK, Smirnoff Black Vodka, Smirnoff Blue Vodka and Smirnoff Mule.

Smirnoff Twist, in lemon and lime, raspberry, orange, vanilla and green apple flavours, was launched in the US and Canada in 2000.

The Smirnoff brand is owned by Diageo, which also owns Gordon's Gin, Johnnie Walker and Guinness.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=28582

22/09/2005 | 09:52:45

Glowing with food safety

A new method to test for microbial contamination of food products makes use of the same principle that allows the glowworm to "glow".

It involves a reaction with the compound adenosine triphosphate, which is present in all cells, including microbes, says FoodProductionDaily.

If a cell is destroyed and brought into contact with a specific reagent, it starts to emit a glow.

Scientists from Moscow State University therefore mixed a food sample with such a reagent, and placed it in a container with a bacteria-filter membrane in the bottom to allow the liquid part of the sample to drain through.

This left only the bacteria cells, whereupon another reagent was added that isolated the adenosine triphosphate.

Finally, a genetically modified luciferase enzyme is added, which triggers the glowing process, and the stronger the glow, the greater the number of microbes present.

The scientists stress that the method of detection is faster than many current methods, with important implications for the food safety concerns and regulations facing producers.

The scientists predict that the test could be carried out in under half an hour on meat and milk, and they have formed a company, Lumtech, to market the process.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62661-food-safety-bacteria>

22/09/2005 | 09:48:40

Rapid shake cooking process in the can

A UK firm, Zinetec, is developing a new method of processing canned products, which results in lower sterilisation times and fresher food with improved taste and texture.

Essentially, it involves the rapid shaking of the product when undergoing the heat steaming sterilisation process in the retort, or autoclave.

Food companies usually include some shaking or swirling to increase the rate of heat penetration time, but the long process still results in products with an overcooked feel.

The new discovery was made by Richard Walden, founder of Zinetec, who recently also bought the rights to the technology.

Dubbed "Shaka", Zinetec is currently in talks with European autoclave manufacturers, according to John Emanuel, chairman of Utek Europe, which has been brought in to handle marketing.

The two companies are using a process pilot plant that has been set up with the assistance of the UK's Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association.

They have tested the process on foods including sauces, vegetables and baby food, and Mr Emanuel said the first products to be cooked using the method should be available commercially in 2006.

He estimated that canned goods could see their cooking times cut by as much as 95 per cent.

"The brands of big food companies are under pressure from fresh and chilled foods," he told FoodProductionDaily.

"Now they can suddenly compete in these categories."

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=62691-sterilisation-canned-food-autoclave>

22/09/2005 | 09:45:48

Nestle to trial Timestrip

Nestle Foodservices UK is to embark on a commercial trial of smart label technology developed by UK-based Timestrip this autumn.

The labels will contain a liquid that migrates across a calendar of days to indicate how long an item has been "open".

The liquid technology is activated as soon as the seal of the can, or other product, is broken.

Initially designed to adhere to the sides of cans or wrapped products, the firm has now found a way to incorporate the device into the packaging itself, although the branded product on which it will be tested has not yet been named.

The innovation is expected to be particularly beneficial to restaurants and caterers, for whom food safety, and particularly shelf life, is of great and growing importance.

Mike Carter, innovations manager for Nestle, told FoodProductionDaily that the technology provided it with "a meaningful point of differentiation".

Further information: http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?idNewsMaker=9117&fSite=AO545&next=1

21/09/2005 | 13:01:01

Green tea to help battle Alzheimer's

The healing properties of green tea could go as far as to protect the brain from the damaging effects of Alzheimer's disease, a new study has found.

Researchers at the University of South Florida observed that a component found in green tea, epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), can help to halt the neurodegenerative disease process brought about by the condition.

EGCG is a major antioxidant, and has already been widely studied for its reported protection against certain cancers.

Now it has been found to decrease the production of the Alzheimer's-related protein, beta-amyloid, in the brains of mice.

Senior study author, Jun Tan, said: "If beta-amyloid pathology in this Alzheimer's mouse model is representative of Alzheimer's disease pathology in humans, EGCG dietary supplementation may be effective in preventing and treating the disease."

However, although green tea is already renowned for its antioxidants known as flavonoids, which can protect against free radical damage to the brain, these actually oppose the protective effects of EGCG, the researchers claim.

"Green tea extracts selectively concentrating EGCG would be needed to override the counteractive effect of other flavonoids found in green tea," explained study co-author, Doug Shytle.

"A new generation of dietary supplements containing pure EGCG may lead to the greatest benefit for treating Alzheimer's disease," he continued.

The results of the investigation were published in this month's issue of the Journal of Neuroscience.

Further information: http://www.innovations-report.de/html/berichte/medizin_gesundheit/bericht-49508.html

21/09/2005 | 12:45:31

More pesticides found in school fruit

Fruit and vegetables served up as part of school meals contain more pesticides than those on sale in the UK's shops, according to a new report from the Soil Association.

The association claims the reason for the difference is that the produce supplied to schools as part of the "School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme" (SFVS) is of a lower quality than that presented to consumers.

In general, there were chemical residues discovered in 84 per cent of the fresh produce included in school meals, the report said.

Of 167 items tested in schools around the country, 84 per cent contained some pesticide residues, and 57 per cent exhibited multiple residues.

However, these figures decreased to 57 per cent and 36 per cent respectively when attention was turned to 882 items on sale in the shops.

The survey was carried out by the government's own Pesticide Residues Committee last year, and the comparison is made in the Soil Association's "Pesticides in School Children's Fruit" report.

Although the Soil Association supports the government's scheme, policy director, Lord Melchett, said it was "wrong for a scheme that provides fruit and vegetables to the most vulnerable in society to source lower quality produce".

The association called on the government to include more seasonal, locally grown fruit and vegetables in school meals, but the Department of Health said that the residues discovered were not a cause for concern.

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=1970542005>

21/09/2005 | 10:07:59

Heinz invests in core innovation

Food firm H.J. Heinz has revealed more details of its growth strategy, which focuses on product innovation, packaging and recipes in its three core food categories: ketchup, condiments and sauces, meals and snacks, and infant nutrition.

Earlier this week, the company opened a new "Global Innovation and Quality" centre in Pittsburgh, US, where chefs and researchers, as well as nutritionists, will be seeking to spearhead product development in this area.

At the same time, the firm is looking to divest itself of its less profitable European seafood, vegetable and frozen and chilled food businesses, as well as the Tegel poultry unit in New Zealand, accounting for annual sales of approximately \$1.4 billion between them.

The Petit Navire, John West and HAK brands have all been mentioned as likely to be axed.

President of Heinz Europe, Joe Jiminez, said the move would make the firm "leaner and more nimble", but it is also likely to affect some 2,300 employees in the UK and Ireland.

The sites affected in the UK are plants at Fakenham in Norfolk, Leamington in Warwickshire, Okehampton in Devon and Westwick in Norfolk.

Further information: <http://www.mlive.com/business/ambizdaily/bizjournals/index.ssf?base/abd-1/1127277600304182.xml>

21/09/2005 | 10:04:02

Tagatose receives UK approval for food products

Low-calorie sweetener, Tagatose, has been approved by the UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) as a "novel food ingredient", paving the way for its inclusion in a range of European products.

Full EU approval is now expected by the first quarter of 2006, says manufacturer Arla Foods Ingredients, with the other EU member states given 60 days either to rubber-stamp the decision or to respond to the firm with questions.

Earlier this month the sweetener, which has sufficient bulk for use in cooking, was also approved in Brazil, with the same process currently underway in Canada, Mexico and Japan.

Approval has already been secured in the US, Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Small quantities of tagatose can be used to heighten texture, sweetness and the flavour of products that contain high-intensity sweeteners.

In 1996, Arla acquired the rights to manufacture and market tagatose for use in food and beverage products from Spherix Incorporated.

Arla has now formed a joint venture with Germany-based Nordzucker, SweetGredients, to market tagatose as Gaio tagatose.

However, Spherix has retained the rights to use it as an ingredient in non-food products such as toothpaste.

Spherix president and CEO, Richard Levin, said: "I am very pleased with the approval in Brazil and the expected approval in Europe.

"The opening of these new markets could be just what is needed to energise sales, creating the demand for the increased production of this great product."

Further information: http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?idNewsMaker=9125&fSite=AO545&next=1

21/09/2005 | 08:56:28

New chair for "Food from Britain"

The secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, Margaret Beckett, has announced the appointment of Lady Sylvia Jay as the next chairperson of Food from Britain (FFB).

Taking over from Gordon Summerfield with effect from January 1st next year, she will work to promote the overseas export of food and drink produced in the UK.

FFB receives a government grant of £5.4 million to this end, and it has been awarded a further £3 million for the period from 2003 to 2006 to be used exclusively for the quality regional food sector.

Ms Jay was the director general of the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) from 2001 until 2005, says just-food.com.

Ms Beckett said of the appointment: "I am delighted to welcome Sylvia Jay as chair designate of Food from Britain's council.

"The range of experience she brings to the role, and her knowledge of working with government and the food industry, will help Food from Britain continue to deliver a quality service, and help us to promote success and excellence in British food."

Outgoing chairman, Gordon Summerfield, added: "Her knowledge of the food and drink industry will undoubtedly assist exporters in breaking through the £10 billion barrier for the first time in nearly a decade."

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61930&lk=rss

21/09/2005 | 08:52:55

New Tate and Lyle group seeks sweet opportunities

Sugar and sweetener firm, Tate and Lyle, has formed a new global food ingredients group, charged with identifying growth opportunities and maximising business for its range of functional food ingredients.

Primarily a marketing division, the group will also lead the company into new areas of ingredients, led by Mark White, who is currently the chief executive of sugars in Europe.

Mr White will take over as president of global food ingredients with effect from October 1st this year.

The firm's chief executive, Iain Ferguson, said that the innovation reflected a desire to "meet the changing needs of our customers and to capture the exciting opportunities for our food and industrial ingredients businesses", according to just-food.com.

"This is another step towards achieving our vision to be consistently first in renewable ingredients," he added.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61931

20/09/2005 | 15:35:39

Sushi is the business in the North

The first specialist sushi catering service in the north of England, Sisushi, is to open an outlet in Leeds next month, before rolling out throughout the region, including in Manchester and Newcastle.

In addition to a variety of types of sushi itself, the company will offer the Japanese speciality Raman, which is soup containing noodles, a range of noodle salads, and fresh fruit smoothies.

An extra delivery service will see so-called "rannas" roller-blading around the cities, bringing lunch to business workers who are increasingly turning to healthier options.

Launched last year, and based in Leeds, the corporate event catering company seeks advice from Japanese consultants on the correct preparation and creation of sushi dishes.

Simon Baskind, one half of the pair behind the firm, told the Yorkshire Post: "Sisushi will be a bread-free, coffee-free zone.

"This is food to make you look good - a fresh and funky food experience."

Sushi is believed to assist in the fight against heart disease and high cholesterol levels, as well as improving concentration.

Further information: <http://www.yorkshiretoday.co.uk/ViewArticle2.aspx?SectionID=56&ArticleID=1194875>

20/09/2005 | 15:31:32

A quarter of consumers concerned about food safety

More than a quarter of consumers polled in a survey have said that food gives them greater cause for concern now than it did a year ago.

While 27 per cent expressed general misgivings, 25 per cent said that it was the use of additives that concerned them most, with 12 per cent worried about harmful ingredients, according to Foodnavigator.com.

A good example would be the potentially cancer-causing red dye Sudan 1, banned from use in foods in accordance with EU regulations, but which was discovered in a batch of Premier Foods Worcester Sauce in February this year.

The subsequent recall cost the firm more than €200 million.

