

FDIN Archive

February 06

Genetic link between red meat and bowel cancer

Date

01/02/2006

Article Text

British scientists believe they have discovered why eating a diet rich in red meat seems to increase the risk of developing bowel cancer.

Diets high in red meat result in higher levels of damage to DNA, leaving the genetic code at greater risk of mutating and causing cancer, compared with vegetarian or higher fibre eating habits.

"This latest study, together with the compelling epidemiological evidence published last year, is an important step towards understanding, and potentially preventing this common disease," according to Professor Colin Blakemore, the chief executive of the Medical Research Council (MRC).

Researchers at the MRC's Dunn human nutrition unit in Cambridge showed last year that that people who regularly consume two portions of red meat per day carry a third higher risk of developing the disease, compared with those who indulge less frequently than once each week.

The lead investigator, Sheila Bingham, explained that it was difficult to probe further into the likely mechanisms of the link "due to the inaccessibility of the large bowel and the fact that there are no blood-borne risk markers in bowel cancer".

So the scientists monitored 21 volunteers who were subjected to three fortnight-long diets. First they feasted on meat rich meals featuring a large amount of beef and pork, then they moved onto vegetarian fare, followed by a third period of omnivorous eating but with a higher fibre content.

Cells from the lining of the volunteers' colons were obtained from stool samples, which revealed varying amounts of DNA damage, with the meat diet resulting in the greatest genetic impact.

Researchers from the Open University (OU) department of chemistry in Milton Keynes have previously shown that chemicals derived from compounds in meat can lead to changes in DNA code. It is this mechanism which is thought to elevate bowel cancer risk.

The OU's Professor David Shuker said: "These combined discoveries have allowed us to link red meat consumption to an increased risk of bowel cancer and may give us some clues about developing a screening test for very early changes related to the disease."

FDA to rule on insect dye

Date

01/02/2006

Article Text

The US Food and Drug Administration is considering proposals to require manufacturers to list the use of insect-derived dyes on product labels.

Produced from the ground bodies of the Cochineal beetle, Carmine and Cochineal extract are both utilised in food, pharmaceutical and cosmetic items.

The regulatory body is concerned that the ingredients can potentially cause an allergic reaction in some consumers, which can result in anaphylactic shock.

At present, manufacturers are only required to state whether the product contains added colouring and this move is indicative of increased consumer sensitivity to ingredients from an animal source.

Commonly found in foods such as ice cream, fruit beverages and sweets, the extracts are also utilised in colour cosmetics such as rouge and lipstick.

The Centre for Science in the Public Interest is calling for manufacturers to specify on product labels that the dye is "insect-based".

No further information.

Sugar-free gum fuelling Brits' chewing

Date

01/02/2006

Article Text

Britain's love affair with chewing gum shows no signs of ending, according to the latest figures from Mintel.

It found that in 2005 Britons chewed their way through £317 million worth of chewing gum, an increase of some 28 per cent on 2001 figures.

The growing market is particularly fuelled by sugar-free gum, which now accounts for 76 per cent of the sector, a growth of 38 per cent from 2001.

Julie Sloan, senior marketing analyst at Mintel, said that older adults have been wooed by marketing claims of dental advantages from gum

"Once chewed mainly just for the taste, gum has benefited from high levels of new product development, which have encouraged people to try some for the first time," Ms Sloan said.

"What is more, varieties that claim to whiten teeth or improve dental hygiene have proved extremely successful, appealing to older adults in particular. High levels of promotion and advertising by the leading manufacturers have also undoubtedly boosted the market".

Mintel also suggests that the proposed smoking ban will help gum sales as smokers' reach for an alternative when in a public place.

No further information.

FSA announces plans to cut food and drink bureaucracy

Date

01/02/2006

Article Text

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has announced it will launch a public consultation in efforts to cut unnecessary food and drink legislation.

It estimated that the UK's manufacturers currently lose £200 million a year by being hindered by unclear regulations.

Public health benefits could also ultimately be compromised by incomprehensible legislation, the FSA warned.

An FSA spokesperson stated yesterday (Tuesday): "Simplification means to clarify or change regulations to help people comply with regulations without removing necessary protection for the public.

"The burdens may fall on private, public, therefore including enforcement issues, and voluntary sectors.

"They can also originate from either domestic or European regulatory proposals."

The consultation will see legislation such as that currently relating to the bottling of water in the UK reviewed. It will also outline the transfer of the food industry's paper records to a central electronic database.