However, while Sudan 1 would be classed as a harmful ingredient, the survey commissioned by Razor Public Relations showed that consumers thought of it as an additive.

There is therefore an opportunity for food companies to differentiate themselves by how well they communicate with consumers about food safety and risk, said Razor.

"Those companies who turn out to be best placed will use a combination of proactive and targeted communication as well as risk and crisis management strategies that are clearly understood by all levels of an organisation," said director, Chris Woodcock.

Further information: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/ng.asp?n=62636-sudan-risk-additives>

20/09/2005 | 10:58:49

Nestle to launch hot chocolate product

Nestle is to tap into the growing market for hot chocolate by launching its first product in the sector in the UK through its Nestle FoodServices division.

Aero instant hot chocolate will be available in the on-trade from October 3rd this year, and can be bought in 6x1kg tins or in packs of 40 24g individual serving sachets.

Katy Hilditch, beverages category lead, told the Publican: "We don't expect our customers to take out word for it, but would urge outlets that serve hot chocolate to trial this product."

Nestle's beverage brands include the first commercially successful soluble coffee, Nescafe, launched in Swizerland in 1938, and the popular powdered milkshake drink Nesquik.

Available in a range of flavours, including strawberry and the original chocolate, the Nesquik recipe was modified in 2000 to include additional calcium and vitamin C.

Further information: <http://www.thepublican.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=18467&d=32&h=24&f=23&dateformat=%25o%20%25B%20%25Y>

20/09/2005 | 10:34:50

Milking demand for a good night's sleep

The concept of a hot, milky drink before bedtime is enjoying a comeback in the UK, according to a new report.

Food industry magazine, the Grocer, found that hot chocolate sales in 2004 rose by nine per cent to generate £85 million, according to the Scotsman.

Meanwhile, malted drinks, such as Horlicks and Ovaltine, saw even greater growth, increasing 13 per cent to £59 million.

Although tea and instant coffee account for some two thirds of the £1.3 billion UK hot beverage market, the Grocer found consumers were decreasing their intake owing to the health implications of too much caffeine.

Milk-based drinks, by comparison, were also given a boost owing to their ability to aid in getting a healthy night's sleep after a busy day.

Milk includes an amino acid that releases mood-enhancing serotonin, which helps the body to relax.

This effect is further increased if the milk is warmed.

A spokesman for the Grocer commented: "Hot chocolate sales have grown, benefiting from the perception that it is indulgent and healthy - due to its exclusion of caffeine - but still practical.

"Nowadays, whatever the age of the consumer, the brand is all about getting a decent night's sleep. This message has been pressed home by a £3 million campaign which includes tips for relaxation."

Further information: <http://news.scotsman.com/uk.cfm?id=1965012005>

20/09/2005 | 10:09:30

Bad meat detected in minutes

Scientists from the UK have developed a new technique to identify whether meat is bad at such a high speed it could be employed on a production line.

While the current methods used can take hours to reach a conclusion, the new infrared technology takes no longer than a minute, the researchers claim.

Meat samples kept at room temperature for 24 hours were monitored for bacteria on an hourly basis, and the results were used to determine threshold bacterial concentrations with the aid of genetic algorithms.

This was then used to generate software that could identify the biochemicals created when the bacteria concentration in different meats reached a certain level.

An infrared beam is fired into a sample, producing a wavelength spectrum that shows whether or not the "safe" bacteria concentration threshold has been exceeded.

David Ellis, a researcher from the University of Manchester's school of chemistry, explained: "You really want something that measures in real time," according to Wired News, before the meat has "been dressed and delivered to a retailer".

Having detected concentrations down to one million for chicken and 10,000 for beef, the team now hope to improve the beef method, and extend use to dairy products such as milk and eggs.

The findings were outlined at last week's Society for General Microbiology meeting at the UK's Keele University.

Further information: http://www.wired.com/news/medtech/0,1286,68857,00.html?tw=wn_tophead_4

20/09/2005 | 09:40:16

Raspberry sales to get big boost

A new variety of raspberry is to be introduced in the UK, twice the size of the fruit that consumers are used to.

The announcement from Marks and Spencer comes as growth in raspberry sales has outstripped the classic summer treat of strawberries by 50 per cent.

Figures from the retail analyst AC Nielsen indicate that raspberry sales have increased by 62 per cent over the last two years, driven by consumer demand for health-boosting "superfoods".

Strawberry sales rose by just 34 per cent over the same period, according to the same figures.

Spokeswoman, Danielle Tolson, explained: "Like blueberries, raspberries are selling well because of their health benefits."

Known as Madonna, or King, raspberries, they were grown in the UK for the first time this year, bred by crossing two other varieties.

They will come in 125g punnets, costing £2.49 each, and are likely to be used to dip in chocolate, a growing trend in the US.

Further information: http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1573118,00.html

19/09/2005 | 13:15:28

Colour camera unit finds bad nuts

Key Technology has developed an instrument that can detect imperfections in shelled nuts on the production line, removing "bad" nuts, as well as contaminants, with the aid of colour cameras and laser technology.

The OptyxR G6 3000 sorter can detect shell, husk and hull, as well as nuts that show signs of damage by insects.

The camera assesses the individual nuts based on size, shape and colour, with the use of three sensors positioned above and below the product flow.

The unit itself has a flat belt with air-tensioning and a quick-release capability, and it can process between 8,000 and 12,000 pounds of nuts each hour.

Specific product settings can also be saved and accessed again as necessary.

Marketing manager, Bret Larreau, told FoodProductionDaily: "Based on recent production tests on almonds, we've seen foreign material removal efficiencies approaching 100 per cent."

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62618-key-technology-sorter-nuts>

19/09/2005 | 12:27:38

Infant milk formula message confusing mothers

Manufacturers of baby milk in the UK are advertising follow-on formulas that are "almost identical" to standard infant formulas in terms of their external appearance, a new survey from UNICEF has concluded.

The poll of around 1,000 new mothers, conducted in August, found that around 60 per cent recalled having seen infant formula advertised, although a ban has been in place in the UK since 1995.

"The manufacturers have changed the way they package and promote their follow-on formulas so they're almost identical to the regular infant formula," said Andrew Radford, director of UNICEF UK's Baby Friendly Initiative.

"This means that a supposedly legal TV or magazine advert for a follow-on formula will also promote a company's infant formula," he continued.

The same survey also uncovered that 17 per cent of women began feeding babies follow-on milk within three months of the baby's birth, with 38 per cent feeding their youngest child solely with breastmilk.

However, a similar 36 per cent had only used formula, according to the survey carried out by UNICEF UK and the National Childbirth Trust.

The Department of Health recommends breastfeeding alone for the first six months of a new baby's life.

Further information: http://www.eitb24.com/noticia_en.php?id=90529

19/09/2005 | 11:24:15

Sainsbury's looks to recipes for success

Supermarket chain Sainsbury is poised to screen the first of a string of TV advertisements in a new £10 million rebranding campaign designed to attract new customers and generate an extra £2.5 billion worth of sales by 2008.

A key aspect of the changeover is a slogan switch from "Making Life Taste Better", which has served the company since 1999, to "Try Something New Today".

This tag will now appear on all till receipts, bags, in store and on delivery lorries, although celebrity chef, Jamie Oliver, will remain the figurehead of the revamped marketing drive.

Sainsbury said that its customers were asking for simple recipe ideas tailored for modern lifestyles, but which were still exciting.

The adverts will therefore feature Jamie offering some of his chef's tips, which are also being trialled by the chain's some 153,000 members of staff, the company said.

"Today's announcement marks a change in how we will serve our customers and the start of a company-wide training programme equipping every colleague to improve the customer experience in store," said chief executive, Justin King.

Up to 1,000 managers, including Mr King himself, will attend a two-day training course in business optimisation.

Sainsbury's has reported like-for-like growth in sales for the last two quarters.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61903

19/09/2005 | 09:56:54

Taiwan gets taste of British treat

The British traditional favourite, fish and chips, has arrived in the Taiwanese capital of Taipei.

The "Frying Scotsman" restaurant opened its doors at the weekend, and could be the first establishment of its kind in Taiwan, according to the Taiwan News.

The idea belongs to Duncan Inglis, a former railway health and safety inspector and cook, who arrived in the country some six years ago.

He maintains that the majority of his ingredients are imported to Taiwan from the UK, and he met with suppliers from the UK, as well as undertaking a training programme with the UK's National Fish Fryers Association.

However, he dismissed suggestions that he should cater for local tastes by modifying his recipes, notably by the addition of more sugar to the mixture.

"Everything meets UK standards from our chips to our sauces," explained Mr Inglis.

"We make them exactly the same way it's done in the UK", he continued, adding that vinegar is the key to the appeal of the dish.

Also on the menu are smoked and English varieties of sausage, chicken and pies, as well as the famous Scottish favourite, deep-fried chocolate bars.

Further information: <http://www.etaiwannews.com/Taiwan/Business/2005/09/19/1127094293.htm>

19/09/2005 | 09:51:45

UK energy drink sales to top £1 billion

Total sales of functional energy and stimulant drinks in the UK are predicted to exceed £1 billion in 2005, according to a new report from Research and Markets.

The report indicates that consumers are increasingly turning to this category, as well as similar health-based offerings, to meet the demands of an ever-more demanding pace of life.

The report also finds that the UK market in energy beverages is largely confined to a few powerful brands, dominated by the market-leading Red Bull and including some supermarket own-label brands.

Since the boom in the market in the early years of the 21st century, a number of other products in the category have proved unable to compete and fallen by the wayside.

The report also provides insights into consumer demographics, drinking habits, and attitudes and trends in the energy beverage market.

Continuous investment in educating the public as to the health benefits of the category is the key to driving the market forwards, it concludes.

Further information: http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20050916005028&newsLang=en

19/09/2005 | 09:45:58

Organic auction site launched

The UK-based firm EcoProduce Ltd has announced the launch of a new online "auction" site, www.ecoproduce.com, which is devoted to the buying and selling of solely organic and eco-friendly produce.

The innovation will employ customised auction software to guarantee a user-friendly interface for the purchase of a range of products, including wine, tea, olive oil, grains and natural honey.

It is designed to appeal to consumers who are concerned about the relationship between the production of a range of foods and textiles and the environment, both individuals and businesses, says managing director, Richard Igoe.

There are no restrictions on visitors to the site to bid, but all new vendors will be vetted and granted selling rights prior to listing their products.

Similar to the concept behind the "Ebay" phenomenon, buyers pay sellers for their goods directly, with EcoProduce charging the seller a small fee for the listing.

EcoProduce was first established in 2004, and has continued with research into the effective marketing of organic produce throughout 2005.

Further information: <http://www.ambosmedios.com/releases/2005/9/prweb286689.htm>

16/09/2005 | 16:59:01

Plants shape the future of the dairy industry

The dairy industry's drinks sector is looking to plant additives to propel the business into the future.

Adding plant extracts, known as 'phytolactics', to dairy drinks is an effort by the industry to move with the times as consumers are increasingly health conscious.

At the Munich Drinktech expo, Dr Michael De Vrese from Germany's Federal Research Centre for Nutrition and Food encouraged the dairy industry to be innovative.

"Milk has a reputation for being healthy, more than other drinks...the question for functional milk is: how can it have a new image," he said.

Plant extracts such as potassium, and vitamins C and E have can be added to milk and the benefits from different additives can have anti oxidising and cholesterol lowering effects.

Companies such as Unilever have already met the trend, with their Pro Activ Flora range, and a US company called Bravo! will soon distribute its vitamin enriched drinks in the UK.

However Dr De Vrese also warned businesses to be wary of exaggerating health benefits, stressing that any additives "must have scientifically proven benefits beyond the normal nutritional benefits".

Food companies overall are finding that developing healthier foods not only boosts their sales but helps their corporate sustainability as well, as proven by the criteria used in the assessment of companies for the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI).

This year, for the first time the DJSI added research and development in health and nutrition to the criteria on which companies were judged.

16/09/2005 | 13:00:00

Wind farm developers say it will not hurt fishermen

Local fishermen in Yorkshire are fearing that the construction of an offshore wind farm will hurt their profits and prevent them from entering a lucrative area, but builders of the wind farm say it will not cause any harm.

The Humber Gateway wind farm will be placed in one of the most productive fishing areas in Yorkshire, a 30 square kilometre site off Spurn.

Parts of the area will be off limits during construction, but after completion officials have said there will be no need for an exclusion zone.

Shellfisherman Tony Pockley was not convinced and told the Yorkshire Post: "It's going to take a vast amount of our ground and its going to cause problems all around."

The North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee (NESFC) said yesterday that more time between the construction of "phase one" wind farms, which have already been built round the UK, and the "phase two" windfarms, including Humber Gateway would have been better.

16/09/2005 | 10:55:00

Chr. Hansen announces probiotic fruit drinks

Probiotics company Chr. Hansen has announced that it will be expanding its probiotics range to include fresh, chilled beverages.

Hailing the new products as "second generation" probiotics, Chr. Hansen said it was developing probiotic orange juice and other fruit juices with the use of new technology.

"The door is now open to a whole new range of possibilities for food producers around the world," said Mr. Hans Christian Bejder, marketing manager for Probiotics from Chr. Hansen.

"I find it very realistic that we will see the first probiotic fruit juices and drinking milks on breakfast tables before the end of 2005," he added.

The company has manufactured a new Direct Liquid Inoculation solution, using the aseptic dosing system Flex Dos from Tetra Pak, which enables healthy bacteria to be added to milk or juice in a closed and perfectly clean system.

This makes it possible for producers to make safe probiotic beverages using their existing equipment, whereas heat treatments currently used in processing would kill the live bacteria.

"Researchers and food companies all over the world have long been looking for a way to overcome this obstacle, but so far without much luck," said Mr Bejder.

"Naturally, I am very pleased that we became the first to present a suggestion for a viable solution."

16/09/2005 | 10:30:00

Bean, nut and cereal compound stops tumour growth

A compound found within beans, nuts and cereals could help block the development of cancerous tumours when eaten says new research.

For the past eight years, scientists have been studying the compound inositol pentakisphosphate, and its holistic properties.

The findings of the University College London (UCL) team, published in the latest issue of Cancer Research, suggest that eating lentils, peas, beans, wheat bran and nuts could help prevent cancer, and the inhibitor also offers a new tool for anti-cancer therapy.

In a study on mice, the compound was found to halt the growth of tumours in mice, and also enhanced the effect of drugs that treat ovarian and lung cancer.

The evidence suggests that inositol pentakisphosphate could be used to sensitise cancer cells to the action of commonly used anti-cancer drugs.

Dr Marco Falasca, who led the study at the UCL Sackler Institute said: "Our study suggests the importance of a diet enriched in food such as beans, nuts and cereals which could help prevent cancer.

"We believe that inositol pentakisphosphate is a promising anti-cancer tool and we hope to bring it to clinical testing soon."

16/09/2005 | 09:30:00

Food experts consider shelf-life food safety

Following a new report into the food safety of Modified Atmosphere Packaged (MAP) chilled foods, the Foods Standards Agency (FSA) is now considering reducing the shelf life of chilled products.

The annual Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF) report suggests reducing the shelf-left of vacuum packed and MAP foods from the current ten days down to five.

It also proposes an independent review of the evidence into bacteria and food safety, writes FoodProductionDaily.com, to ensure that the right shelf life limit is given because "there were gaps in the scientific evidence to support the shelf life limitation of five days."

Vacuum packaging removes air from a product, and keeps it out with an airtight seal and MAP packaging involves modifying the gaseous content inside a product, which also removes air.

However, new scientific evidence had discovered that in some conditions, a bacterium called Clostridium botulinum may grow, that thrives in airless atmospheres. At low temperatures, this bacteria can sometimes produce toxin.

The FSA guidance document on shelf life is currently at draft stage.

15/09/2005 | 14:53:59

New internet temperature alarm developed

Weiss Instruments has created a new sensor that alerts plant monitors when unplanned changes in temperature occur.

The XJ500 monitor and web-based XWEB System alerts monitors via sound or through the internet when the safety of products is compromised by changes in temperature. The system can record temperatures, along with compressor, fan, and defrost run times.

Weiss claims that the sensors are suitable for restaurants, institutional food service operations, convenience stores, supermarkets, warehouses and food processing plants, Food Production Daily reports. The sensors can control and monitor reach-in refrigerators, walk-ins, freezers, hot food cabinets, ovens, ware-washing and lighting control.

Customers can start with a smaller system featuring just alarms and can gradually develop it to internet-based control and supervision. With internet alerts, alarms can be faxed or emailed to multiple locations.

"With our XJ500 and XWEB systems, you can be alerted to a small problem before it becomes a big one," Weiss said in a press statement.

15/09/2005 | 14:28:38

New bottle filler for PET containers

Krones has unveiled a new modular PET bottle filler for PET containers.

The F1 generation has been designed primarily for volumetric fillers used for filling PET containers and features a modularised construction with no front table.

The F1 also has a redesigned filling system and a new filling-valve actuation concept and is aimed at the growing market for modular machines, which allow companies quicker changeovers when switching to a different product on the same line or expanding production, Food Production Daily reports.

The F1 filler is a completely new generation of filler design and the modularised construction provides options for fitting or removing different closer modules without having to cope with a tabletop.

The drive concept has no front table and the links between the rinser and the filler, and between the filler and the closer, consist of individual neck-handling starwheels. The F1 filler's drive concept needs almost no maintenance, is easy to clean, and promises a lengthy lifetime, according to Krones.

The company said in a statement: "This provides advantages in terms of a fundamentally faster response time, upgraded reproducibility, and thus enhanced filling accuracy with simultaneously reduced air consumption. Hygienic design is the overriding theme of this volumetric PET filler F1, which is especially well suited for bottling still and carbonated soft drinks and mineral waters in PET."

15/09/2005 | 12:53:57

BSE ban on old cattle lifted

The government has lifted its ban on consuming beef from cattle aged over 30 months.

The ban was imposed in 1996 following an outbreak of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and the recognition that Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD) is caused by consuming BSE-infected meat.

Environment secretary Margaret Beckett announced that, from November 7th, cattle over 30 months old that test negative for BSE will be authorised for human consumption.

The announcement follows advice given by the Food Standards Agency in December 2004 that the Over Thirty Months rule was no longer a proportionate response to the risk of BSE since there has been a sharp decline in the number of cases of the disease.

"It is excellent news that we will soon be able to increase our supplies of home-produced beef," Ms Beckett said.

But Jim Paice, shadow minister for agricultural and rural affairs, said: "It is obviously in the interests of consumers that this high quality beef comes back on to the market but unless exports of beef from over 30 month old cattle are accepted by the EU, British beef farmers may find themselves worse off than they were before.

"Until the government manages to do what it has so far failed to and convince the European Commission ... that beef from over 30 month old cattle is safe to consume, the opportunity for cattle to go into the Over Thirty Months Scheme must remain as a safety net for British farmers."

Over 140 people are thought to have died from vCJD in Britain, while 7.3 million animals were slaughtered under BSE control measures by July 2004.

15/09/2005 | 09:25:00

Global food data network in the pipeline

Some of the world's biggest food and drink producers have signed up to become part of a new global supply network system.

Today marks the conclusion of a two-day meeting in Atlanta, where food producers have been working out the details of the Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN), writes FoodProductionDaily.com.

The non-profit EPCglobal Network will synchronise the supply chain using radio frequency identification (RFID) technology, the Electronic Product Code (EPC), and the existing communications network.

The shared data system would enable information regarding food shipments to be passed quickly and efficiently through the supply chain.

It would also reduce the chance of human error, as any figures being sent to another company would originate straight from the manufacturer, rather than re-inputted further down the supply chain.

"Billions of dollars are trapped in the supply chain due to bad data," Jack Grasso, a spokesperson for EPCGlobal US, told FoodProductionDaily.com.

"The end result helps organisations be more efficient, flexible, and responsive to customer," he added.

Of the 4,000 companies signed up so far, some of the big names include: Nestle, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Kraft, Unilever, Sara Lee, Wal-Mart, Colgate Palmolive, and Procter & Gamble.

EPCglobal is hoping that thousand more in the food industry will want to add their names to the network.

15/09/2005 | 09:00:00

Understanding bacteria communication could preserve food

Investigating how bacteria communicates and multiplies could help better preserve food says scientists.

Danish scientists claim that by examining how bacteria 'talks' to each other, research could be carried out into methods of stopping the communication, which would help keep food safer and fresher, writes FoodNavigator.com.

Bacteria spoil up to a quarter of crops, fish and meat after harvesting, and the food industry is forced to use preservatives to keep foods from going off.

"Bacteria have a social life. Some fight each other - and others communicate," said Professor Gram at the annual meeting of the Society for General Microbiology.

"Bacteria grow in most of our foods, and some foods rot because the bacteria have decided to change their behaviour," she added.

Consumers are increasingly calling for more natural foods that are free of preservatives and additives, and the research could be one way of developing more organic produce.

14/09/2005 | 13:17:36

New cereal ingredient formula from Tate & Lyle

Tate & Lyle has released two new cereal ingredient solutions designed to assist with digestion without affecting taste or texture.

Enrich 701 and Enrich 702, which were recently launched at the American Association of Cereal Chemists 2005, include a combination of functional ingredients intended for use in multigrain or wholegrain expanded cereals.

The solutions contain high levels of oat fibre, which according to the food ingredients company can lead to good "bowel life", providing eight grams of whole grain per 30 grams of the cereal, if the proposed formulations are followed.

Doris Dougherty, Tate & Lyle technical specialist stated: "Both of these new ingredient solution sets provide consumers with a great tasting, high fibre cereal, without the chalkiness sometimes associated with high fibre products."

Each 30-gram serving of the formulas provided by the firm for both the solution sets contain 100 calories, using sucralose to ensure consistent sweetness distribution.

Dietary guidelines published in the US advise an intake of 25 to 30 grams of fibre every day.

14/09/2005 | 13:16:31

Innovative food promotions on credit cards

A new loyalty card initiative has been unveiled by Maybank and Pizza Hut, enabling customers to benefit from special promotions.

The largest Malaysian banking firm has joined forces with the fast food giant in a bid to encourage consumers to purchase goods using their credit cards, while building up reward points.

Points will be stored on the card's smart EMV chip and are transferred in to e-vouchers, which can then be redeemed at any Pizza Hut outlet.

Until the end of November, loyal customers can take advantage of the Maybankard Treats On-Chip offer with a guaranteed discount on every Pizza Hut order and a free pizza once RM65 has been spent on four separate occasions.

The bank hopes this loyalty programme will encourage more people to use their Maybankard MasterCard and Visa cards when purchasing goods.

Group chief operation officer of Pizza Hut owner QSR Brands Bhd, CW Toh, commented that the programme is expected to have a strong impact on sales, and also revealed that the company plans to open five more outlets across Malaysia before the end of the year.

14/09/2005 | 12:13:48

Real ale in real resurgence

It seems that together with the revival in the nation's traditional game of cricket Britons are rediscovering their taste for warm beer.

More and more are turning away from "bland" lagers in favour of a more British tippie in the form of real ale, according to a the Good Beer Guide 2006.

The real ale drinker's bible lists a greater variety of beers on sale in the UK than at any point in the last twenty years.