"Making compliance with legislation easier for businesses should enhance consumer protection offered by regulations," the FSA emphasised.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=65522-fsa-legislation-hygiene>

Organic milk sales putting strain on production

Date

01/02/2006

Article Text

Consumer demand for organic milk is growing at such a rate that production needs to be upped, according to a new report by the Organic Milk Supplier Cooperative (OMSC).

Recent advertising campaigns showing organic milk to have higher vitamin and antioxidant content are thought to have driven sales substantially, which now stand at over £100 million per annum.

The new consumer shift towards organic dairy produce marks a reversal of trends from a few years ago, when many farmers who switched to organic milk in an effort to boost sales found themselves burdened with unwanted excess.

According to the OMSC report, five per cent of supermarket milk sales are currently organic, with consumer demand set to boom by 45 per cent this year.

Last year organic milk sales grew by 91 per cent in the 12 months up to November, and had grown 30 per cent in the ten years prior to that.

The boom in demand for organic milk mirrors the UK's increased appetite for organic food in general. Ten years ago the market was worth £100 million a year; now it is valued at £1.25 billion.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=65513-organic-milk-dairy-processors-britain>

UK firm picks up Dutch prize

Date

01/02/2006

Article Text

UK-based Amcor Flexibles was among the conglomerate of eight manufacturers that picked up the Dutch Supply Chain Prize for a flow-wrapped 500g bag of chicory.

The award is aimed at distinguishing cooperation between different companies that results in the arrival of a new concept on the Dutch market.

The winning flow wrap, which is manufactured by Amcor at Ledbury in the UK, maintains the correct modified atmosphere to optimise shelf life.

An anti-misting system which enhances the visibility of chicory to consumers and maintains freshness is also part of the wrap's success.

Judges recognised that the collaboration between Amcor and seven other firms had ultimately resulted in reversing chicory's consumer decline, as sales increased by 20 per cent.

No further information.

Increased GM acreage

Date

02/02/2006

Article Text

There has been an 11 per cent increase in global biotech acreage from 2004-05, reports International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA).

According to its latest report, 222 million acres were planted by growers in 21 countries in 2005, an increase of 22 million acres on the previous year.

The ISAAA also claims the planting of genetically modified crops is likely to grow at a faster rate over the coming years.

It states the increased awareness of benefits of GM crops among growers, easier access to GM seed and the potential for growing crops with health, energy and processing advantages would drive the growth.

"Biotech crops deliver substantial agronomic, environmental, economic, health and social benefits to farmers and, increasingly, to society at large," the report states.

America is currently the largest producer of GM crops but the ISAAA predicts significant take-up in the developing world and Europe over the next decade.

No further information.

Tetra Pak announces new packaging

Date

02/02/2006

Article Text

Tetra Pak has announced the worldwide launch of new polymer packaging that the company is claiming is thinner but stronger than the current version.

According to food processing and packaging website FoodProductionDaily.com, the new packaging has an inner coating that is stronger and more reliable than the standard packaging the company produces.

The worldwide launch follows tests of the packaging in a number of countries.

"We have already produced over 50 billion packages around the globe with Australia, Brazil and Japan leading the way and both manufacturers and retailers are reporting better product performance and more cost-efficient operations," said Gunther Lanzinger, Tetra Pak's project director for its ambient carton unit.

The company said that by March, the new packaging technology would be the standard for carton packages in the industry, with all Tetra Pak factories around the world using it.

Tetra Pak's new packaging is branded Wide, using a greater percentage of renewable paperboard and less polymers. This reduces energy consumption by some 17 per cent, according to FoodProductionDaily.com.

For more information go to <http://www.azom.com/details.asp?newsID=4806>

Mediterranean diet could benefit pregnant women

Date

02/02/2006

Article Text

A Mediterranean-style diet could positively benefit unborn babies while in the womb, according to new research.

According to a survey by US charity March of the Dimes, French babies have the lowest global rate of birth defects, with just 39.7 problems per 1,000 births on average. Spain

and Italy also saw much lower incidences of heart problems, spinal disorders and other defects.

Professor Bernatte Modell, of the Royal Free and University College Medical School, told the Independent that a diet rich in leafy vegetables and folic acid typical of these Mediterranean countries could be a major factor.

"The Mediterranean diet doesn't just prevent heart disease - it seems to have an effect on birth defects too," she said.

"It is probably the effect of folic acid, but it is quite possible there are multiple vitamin effects."

She added: "Fortifying flour with folic acid globally should be a priority.

"They have done it in North America and they are seeing a fall in defects."