Furthermore, 80 new breweries have been listed in the guide, more than twice as many as last year.

The consumer guide claims a resurgence in the popularity of traditional beers is driving the increase in "microbreweries". It also reveals that the UK has 500 such microbreweries - more per head than any other country.

"The giant national breweries will tell you that people only want to drink lager but we know there are people who don't want to drink heavily hyped, over-promoted lager brands. They want beer with flavour and character," said the Guide's editor Roger Protz.

14/09/2005 | 11:50:00

ABF launches healthier Ovaltine

Associated British Foods (ABF) has launched a lower-fat version of Ovaltine.

The new variety reduces the calories per serving because it is made up with water rather than milk, writes JustFood.com, giving consumers a healthier option.

New Ovaltine Original Add Water is available from supermarkets nation-wide in 300g jars, priced from £1.89 and single serve sachets at 25 pence.

It complements the existing range of Ovaltine Original (served with milk) and Ovaltine Chocolate Add Water.

New research by Ovaltine says that women shoppers are becoming more "traditionalist", creating a niche in the market for the brand. Seven out of ten women today think "everything" was better fifty years ago with 67 per cent feeling family life was better back then, and more than a third believing the food we ate fifty years ago was better.

ABF says that Ovaltine contains 11 vitamins, four minerals and complex carbohydrates and is an "incredibly rich" source of folic acid and Vitamin Bs.

"Rich in folic acid and other vitamins and minerals, one of Ovaltine's target markets is women who are planning to become pregnant or who are in the first trimester of pregnancy. Folic acid is taken during this time to help prevent neural tube defects in babies," said Claudia Salazar-Lewis of Ovaltine.

Sources at the company also commented that a fourth add-milk variety of Ovaltine Chocolate is being developed.

14/09/2005 | 11:15:00

Jamie's school meals in decline

Primary school dinners are less popular than ever and it's all down to Jamie Oliver's TV series, a BBC survey says.

Over half of catering contract managers questioned for the BBC's anonymous survey say that numbers of children taking primary school dinners are down, and more than 20 per cent blame the drop on Jamie's School Dinners.

The Local Authority Catering Association said it thought that the take-up of school meals, which are provided by companies such as Compass, Sodexo and Aramark, had dropped nine per cent.

One anonymous catering manager told the BBC the problem was that children didn't like healthy food: "We are required to operate commercially and must sell our service to parents, who are not prepared to pay for something which the child [rightly or wrongly] won't eat."

In Paisley primary school in East Hull, the BBC says that school meals have dropped from 180 meals a day to an average of 160 today.

But headteacher Robin Petch is optimistic: "We've constantly publicised the new menus and promoted messages of healthy eating throughout the school. It's been hard work but we are gradually getting children and parents on board."

14/09/2005 | 09:30:00

Fruit and veg scheme encourages children's intake

An evaluation of the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS) has demonstrated that children ate significantly more fruit while participating in the scheme with some evidence of increased knowledge of healthy eating, particularly in children from deprived areas.

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS) is part of the 5 A DAY programme and provides a free piece of fruit or a vegetable to children aged four to six every school day. It was piloted in more than 500 schools throughout England with much success and the Department of Health now funds the SFVS to operate throughout the UK.

Today's research explored young children's diets and their attitudes to food, and revealed that the children participating in the scheme ate significantly more fruit, and girls (but not boys) also ate slightly more vegetables after the introduction of the SFVS.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) research, commissioned by the Big Lottery Fund and working in partnership with nutritionists from Leeds University, also found that after seven months on the SFVS, older children were eating less sugar while younger pupils were eating more fruit and vegetables.

However, their intake of dietary fibre appeared to have been unaffected and salt intake remained universally high.

Pupils were also more likely to identify the healthiest options from a choice of snacks, and the impact of the scheme on children living in areas of high deprivation greater than those from more affluent backgrounds.

NFER's Sandie Schagen said: "The scheme has certainly been successful in encouraging young children to eat more fruit. There is no evidence yet of a permanent change in eating habits, but the children we surveyed had been in the scheme for only a short time."

13/09/2005 | 17:02:33

Heinz and Asda increase online innovation

Both Heinz and supermarket chain Asda have announced plans to extend their online offerings.

Heinz has launched an online store being used to showcase new products and offer online exclusives, but will also be used as a marketing tool, reports NMA.co.uk.

Asda announced that it will add a online photo shop offering digital prints from 10p each to its internet food service.

The supermarket is also developing a photo collection service, developed parent company Wal-Mart in the US, called Click and Collect.

At Heinz, the Carb Check range is the first food range to be promoted on heinz2u.co.uk.

"The new ecommerce platform will allow us to supply speciality products that aren't necessarily available for national retail distribution," Peter Ebsworth, marketing manager at Heinz told NMA.co.uk.

"The site will also enable us to conduct market research campaigns," he added.

13/09/2005 | 16:30:00

Soy could cut fractures in older women

Eating soyfoods could help postmenopausal women reduce the chance of developing fractures, a new study has found.

Consuming soy is particularly of benefit to those women in the nearest years following menopause reveals the Shanghai Women's Health Study.

Although previous studies have shown a link between soy products and bone mineral density, writes NutraIngredients.com, the study is the first of its kind to investigate the association between soy consumption and the risk of fracture, write Dr Xiao-Ou Shu and colleagues.

The study was carried out on 24,000 postmenopausal women, who were asked about their dietary habits and intake of food.

Four and a half years later, they were then asked if they had suffered any fractures in the time that had elapsed.

The subjects completed a food frequency questionnaire and at follow-up 4.5 years later, they were asked if they had suffered any fractures.

Women who ate soy and who had been menopausal for more than ten years were found to have reduced the risk of fracture by 29 per cent.

Those within ten years of menopause cut the risk of fracture by 48 per cent, and fracture risk was lessened in soy-eating women even after adjusting controls such as age and osteoporosis risk factors.

13/09/2005 | 15:52:19

Spill resistant keyboard developed

A new keyboard has been developed for food producers who use electronic equipment in their factories or laboratories, or check food safety.

The InduProof keyboard and mouse is encased in a silicone cover, making it highly resistant to chemicals and spillages, writes FoodProductionDaily.com.

The bases of the pieces are made of sealed metal, which prevents liquids from seeping through the bottom of the device, and the company says that both items also meet industry standards for total liquid immersion.

InduKey's keyboard and mouse have been tested by the Institute for Microbiology & Hospital Hygiene at the clinical centre of the Phillipps University in Marburg for use in hygienic environments such as food testing laboratories, announced the makers.

"These tests show that these data input solutions are best suited for use in hygienically critical and sensitive areas that require spraying and wiping disinfectant and cleaning solutions on the surfaces of the keyboard," the company added.

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

13/09/2005 | 15:30:58

Rexam moves to aluminium

Global packaging group Rexam has converted its beverage can plant in Germany from steel to aluminium.

Germany is planning a nationwide return system for one-way containers in May 2006.

The company said that the economics of the aluminium can in a deposit system combined with its strong environmental track record were key drivers behind the move.

Aluminium cans are 100 per cent recyclable and can be brought to the recycling process again and again without deterioration.

The company said that the high scrap value of aluminium will make the beverage can the most viable packaging solution within the new return system

The conversion of the Berlin plant will start in January 2006 and will be completed by the end of the second quarter. Following the conversion, production at the plant will increase from two to three lines.

<http://www.rexam.com>

13/09/2005 | 14:58:17

New dairy crisps launched

Fonterra's dairy protein crisps, with up to 80 per cent protein, have the highest protein content of any known dairy crisp currently on the market.

This high protein level has been achieved by using new technology that manufactures "light and crispy, high - protein dairy particulates without the use of any additives, chemicals or processing aids," says the company.

The protein crisps will be launched as a health food, and are used as an ingredient in the growing value-added nutritional bar, snack foods and cereals market.

The fusion of food engineering and food science has led to the development of a high quality, natural dairy protein crisp that retains its functionality, nutritional benefit and bland flavour profile," said Anthony Lawler, protein crisps business manager at Fonterra Innovation.

"Consumers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the benefits of protein in managing their weight, and in sustaining energy and performance, and are looking for healthy and convenient food formats such as snacks, bars and cereals," he added

<http://www.fonterra.com/default.jsp>

13/09/2005 | 12:53:00

Vegan diet linked to weight loss

A vegan diet high in carbohydrates can help women lose weight, according to a new study.

The research, published in the September issue of the American Journal of Medicine, found a low-fat, plant-based diet to be more effective at contributing to weight loss than an omnivorous diet.

Researchers from the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), Georgetown University Hospital and George Washington University also found a vegan diet to be more successful at improving insulin sensitivity.

Explaining the findings, lead author Dr Neal Barnard, said: "The study participants following the vegan diet enjoyed unlimited servings of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other healthful foods that enabled them to lose weight without feeling hungry.

"As they began to experience the positive effects, weight loss and improved insulin sensitivity, the women in the intervention group became even more motivated to follow the plant-based eating plan."

Researchers monitored 59 overweight, postmenopausal women, half of which followed a vegan regime, with the remainder following a control diet based on National Cholesterol Education Program guidelines.

Research shows obesity is far less common among populations who stick to a plant-based diet.

Further information: <http://www.pcrm.org/news/release050909.html>

12/09/2005 | 14:15:41

Name change and different packing for whisky firm

Ian Macleod Distillers are to launch a new style of packaging for their Six Isles Pure Malt Scotch Whisky.

Due to new regulations from the Scotch Whisky Association, shortly to be introduced, Six Isles will now be known as a blended malt rather than a pure malt.

The changes to the packaging will involve reversed printing on the new label with white writing on a black background and the gift tin will now be embossed.

"We constantly review the packaging of all our products to ensure that they have the greatest shelf impact possible," Macleod's head of marketing Iain Weir told JustDrinks.com

"We felt that, with the new SWA proposals likely to be coming into effect, the time was right to make these changes to the packaging of Six Isles and we are very pleased with the end result."

12/09/2005 | 14:00:07

The best of UK's food industry promoted to Europe

The best of the UK's regional food and drink was sampled by environment and agriculture ministers from across Europe in London this weekend.

The government is promoting the best of the UK's regional food and drink as part of its presidency of the European Union.

Dishes on the menu included fish landed in Plymouth, chicken and turkey from Norfolk, soft fruit and potatoes from Kent, root vegetables from Lincolnshire and runner beans from Cornwall.

The culinary delights were sampled by more than 50 EU ministers and delegates.

UK secretary of state for environment, Margaret Beckett said: "This meeting is a great opportunity for ministers from across Europe to experience the excellence and diversity of the best of British food and drink. I am sure everyone who tastes our fresh produce will agree, that the range and quality of British regional food and drink is world class.

"My department is working in partnership with Food from Britain to provide support to the industry which employs over 55,500 people.

"Over the last three years we have given an additional GBP3million to Food from Britain to help more than 3,700 producers increase sales and raise consumer awareness about the quality of British regional food and drink in the UK and across Europe."

12/09/2005 | 09:40:00

Beef and lamb adverts "stunning success"

The English Beef and Lamb Executive (EBLEX) has announced that its latest advertising campaign has been extremely successful with consumers.

The series of TV adverts featuring cricketing hero characters Ian Botham and Allan Lamb have generated substantial publicity for English meat, according to EBLEX figures.

Nearly two in three people said that they were aware of the advertising campaign in England, compared with an average awareness of 47 per cent for other advertisements running during the same period.

The Beefy and Lamby adverts also promoted the Quality Standard Marks (QSM) for beef and lamb, helping to educate consumers in the quality of homegrown produce.

Following the campaign, 77 per cent of the survey's respondents said that they would "trust" the QSM label and a further 76 per cent said that the "QSM is a good indicator of quality beef and lamb".

The adverts seem to have affected shopping habits, with around two thirds of consumers stating that the QSM mark was an important factor in choosing meat, and 62 per cent actively looking for the mark.

Andrew Garvey, EBLEX head of marketing, said: "The campaign has proved a stunning success among consumers.

"These are highly positive results which we will be able to build on in the future to ensure the Quality Standard Mark is an instantly recognisable household brand.

12/09/2005 | 09:20:00

Temperature instrument helps traceability

A new temperature measuring device has been developed that can transmit data by radio, helping food exporters and importers to keep better records of the quality of produce.

The gauge means that food companies will be able to hold identical records of the produce condition when in transit, helping them to abide by health and safety regulations.

Tracing food through the supply chain is becoming increasingly important to food companies, writes FoodProductionDaily.com, and the data-sharing device aids this trace.

The Testo 926 can read temperatures of -50°C to 350°C. The sensors react quickly to changes in the food's heat, and can transmit data from a range of 20 metres, which can then be sent to a printer, giving food companies paper records.

Temperatures are measured by probe, which avoids food contamination, and a wireless probe is available for added hygiene.

The machine can also be set to alert workers to any high or low temperature changes, keeping produce in optimum condition.

09/09/2005 | 16:33:32

New compact condenser launched

A new condensing machine has been launched specifically for the food industry, which makers claim will save producers both time and money.

Going on sale this month, Alfa Laval says the technology is more efficient than the shell-and-tube heat exchangers and barometric condensers currently used by the industry, writes FoodProductionDaily.com.

The AlfaCond 400 is a scaled down version of its mother model, which was built for distillation systems and evaporation and crystallization processes in large plants.

The new version has been developed with the food industry in mind, which usually operates on a smaller scale.

The machine condenses vapours under low-pressure, high-vacuum conditions in evaporation and distillation systems, and can be used for boiling, condensing and concentrating foods.

Alfa Laval, the machine's makers, market the AlfaCond 400 as being 20 per cent to 30 per cent cheaper than the current machines used by food processors.

It is also smaller, requiring less space, and weighs less than standard machines, marketing manager Tomas Kovacs said.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62391-alfa-laval-condensation-exchanger>

09/09/2005 | 16:32:02

UK exhibits taste for "ethnic"

The UK has shown itself to be the country most enthusiastic about ethnic cuisine, according to a new report from Datamonitor.

The average Brit now spends €35 a year on ethnic food for home consumption, and the UK accounts for over half the total European packaged ethnic food market.

It is the only European country where ethnic packaged foods currently account for over one per cent of overall European retail packaged food sales.

Sales of packaged ethnic foods are predicted to hit €7 billion in Europe by 2009, and in Spain alone the value of packaged ethnic foods is expected to treble.

Ethnic packaged food products currently make up 0.9 per cent (€3.9 billion) of Europe's €450 billion packaged food market, and industry analysts are predicting growth of 12.2 per cent between now and 2009.

"As people demand better-tasting, stronger-flavoured and more authentic food, they are stepping up their consumption of Chinese, Mexican and Indian meals - both pre-packaged and homemade," says John Band, consumer markets analyst at Datamonitor.

"The growth in ethnic food has benefited from consumers' demand for healthier food and curiosity in trying out lighter, zestier flavours."

"It also benefits from their demand for 'natural' foods: many ethnic food types are less processed than traditional Western foods, with a strong focus on fresh vegetables and fresh meat," he added.

Further information: <http://europe.tiscali.co.uk/index.jsp?section=lifestyle&level=preview&content=382959>

09/09/2005 | 09:54:32

Poll reveals pick of pubs

The UK drinks industry magazine, the Morning Advertiser, has announced its top 10 pubs in the country, based on a survey.

The 500 judges considered outlets' performance in terms of customer service, atmosphere, drinks, quality of food served, and the menu.

The White Horse in Parsons Green, London, came first, with the judges placing particular emphasis on the food offering and range of unusual beers that were available.

Mark Dober, landlord at the White Horse, said that his aim was "to improve the cultural appreciation of beer and to link it with food in civilised surroundings".

Second and third place went to the Churchill Arms in Kensington and Norwich's the Fat Cat.

Further information: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/09/09/nzagat109.xml&sSheet=/news/2005/09/09/ixhome.html>

09/09/2005 | 09:34:39

Use tax to tackle binge-drinking, says expert

Taxation policy, rather than extended licenses, should be used to tackle the UK's binge drinking "crisis", a leading expert has stated.

Professor Wayne Hall from the University of Queensland said that reducing the tax on drinks containing a lower concentration of alcohol would foster a more moderate drinking culture.

"Epidemiologists see the key drivers of rising consumption as the reduced price of alcohol, its increased availability and its extensive promotion in British cities," he wrote in the British Medical Journal.

While drinking per capita fell by 24 per cent in Australia between 1980 and 2000, in the UK it rose by 31 per cent over the same period.

Professor Hall argues that policies implemented in Australia have been successful in reducing alcohol consumption.

These include making drinks with higher alcohol content significantly more expensive than their low-alcohol counterparts.

He also highlighted the policy of random breath tests and the more stringent drink-drinking limit of 0.05 per cent alcohol in the blood, compared with 0.08 per cent in the UK.

The result is that low-alcohol brands now account for 40 per cent of all beer sold in Australia.

Further information: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/09/09/nbinge09.xml&sSheet=/news/2005/09/09/ixhome.html>

09/09/2005 | 09:32:49

Machine solves crisp packet dilemma

Everyone is familiar with the image of somebody struggling in vain to open a crisp packet, only for it to burst open a few moments later in a shower of crisps.

However, Lloyds Instruments have now developed a machine that minimises this risk by testing crisp packets to ensure they are both easy to open and sufficiently resistant to unintentional pressure.

Packets of crisps must be designed so that they yield when a certain amount of pressure is applied, but must also be strong enough to safeguard against accidental tearing or bursting.

The 1 kN LFPPPlus machine therefore tests for burst strength, opening strength, seam strength, and tear and peel pressure, says FoodProductionDaily.

It also tests for static and kinetic friction, with a sliding part being used to calculate the friction coefficient when the polypropylene plastic of the packet passes over the rollers on the production line.

If the plastic film does not move at the correct speed, the friction generated will impact on the efficiency of the line, possibly also causing expensive damage to equipment.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62379-lloyd-instruments-potato-crisps-package-strength>

09/09/2005 | 09:29:40

Spread firm invests in speed

A UK-based spread manufacturer, Matthew Foods, has invested £500,000 in a new filling and packing line that is able to process goods at a rate of 4,000 kg/h.

The firm's second-fastest line operates at just 1,800 kg/h.

With 22 per cent compound annual growth in the past four years, the company is experiencing a sharp increase in demand for its 500g tubs of spread.

The new filling and packing line complements the speed of the processing line, handling about 130 units of the tubs each minute.

"The new equipment has the capacity to run even faster – leaving the potential for further upgrades in the future," the firm said, according to FoodProductionDaily.

Based in Ossett, Yorkshire, Matthew Foods' portfolio of products includes Filippo Berio Olive Spread and the "Pure" range.

As consumers are increasingly exhibiting a preference for healthier options, spreads based on olive-oil and low-fat ranges are in particular demand, stealing market share away from traditional fats such as butters.

Further information: <http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62350-matthews-foods-spreads>

08/09/2005 | 16:03:09

Plastic prices set to rise

The cost of plastic packaging is rising faster than other types, according to a report from KPMG.

Plastic is the preferred choice of packaging among most food producers because of its malleable, light and strong properties.

KPMG's report also suggests that all packaging, whether plastic, glass, paper or aluminium, is going to be subject to price increases, and could lead food producers to use biodegradable and recycled alternatives, writes FoodProductionDaily.com.

The price of polyethylene, a plastic film used in food packaging, rose by 25 per cent between May and June this year, and KPMG expects this to increase by between 15 and 20 per cent in future, citing data from the Plastics Exchange in Chicago.

Scott Flynn, a partner at KPMG, says it is now inevitable that food producers will face price hikes, as price increases are just starting to trickle down to the consumer products industry, including food processors, with packaging costs accounting for about 10 per cent of a product's cost.

The report claims that until now, plastic packaging firms have absorbed the extra costs, but this is not sustainable.

"When food commodity prices rose over the past several years, ingredient suppliers eventually had to raise their prices for food makers," Mr Flynn explained.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62390-packing-polymer-price>

08/09/2005 | 15:48:50

FSA offers caterers support

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has announced that £5.5 million worth of grants will be given to local authorities to invest in training caterers in issues of food safety.

The money is part of the FSA's focus on reducing instances of food poisoning when consumers eat out.

"Safer Food, better business" (SFBB), as the initiative is known, is also part of efforts to help caterers comply with a new body of EU food safety legislation scheduled to come into effect in January.

David Statham, the agency's director of enforcement, said: "These awards are part of a rolling programme to assist local authorities to provide information that food businesses will need to comply with the new EU hygiene regulations and to make sure food sold to people when they eat out is as safe as possible.

"We have developed the 'Safer food, better business' pack to make the transition to the new rules simple and free of red tape."

He was speaking at the annual conference of the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health (CIEH).

Over the next three years a further £4.5 million will be made available.

The first tranche of funding was awarded to some 158 local authorities, in some instances in collaboration with trade bodies or training organisations.

Further information: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2005/sep/sfbbawards>

08/09/2005 | 15:29:28

Tesco toasts champagne success

A non-vintage champagne from supermarket chain Tesco has been judged the best at the International Wine Challenge awards in London.

Seeing off competition from 282 other non-vintage varieties, it is the first time in the competition's 22-year history that a supermarket has won in the category.

Tesco Premier Cru costs £14.79 a bottle, and was judged better than bottles from names such as Mumm and Landon in blind taste tests.

Judges were told neither the champagnes' names, nor their prices.

Chairman, Robert Joseph, said: "It's fantastic that a British supermarket can choose a champagne that proves to be better than many of the big names and sell it at an affordable price.

"Hopefully it will allow more of the British public to experience the unique flavour of great champagne normally associated with much more expensive brands."

Premier Cru is made by a co-operative of growers in Epernay in the Cote des Blancs region of France.

Further information: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/09/08/nchamp08.xml&sSheet=/portal/2005/09/08/ixportal.html>

08/09/2005 | 12:04:23

Beef jerky comes to Britain

A husband and wife catering team have started producing cowboy-favourite "beef jerky", which they say is likely to be "the only one in the country not imported from America or South Africa".

Brian and Linda Bradley have opened a production line in Eshott Heugh, Northumberland, from where they take their produce to county fairs and shows.

As the climate of Northumberland is significantly different to more usual markets for the sun-dried meat, Mr Bradley has developed a new method to create the continual "sunshine" needed for the process.

Mr Bradley told Blyth & Wansbeck: "We're already proving a hit with people in the county and north of the border and we've even been invited to the Scotland's Countryside Festival at Glamis Castle."

Mrs Bradley added that the product was proving particularly popular with people following "high protein diets", and benefited from the fact that it did not need "to be kept in a fridge to stay fresh".

It is therefore ideally placed to make its mark in the UK's growing market for simple, snack-style foods.

Sun-drying meat began in ancient Egypt, but it is famous as the preferred food on the American ranch.

Known as Mr BBQ, the Bradleys offer five flavours of Northumberland beef jerky: Peppered, Cajun hot, Teriyaki, Barbecue, and Sweet, marinated in pineapple juice.

Further information: <http://www.blyth-wansbecktoday.co.uk/ViewArticle2.aspx?SectionID=1115&ArticleID=1138460>

08/09/2005 | 10:50:00

Optimised sourdough improves wheat bread flavour

A Finnish scientist has completed a seven-year project to demonstrate that using sourdough made from flour with high ash content improves the flavour, shelf life and nutritional value of wheat bread.

The discovery goes against commonly received wisdom that means sourdough is not often used in wheat baking.

This is because the mild flavour of most wheat breads is found to be compromised by the high acidity of sourdough, says Foodnavigator.com.

The fermentation process with either lactic acid bacteria or yeast generates organic acids, but also leads to precursors of flavour, such as amino acids and volatile compounds.

Kati Katina, from the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTI), observed that a "balanced, stronger flavour" resulted from sourdough made with flour with a high ash content, and which was fermented with lactic acid bacteria at approximately 24 degrees C for 20 hours.

In terms of ensuring softness in storage, the best conditions were fermenting for between 12 and 14 hours with lactic acid bacteria, or six to eight hours with yeast.

The VTI concluded that Ms Katina's thesis showed that "mildly acidic sourdough containing high levels of amino acids improves bread flavour".

08/09/2005 | 09:16:07

Horlicks caters for diabetics in India

GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare, the company behind the "Horlicks" drink brand, has announced the launch of two new products in India.

"Horlicks Lite" and "Horlicks Lite Bite" are specifically targeted at people suffering from diabetes, and were developed following consultation with senior Indian doctors.

Horlicks Lite is a malted drink that contains 26 different nutrients, including vitamins and minerals, is high in fibre but sugar-free, and is available in two flavours, regular malt and coffee.

Horlicks Lite Bite is a high-fibre biscuit with no sucrose. It is currently only available in wheat flavour, but the range will be expanded soon, the company says.

Anindya Dasgupta, general manager of nutritional innovation, said: "The two products are certified and endorsed by Diabetes India and are launched for the growing diabetic population in the country," according to Business Standard.

GlaxoSmithKline expects the new products to account for around 15 per cent of Horlicks sales, which itself claims 53 per cent of the Indian market for nutritional diet supplements.

Further information: <http://www.business-standard.com/common/storypage.php?storyflag=y&leftnm=lmnu1&leftindx=1&lselect=1&chklogin=N&autono=199442>

07/09/2005 | 15:49:18

Fungi antioxidant levels mushroom

The simple mushroom can now claim to contain more antioxidants than any other food on the market, according to new scientific research.

The white button mushroom has 12 times the antioxidant content of wheat germ and four times as much as chicken liver, both food sources to have previously been rated top.

"Ergothioneine, a unique metabolite produced by fungi, has been shown to have strong antioxidant properties and to provide cellular protection within the human body," says Joy Dubost, who conducted the study at Penn State University in the US.

Ergothioneine is a health-boosting antioxidant that helps fight against disease, and a standard three-ounce serving (or handful) of mushroom, supplies up to 5mg worth.

Furthermore, according to the scientists, the more exotic the breed of mushroom, the greater the health benefits derived from its consumption.

Shitake, oyster, king oyster or maitake varieties can contain as much as 13mg per three ounces, and the ergothioneine level does not decrease if the mushrooms are cooked.

With a rise in the popularity of health-boosting foods, food producers would do well to begin publicising the newly discovered health benefits of the mushroom.

Further information: <http://i-newswire.com/pr45256.html>

07/09/2005 | 13:03:41

Density device detects dilution

A firm from Denbighshire, North Wales, has received an order from Dublin's director of consumer affairs for a batch of its "Alcofloat Spirit Test" kits.

The devices provide a means for pubs and bars to determine whether their spirits have been watered down, and they have been trialled in outlets around the UK for the last 18 months.

The device comprises a four-inch long glass tube containing spheres of different densities.

When a spirit is poured into the tube, the number of floating spheres indicates the liquid's density, which can then be used to judge whether or not a spirit has been diluted.

The pub owner would know beforehand how many balls should float for a given spirit.

If more spheres than expected float, it suggests the spirit has been tampered with, as water is denser than alcohol.

Dennis Fitzgerald of H&D Fitzgerald said a large pub company contacted the firm two years ago, according to the Daily Post.

"They wanted us to devise a piece of equipment which would help them gauge whether their spirits had been watered down or not.

"Apparently, they'd been in some trouble over such matters and wanted to keep a tight grip on the situation."

Used by trading standards officers, pub managers and independent auditors, a particular advantage is that the test only requires a very small amount of liquid.

Further information: http://icnorthwales.icnetwork.co.uk/business/businessnews/tm_objectid=15940127&method=full&siteid=50142&headline=are-your-drinks-being-watered-down--name_page.html

07/09/2005 | 12:33:26

Conference calls for food policy council

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is calling for the establishment of a new food policy council to ensure consumers receive consistent advice on nutrition and health.

Delegates at the Institute's annual conference in Cardiff are making the case that the government's current approach is sending out mixed messages, highlighting that in spite of the high profile "5 a day" campaign, people are actually eating less fruit and vegetables.

Policy officer, Jenny Morris, said the Institute had to "challenge the government to show real leadership to address key issues such as food advertising and the availability and affordability of healthier food".

Among the specific measures the conference is debating are "fat taxes" on unhealthy foods, banning certain advertisements, particularly if aimed at children, and cigarette-style warning labels.

Professor Tim Lang, CIEH vice president, said: "On the one hand we are being told to eat more fish because they contain good nutrients yet environmentally the advice is to cut back on fishing to preserve fish stocks."

The CIEH has over 10,000 members in total.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62343-environmental-health-fruit-advertising>

07/09/2005 | 09:22:16

Texture the talk of FI Europe

Details have emerged of some of the food ingredient innovations that will be showcased at the Food Ingredients (FI) Europe exhibition in Paris in November.

Amongst the companies represented will be the UK's Stable Micro Systems, which says it will be demonstrating an "array of instruments to meet food manufacturers' texture analysis requirements".

The "dough inflation system", for example, allows a dough bubble's rate of inflation to be changed along with its volume, providing important information about the behaviour of gas in dough during the proving and baking processes.

Also on display will be the firm's "multiple puncture probe", able to assess the firmness of foods with varying textures such as thick-cut marmalade or chocolate-chip ice cream.

Finally, the "acoustic envelope detector" adds a "new dimension to texture analysis" by recording noise simultaneously with force, distance and time, says Foodnavigator.com.

The same event will see US-based Cerestar unveil a modified starch that keeps its low viscosity during the UHT heating process, thereby saving energy costs by maximising heat penetration.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62301-cni-stable-micro-systems-cerestar>

07/09/2005 | 09:20:02

Alcan can division goes to Europe

Alcan Packaging Sutton (APS), a UK manufacturer of metal cans for food and petfood products, has been bought by Dutch company Impress Holdings.

The deal will give the latter a secure foothold in the UK's food can market, which is now the second largest in Europe.

It is also a growing market, driven by trends such as an increase in single person households and snack-based eating habits, according to FoodProductionDaily.

This has led to a demand for convenient, single-serve packages, such as easy-to-open cans with ring-pulls.

APS is Alcan's can and decorative tinplate container facility, which saw sales of approximately €60 million in 2004.

Impress supplies metal packaging for seafood, fruit, vegetables, soups and ready-meals.

It is the largest producer of cans for dried goods in Europe, and ranks second in the processed food can market.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62314-impress-alcan-food-can>

07/09/2005 | 09:17:37

Designer HP sauce on sale

The first 500 bottles of a limited edition version of HP sauce were sold within hours of going on sale at Harrods on Monday.

There will be 1,899 of the bottles manufactured by the firm in total, reflecting the fact that the English favourite was first launched in 1899.

Costing £2.95 each, the 225ml bottles are four times as expensive as the standard version, but the consumer is essentially paying for the packaging design.

Fashion designer Paul Smith's customised multi-stripe pattern appears on the label in shades of brown, and each bottle has its own number with a certificate of authentication.

The new packaging is part of Harrods' "Truly British" season, and the bottles will remain on sale until October 15th this year.

Paul Smith commented: "Customising the HP label was a great way for me to be part of this celebration of all things British."

Ten per cent of the proceeds from all sales are being donated to birth charity Tommy's.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61800

06/09/2005 | 15:57:44

Opting organic a question of taste

Organic consumers prefer the taste of organic products to food that is produced with chemicals, a survey carried out by the Soil Association has found.

These foods are produced without the aid of pesticides and other treatments, and livestock are reared on natural feeds, thereby removing artificial chemicals from the food chain.

As expected, the research revealed that 95 per cent of organic consumers buy natural foods to avoid the intake of such preservatives, additives and pesticides, reports FoodProductionDaily.

However, this consumer group also preferred the taste of naturally grown produce, with 72 per cent of participants stating that the flavour of organic fruits and vegetables was better than those treated with chemicals.

And 71 per cent of the 813 people asked in the survey agreed that organic meat tasted better than the alternatives available too.

The report suggests that food producers could look to improving food formulations to meet this consumer trend, with particular opportunities arising for suppliers who source locally.

The Soil Association, the UK's main organic body, has about 2383 producers and 1227 processors as members.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62272-organic-market-ingredients>

06/09/2005 | 13:13:05

Australian Merlot producer finds UK Prestige

Playford Ros division, Prestige Agencies, has been chosen as the sole UK agent for the Australian wine producer Irvine Wines, and will distribute brands to retailers and small hotel and restaurant chains nationwide from November 1st.

Jim Irvine explained: "Although we are not a huge company...we play in the world Merlot scene, beating the best regularly in international competition," according to Leeds Today.

"I did not think we were reaching our full potential in the UK, hence the change to Playford Ros's Prestige Agencies," he continued.

Andrew Firth, Playford Ros managing director, said that Irvine is "renowned for producing the finest Merlot in the world".

"To represent Irvine in England is a tremendous honour," he added.

The Prestige Agencies division was recently set up by Playford to focus on attracting smaller producers who cater for the quality end of the UK's wine market.

"There are some really top producers in the New World who only produce small quantities," said Mr Firth.

"That suits us perfectly. They want to see it in our best hotels and restaurants, but might only want to sell 500 or 1,000 cases in the UK, which is not enough to interest the bigger companies," he continued.

Further information: <http://www.leedstoday.net/ViewArticle2.aspx?SectionID=40&ArticleID=1135697>

06/09/2005 | 12:43:41

FSA considers "allergen alert"

The UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) has said it is in the process of compiling guidelines concerning allergen labelling, particularly in the case of possible cross-contamination.

Having worked with food manufacturers, retailers and consumer groups, the FSA is now calling for views on the issue in a consultation that will last until December 6th this year.

New EU legislation aimed at protecting food allergy sufferers was introduced in 2004, and is being enforced from November this year.

Food labels will then have to give prominence to the inclusion of a range of possible allergen-containing foodstuffs, including gluten, fish, egg, peanut, soy, milk, nuts, celery, sesame seed and sulphites.

However, while deliberate allergenic ingredients will be covered under Directive 2003/89/EC, there is as yet no legislation on the subject of possible cross-contamination of allergens along the food chain.

The FSA's new document advises a voluntary code of best practice for determining whether food products that may have been contaminated should be labelled.

Consumers have expressed a preference for a symbol-style labelling regime, and one option the FSA is therefore considering is a single "allergen alert" symbol, says Foodnavigator.com.

The FSA said that its document is "intended to lead to a common understanding by food producers and retailers, enforcement bodies and consumers of when warning labels should, or should not, be used and what they mean for the affected consumer."

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62313-fsa-allergens-ingredients>

06/09/2005 | 10:32:48

B vitamins linked to cardiovascular disease

A trial carried out in Norway has concluded that administering high doses of B vitamins to patients who have experienced a heart attack could be counter-productive.

The Norwegian Vitamin Trial (NORVIT) looked at 3,749 patients from 35 Norwegian hospitals, and divided them into four groups at random.

One group was given a supplement of 0.8mg of folic acid each day; the second, 40mg of vitamin B-6; the third, both the supplements; and the fourth, a placebo.

The trial lasted for three years, and found that while no group experienced a benefit, there was a small increase in the risk of cardiovascular disease among the groups that took one of the vitamin supplements.

Furthermore, among the group taking both folic acid and vitamin B-6, the risk increased by as much as 20 per cent.

Doctors took to prescribing B vitamins when it emerged that they were capable of lowering the level of the amino acid homocysteine in the blood.

High levels of homocysteine have been linked to artery blockage, which can lead to heart attacks and stroke.

However, NORVIT principal investigator, Professor Kaare Harald Bonna, said that while the trial found "homocysteine levels were lowered by 30 per cent... this did not lower the patients' risk of cardiovascular disease".

"B vitamins should be prescribed only to patients who have B vitamin deficiency," he added.

Further information: <http://www.news-medical.net/?id=12934>

06/09/2005 | 09:57:10

Green tea sales seeing stars

Sales of green tea are soaring in the UK and elsewhere, boosted by celebrity endorsement.

Young women are the demographic group seeing the most significant swing to the beverage, seeking to emulate the lifestyle choices of stars such as Jennifer Lopez, Lindsay Lohan and Gwyneth Paltrow.

US drinks firm AriZona has seen sales at its UK business increase by 125 per cent in the last five months.

AriZona's lines include Pomegranate, Asia Plum, Mandarin Orange and Ginseng and Honey flavours, and its UK website is currently receiving more than 130,000 visitors a month.

The bottles are sold in health food chain Holland & Barrett, Whittard's of Chelsea and Julian Graves.

Angelos Panayiotou of AriZona UK, said: "We always knew that our drinks were packed with health benefits but to have stars such as Jennifer Lopez and Lindsay Lohan as fans undoubtedly helps.

"In the states the drinks are tipped to be as big as Coca-Cola and I don't see why that shouldn't happen here in the UK."

Rich in antioxidants, green tea is known to have a variety of health-boosting properties, including protection against heart disease.

However, Bill Gorman, executive director of the Tea Council, adds that people "have got bored with buying bottled water that has no real taste to it".

"Green tea is a tastier way to take in lots of water, but has added health benefits," he explained.

Further information: http://www.responsesource.com/releases/rel_display.php?relid=22514&hilite=

06/09/2005 | 09:54:33

Seafood firm sale to stimulate shellfish market

The UK's shellfish market is set to receive a boost from the acquisition of private importer and processor of chilled and frozen products, The Seafood Company.

The firm has been bought by Canada-based FPI for £18.3 million on a cash-free, debt-free basis, and offers "exciting growth opportunities", says Derrick Rowe, FPI's chief executive officer.

Demand for fish and seafood in the UK grows by approximately 8.5 per cent year-on-year, according to Foodnavigator.com, largely driven by consumers' ongoing concern for health and convenience.

"This acquisition positions us well for the growing value-added, fresh, chilled and ready-to-eat fish and shellfish sectors in the UK," explained Mr Rowe.

"It also allows for the exchange of industry knowledge and culinary innovation between The Seafood Company and Ocean Cuisine International," an operating division of FPI, he added.

The Seafood Company's products involve the processing of warm and coldwater shrimp, crab, lobster and molluscs.

Further information: http://www.food-business-review.com/article_news.asp?guid=ED6EBF85-817D-481D-99BF-841C6083E9EE

05/09/2005 | 16:10:06

Mussels of iron have range of benefits

Mussels can contain up to twice as much iron as is found in red meat, and more than eight times as much as in green leafy vegetables, a new report claims.

Commissioned by the Irish Sea Fisheries Board (BIM), it emphasises that mussels are outperforming traditional sources rich in iron, such as cabbage.

Research has also shown that iron is the single nutrient most lacking in the diet of schoolchildren, according to FishUpdate.

The study suggests that children might benefit from eating more shellfish as well as Omega-3 rich oily fish.

The BIM would therefore like more shellfish to be included in school meals, adding that it is a generally healthy source of food, low in fat.

Evidence also suggests that high doses of iron benefits pregnant women, as it is used to help the unborn child generate new blood cells.

At the same time, a lack of iron in the blood can lead to anaemia, so increasing iron intake can help to combat the condition.

Further information: http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/3012/Report_says_children_need_mussels_for_a_healthy_life.html

05/09/2005 | 15:55:56

Innovation equals growth in enzymes

Product development is what leads to growth in the European market for enzymes to be used in food applications, according to industry analysts Frost & Sullivan.

The company says price sensitivity and market competition are the factors driving this, with the majority of manufacturers concentrating primarily on the improvement of existing products, as well as developing novel enzymes for niche applications.

"Researchers need to continuously develop novel technologies to identify and produce new enzymes," explains Kathy Brownlie, programme manager at Frost & Sullivan.

The company also suggests that increasing consumer demand for chemical-free foods offers enzyme manufacturers opportunities for product differentiation.

Manufacturers should therefore consider developing enzymes in various process conditions as suitable alternatives to conventional chemicals, the report concludes.

It also suggests that demand is being driven by factors such as improved communication channels between suppliers and end-users and the adoption of biotechnology by manufacturers.

At the same time, manufacturers should continue to attempt to overcome resistance to enzymes using GMOs, the report advised.

No further information.

05/09/2005 | 13:08:09

European bread and cereals sector beating expectations

The US and European markets for bakery products and cereals have successfully defended themselves from the threat of low-carb diets, according to a new report.

The year 2004 saw the US and European markets in these items grow by 3.2 per cent and 2.7 per cent respectively compared to 2003, and market analyst Datamonitor has predicted a similar rate of growth over the coming year.

In terms of market value, these increases amount to \$1,638 million in the US and \$3,588 million in Europe.

The report concludes that the bakery sector has managed to counter the negative press attracted by carbohydrates by tapping into a parallel consumer demand for healthier and more ethical products.

For example, this has been seen in a marked increase in "premium" products on the shelves, including wholemeal and granary breads, and organic and fair-trade lines.

Nick Beevors, consumer market analyst, said: "The surge in sales of functional, organic and fair-trade bakery and cereal products in 2004 demonstrates the modern Western consumer's concern with health and trade issues and their willingness to act on those concerns."

Datamonitor also predicts the European market for breakfast cereals will rise from \$6,944 million to \$8,024 million by 2009, with Eastern Europe in particular exhibiting an increasing preference for breakfast cereals in the morning.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61785&lk=rss

05/09/2005 | 11:29:09

Harrods selected for Vodka sake launch

Drinks company Extreme Spirits has launched WOKKA SAKi in the UK, with Harrods becoming the new premium spirit's first retail outlet.

Already extremely popular in the US, where it was launched in 2004, the 40 per cent ABV drink comprises a blend of micro-distilled British grain, Japanese honjozo-shu sake, and a hint of Asian fruit, including peach and apricot.

Priced at £25.95 for the Harrods launch, the usual price range will be between £25 and £30, and the marketing activities of Cellar Trends will also concentrate on exclusive bars in London, Manchester and Edinburgh, initially Zuma, Hakkasan and The Dorchester Hotel.

Tim Day, the spirit's creator and marketing director, said: "The brand's success in the US - where listings were gained in 960 venues in Florida alone within four weeks - gives us great confidence for a full UK launch.

"Our research in the trade indicates that the time is right to introduce a new premium product that offers a whole new appeal beyond the flavoured vodka category."

WOKKA SAKi has won awards at the San Francisco International Spirits competition for three years running in the flavoured vodka category: Double Gold in 2003, Gold in 2004, and Double Gold again in 2005.

Further information: http://www.responsesource.com/releases/rel_display.php?relid=22477&hilite=

05/09/2005 | 11:07:18

RSPCA urges poultry vigilance

The RSPCA has requested the British poultry industry to heighten security in response to the threat of bird flu from Asia.

The charity said that lessons should be learned from the foot and mouth disease crisis in the UK, and key biosecurity practices adhered to.

These include the disinfection of vehicles and wearing of protective clothing in all areas where contamination is thought possible.

Dr Arthur Lindley, the RSPCA's director of science, told the Daily Mail: "Good biosecurity measures should be a matter of routine but the increasing threat from avian influenza means that there can be no room for complacency."

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said that it would not be issuing a ban on keeping poultry outdoors, as has already been implemented in the Netherlands.

The announcement was welcomed by the RSPCA.

"Such loss of the freedom they are accustomed to could cause considerable stress to the birds and could lead to feather-pecking and aggressive behaviour. Stressed birds also have an increased risk of disease," said Dr Julia Wrathall, head of farm animals.

However, the organisation said it had reservations about a perceived lack of detail about culling should it become necessary.

Further information: http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/articles/PA_NEWA21729621125657348A0?source=PA%20Feed

05/09/2005 | 10:41:33

Schools set to ban high-fat food

Blacklisting products that contain more than 10 per cent fat, and rationing others deemed unhealthy, are two of the proposals currently being considered by the School Meals Review Panel.

The panel will now report back to the education secretary, Ruth Kelly, in time for an announcement to be made at the Labour party conference later in the month.

If the 10 per cent criterion is adopted, beefburgers, chicken nuggets and turkey twizzlers would all be deemed unacceptable, as they contain 19 per cent, 17 per cent and 21 per cent of fat respectively.

However, nutritionists have conceded that children should still be permitted 'rare treats', and ice cream and chips, amongst other foods, could therefore be subjected to weekly rationing rather than face an outright ban.

Chips will be of the lower fat "chunky" variety, and will retain the potato's skin for extra nutrition.

Lentils, rice and fresh fruit will also make more regular appearances on menus.

Earlier this year, the department of education pledged to invest £220 million in raising nutritional standards in schools by increasing the average cost of a meal to 50p and 60p for primary and secondary schools respectively.

Further information: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-1764175,00.html>

02/09/2005 | 15:09:23

Premium products lead chocolate growth

Premium chocolate maker, Lindt & Sprungli, says that the higher end of the chocolate market is experiencing notable growth.

According to the company, understanding consumer spending patterns and expectations in the market is the key to developing successful chocolate products.

Lindt has recently announced positive first half profits of €3 million, writes FoodAndDrinkEurope.com, adding that this is due to consumers increasingly turning to better quality chocolate.

Lindt has identified trends in the European market and claims that UK customers are starting to turn from "consumption" to "degustation", resulting in higher demand for premium chocolate products, with Christmas and Easter particularly important times.

For UK chocolate manufacturers exporting to France, the market is geared towards "tablet" products, another area of growth according to Lindt.

German consumers, however, seem to choose "refined chocolate products", with a particular preference shown for praline goods.

According to Mintel's Global New Products Database, 834 new premium chocolate products have been launched in Europe in the past three and a half years.

Further information: <http://www.confectionerynews.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62209-lindt-sprungli-premium-chocolate-dark-chocolate-tablet-chocolate>

02/09/2005 | 13:03:00

BSE could be caused by human remains

A Professor from the University of Kent, Alan Colchester, has put forward a new, worrying theory for the origin of "mad cow" disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

In a report in the medical journal *The Lancet*, he posits that animal tissue and bones imported into the UK from India in the 1960s and 1970s may have contained the remains of human bodies, which was then turned into cattle feed.

These bodies could have been infected with Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), which would have been passed on to cattle in a reversal of the traditional theory for the spread of BSE, the report suggests.

The Hindu religion states that bodies of the dead are to be cremated and then placed in a river, preferably the Ganges that runs through India.

Professor Colchester explained that "gathering large bones and carcasses from the land and from rivers has long been an important local trade for peasants" in India and Pakistan.

He went on to suggest that "considerable quantities of human as well as animal remains" could therefore have been collected as a result of the countries' religious practices.

The widely held belief is that sheep remains infected with scrapie were responsible for BSE in cattle, and that people who ate contaminated beef developed a human form of CJD known as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD).

However, the new theory suggests it is the cattle that fell ill with a new version of the human disease, which was eventually passed back to humans.

Professor Colchester concluded: "Further investigations are needed into the sources of animal by-products used in animal feed manufacture."

Further information: http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/1125618158292_58/?hub=World

02/09/2005 | 11:33:30

More mould found in organic cornflakes

A study carried out on Belgian cornflakes has found a higher degree of contamination with the moulds known as fumonisins in organic varieties.

Researchers from Ghent University and the Agricultural and Biotechnology Centre in Hungary examined 205 samples of cornflakes for fumonisin B1 (FB1), B2 (FB2) and B3 (FB3).

The scientists carried out a screening test using a flow-through enzyme immunoassay method, and found FB1 concentrations of up to 464 g/kg, with FB2 and FB3 present at up to 43 g/kg and 90 g/kg respectively.

Although there was no discernible difference among the various brands tested, there was generally a higher degree of contamination among the organic samples, particularly in regard to FB1.

The toxins are one of a range produced by the various species of *Fusarium*, which infect the grain of wheat and maize.

They have been found to cause cancer in rodents and infect the nervous systems of horses, according to FoodProductionDaily.

The level of fumonisins in products can be reduced by cooking in a solution of alkaline water, as well as by baking and frying at a temperature of approximately 190 degrees C.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/news-ng.asp?n=62242-mycotoxins-cornflakes>

02/09/2005 | 10:40:21

Wetherspoon profits hit by "sensible" drinking

The pub group JD Wetherspoon has said a fall in its underlying profits can be attributed to its efforts to combat binge drinking, increased competition from supermarkets, and its experiment in implementing a "no smoking" policy.

Over the year to July 24th, pre-tax profits fell by 15 per cent to £46.1 million, with like-for-like sales down by 0.6 per cent.

The 665 pubs in the chain then experienced a further 1.7 per cent decline in like-for-like sales in August.

However, full year sales rose 3 per cent to £809.9 million, boosted by 13 new openings throughout the year.

The chain thought that customers were spending less owing to a growing awareness of binge drinking, helped by its promotion of "sensible drinking".

It had removed its two-for-one offers, and stopped offering discounts on the price of double measures of spirits, the company said.

There was also a "considerable" increase in competition from supermarkets, and the 36 pubs that had trialled a non-smoking policy had experienced a seven per cent decline in turnover.

"We feel that it is better to take the initiative, rather than adopting a non-smoking policy at the same time as everyone else, without significant previous experience of its impact," the company said in a statement.

Further information: http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/news/article.html?in_article_id=403381&in_page_id=2

02/09/2005 | 10:36:41

Somerfield told to sell 12 stores

The UK's Competition Commission (CC) has instructed supermarket chain Somerfield to sell 12 of the 115 stores it recently acquired from the Morrison group.

The CC considers that the stores having changed hands will have a substantial impact on the competitive landscape of 12 local grocery markets.

To address the imbalance, Somerfield is therefore to sell 12 primarily mid-range stores to other grocery retailers that are approved by the CC.

In the towns of Filey, Middlesbrough Linthorpe, Newark, Pocklington, Poole Bearwood, South Shields and Whitburn, the sales must be of the stores recently acquired from Morrisons.

However, in Peebles, Johnstone and Yarm, the chain has the option of selling either the acquired store, or an existing outlet identified by the CC.

In Littlehampton and Kelso, where existing stores had been closed following acquisitions, it is the closed stores that must be sold.

The inquiry originally identified 14 stores to be sold, but this was reduced to 12 when it was decided that acquisitions in Bedlington and Paisley would not be anti-competitive.

Christopher Clarke, chairman of the investigation, told just-food.com: "It is important for customers that competition in these local markets is restored and so Somerfield must now sell the specified stores to grocery retailers who are able to compete effectively on price, quality, range and service in these areas."

Further information: <http://www.breakingnews.ie/2005/09/02/story218869.html>

02/09/2005 | 10:33:21

Alcopop demand stabilising, says Diageo

The largest drinks company in the world has said that the recent decline in demand for ready-to-drink brands, such as alcopops, is beginning to level off.

Diageo reported an overall 2 per cent increase in operating profits over the year to June, and told investors that signs suggested its Smirnoff Ice range would receive a boost from a change in drinking trends.

The company cut back on promoting Smirnoff Ice products after sales fell by 19 per cent in the UK and by over 25 per cent in continental Europe, reflecting a more general decline in the popularity of so-called "alcopops", first launched in the 1990s.

Over the years they have lost market share to wine and spirits, with Diageo saying the trend had cut overall sales growth by one per cent in the course of the last year.

However, the firm said that the continuing importance of the ready-to-drink market was clear from the fact that it accounts for approximately 10 per cent of worldwide sales and six per cent of volumes.

"Better pricing and a stabilising ready-to-drink trend may give us the opportunity to improve on the net sales growth we achieved this year," said chief executive, Paul Walsh.

"We believe operating profit growth can be similar to that achieved in 2005 even after allowing for higher growth in marketing spend and higher pension costs," he added.

Further information: http://www.themanufacturer.com/uk/detail.html?contents_id=5883

01/09/2005 | 17:05:13

Patak's settles on ad agency

Indian food company Patak's has chosen Manchester-based advertising agency BDH/TBWA to begin work on the brand's first advertising campaign in two years.

The announcement follows a five-month review process, which saw the agency do battle with both Saatchi & Saatchi and VCCP for the contract.

The company's advertising was previously in the hands of Mitchell Patterson Grime Mitchell, but the £1 million account has not been active since the company was dissolved last year.

The new campaign will focus on Patak's range of Indian sauces, ready-meals, breads and pickles.

The decision was "very difficult", in the words of Fiona Mannion, group director of marketing.

"We were extremely impressed by the enthusiasm, creativity and vision for our business shown by all of the pitching agencies," she told Brand Republic.

Patak's competes in the Indian foods market with Sharwood's. It was first established in England in 1956, and distributes its lines to over 45 countries, as well as over 90 per cent of the UK's Indian restaurants.

Further information: <http://www.brandrepublic.com/bulletins/br/article/493027/bdhtbwa-wins-pataks-account-protracted-pitch/>

01/09/2005 | 17:02:10

Bakemark introduces non-hydro margarine

BakeMark UK has launched a trans-fat free alternative to Marvello, the market-leading cake margarine.

Non-Hydro Marvello is made from non-hydrogenated vegetable oil and allows bakers to produce healthier products, says the company.

Kerrie Medlicott, BakeMark UK's head of marketing, says that the health benefits of switching to a non-hydrogenated margarine, compared to a traditional hydrogenated brand, were becoming widely recognised.

Calling the new margarine the "Rolls Royce of margarines", Ms Medlicott added that the product had been developed with the consumer's health in mind.

BakeMark says that Marvello enhances cake volume, structure and mouthfeel, without compromising taste, according to just-food.com.

The launch comes soon after BakeMark's announcement that it will be phasing out trans-fats from its entire product range by the end of 2005.

Trans-fats are formed during the manufacture of processed foods, and mounting evidence suggests they raise cholesterol levels, which contributes to heart disease.

BakeMark's 400-strong product range includes brands such as Read-Bake, Caravan Brill and Arkady.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61762

01/09/2005 | 11:33:04

Ivy climbs down from number one

The Ivy in Covent Garden has been knocked off the top spot in influential London restaurant guide Harden's for the first time in nine years.

Perhaps famed more for its celebrity clientele than its food, it has been bettered in Londoners' collective opinion by Chez Bruce in Wandsworth, according to the guide's 2006 edition.

The guide also listed the Ivy as the second most disappointing restaurant and the fifth most over-priced.

However, Chez Bruce itself fell from second to third ranking in the category of "top gastronomic experience", while celebrity chef, Gordon Ramsay, rose to claim both first and second place, for his flagship venue in Chelsea and Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's respectively.

The guide is compiled from reports sent in by restaurant-goers, with 8,000 contributing to the latest edition.

Chez Bruce co-owner, Bruce Poole, commented: "I don't think for one minute that we are the best restaurant in London, but we are pleased to have done well in one of the guides that is quite highly respected. It means we are doing something right."

A spokeswoman for the Ivy, owned by Caprice Holdings, declined to comment.

Further information: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,632-1757382,00.html>

01/09/2005 | 11:02:49

Motorway services respond to health concerns

The food on offer at certain motorway service spots is to be given a makeover in line with consumers' increasing demand for healthier options.

The changes will also seek to encourage travellers to refresh themselves thoroughly before continuing on their journey, according to the Motorway service area operator Moto.

In particular, the familiar hot plates designed to keep food warm, are to be replaced by products that are cooked when ordered.

Although favourites will remain, there will also a marked increase in the number of pasta dishes and freshly made salads available, notably a new Caesar salad.

Larger chilled areas will offer an enhanced selection of sandwiches, including paninis and foccacia, and a continental breakfast selection will be offered alongside the "traditional English" variety.

Brian Lotts, managing director at Moto, said: "The result is our new-look service areas that will encourage people to linger and therefore properly relax and refresh themselves before continuing their journey," according to just-food.com.

"What we have done is not dramatic but it is a change for the better and a reflection of the growing desire that people have for a healthier lifestyle and healthier food to accompany it," he added.

The changes are being implemented in response to a programme of customer research.

Further information: http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=61763&lk=rss

01/09/2005 | 10:42:39

Fruit and veg message causing confusion

The UK's consumers are only eating three of the government's recommended five daily portions of fruit and vegetables, partly owing to confusion over what actually constitutes a portion.

In fact, as many as 40 per cent of the 1,000 people polled by the mini-drinks brand Vie Shots said they did not know what counted towards their "five-a-day" allocation.

More than eight out of 10 thought that a potato counted when it does not, and over half, 53 per cent, surprisingly said they didn't have the time to eat their five portions.

By region, Scots fared the second worst, with 72 per cent failing to heed the advice, but London claimed the title of least health conscious region in the UK.

In terms of professions, bankers were joined by shop assistants, and incredibly, chefs, as the unhealthiest workers in the UK.

A spokeswoman for Vie Shots said: "These people don't seem to have the time to squeeze in their five portions a day," according to the Glasgow Evening Times.

The research also revealed that 97 million pieces of fruit and vegetables a week are being thrown away, at an annual cost of £1.5 billion.

Further information: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/thehealthnews.html?in_article_id=360939&in_page_id=1797

01/09/2005 | 10:36:54

Cadbury Schweppes to sell European Beverages

Cadbury Schweppes has announced it is selling its Europe Beverages business to focus on the higher growth potential of its confectionery business.

Proceeds from the sale will initially go towards reducing the group's net debt, which stood at £4.3 billion at June 2005.

European Beverages primarily focuses on the mineral water, still drinks and carbonated sectors, and is the third largest European player in the latter, with a sales volume of 1.7 billion litres.

The main brands are Schweppes tonic water, Orangina, TriNa, Oasis and La Casera, accounting for approximately 75 per cent of total sales

Although some customers are located in the UK, sales are concentrated in Western continental Europe, notably France, Spain and Germany, which together account for around 85 per cent of total sales.

Todd Stitzer, CEO, said: "Europe Beverages has a great portfolio of brands, a talented management team and strong routes to market.

"However, the potential for growth and value creation is greater in the Group's other operations, and therefore we believe it is in the best interests of our shareowners to investigate a sale of the business."

The group's confectionery sales grew by six per cent in 2004, compared with an average annual growth of three per cent in the preceding three years.

Further information: <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=10000102&sid=aFgVmaTkxQU&refer=uk>