The UK was ranked fifth in the March of the Dimes survey, with an average of 43.8 defects per 1,000 births.

No further information.

New enzymes improve product texture

Date

02/02/2006

Article Text

Scientists in the EU claim to have developed a new group of natural enzymes capable of improving the texture of high-protein food products.

The new enzymes will be suitable for use in a range of bakery, dairy and meat products, and will reduce the need for other enhancing ingredients.

Professor Johanna Buchert, who coordinated the research project, told FoodNavigator.com: "By using these enzymes, food manufacturers can exploit the intrinsic components in the food matrix to obtain good texture.

"This means that the amounts of certain ingredients or additives normally used can be reduced."

She added: "The novel enzymes are especially good for use in low-calorie products.

"It is particularly important for consumers to like these types of products, yet obtaining the right texture is always problematic."

She explained that there is currently a small range of similar cross-linking enzymes on the market, but emphasised that none of these existing solutions are suitable across a range of products.

According to the project report, consumers showed positive reactions to the use of new technology to improve food texture.

"Consumers developed more positive attitudes towards the use of modern technology in food production and in enzyme production compared to a control group that did not taste the products with improved properties," the survey said.

For more information go to <http://www.bakeryandsnacks.com/news/ng.asp?n=65440-vtt-crossenz-enzymes>

UK wholesaler adds new organic lines

Date

02/02/2006

Article Text

Leading UK wholesaler 3663 First for Foodservice has announced the addition of 35 new organic and additive-free lines to its frozen, chilled and fresh sections.

The new range comprises 25 Soil Association-certified products, ranging from vegetables to ready meals, plus ten additive-free products including fish, sausages and nuggets.

Julie Moore, marketing controller for 3663, said: "Operators are finding that dietary requirements are becoming a greater consideration for their customers.

"Allergies, intolerances and food preferences play a major role in the choice of dining options a consumer will make, so catering for a wider range of needs is essential.

"We've introduced these new lines to meet the demand and give caterers a practical solution to topical food issues."

To specifically cater for allergies, many of 3663's new lines will be gluten and dairy-free.

No further information.

Fatty acids could be cancer catalyst

Date

02/02/2006

Article Text

The consumption of omega-6 fatty acids could speed up the development of prostate cancer, a study published in Cancer Research has warned.

In a previous study the acids, found in corn oil and many bakery products, were seen to produce enzymes upon contact with prostate cancer cells that sped up the tumour growth twofold.

Dr Millie Hughes-Fulford, who led the San Francisco VA Medical Centre team that conducted the original research, said: "After we added omega-6 fatty acids to the growth medium in the dish, and only omega-6, we observed that tumours grew twice as fast as those without omega-6.

"Investigating the reasons for this rapid growth, we discovered that the omega-6 was turning on a dozen inflammatory genes that are known to be important in cancer."

In the past omega-6 acids have also been linked to breast cancer.

The fatty acids are an increasingly common ingredient in modern foods, and scientists have become concerned that their proliferation is related the growing frequency of prostate cancer cases across the world.

For more information go to <http://www.bakeryandsnacks.com/news/ng.asp?n=65537-omega-corn-oil-prostate-cancer>

New software aids food packaging

Date

03/02/2006

Article Text

New software has been released that can help carry out necessary calculations regarding plastics design, and could therefore the boost food packaging process.

Moldflow Plastics Insight (MPI) 6.0 simulates plastics, and allows for their reaction to conditions such as temperature to be calculated, creating greater efficiency in the creation of adequate packaging for food and drink.

In addition, the software is capable of predicting air traps and to simulate gas penetration, as well as offering the groundbreaking capacity to simulate jetting phenomena.

Executive vice president Ken Welch commented: "The new 3D solver technologies in MPI 6.0 embody the culmination of a major research and development undertaking and employ the latest numerical simulation techniques to break down former speed and capacity barriers for our customers who increasingly rely on MPI/3D solutions to increase output and quality."

The rapidity of developing good quality food packaging will be even further stimulated by MPI 6.0's new 3D Warp solver technology, which can deliver results up to 35 times faster.

The software will also allow manufacturers of food packaging to more accurately account for the effects of processing on the performance of injection moulded plastic parts when subject to service loading.

For more information go to

<http://www.arcweb.com/community/indnews/display.asp?id=7439>

Diet food sales 'unrelated to obesity reduction'

Date

03/02/2006

Article Text

Increasing diet food sales does not mean that the average UK waistline is shrinking, according to a new study.

Research from independent market analyst Datamonitor concluded that consumers are likely to spend around £86 per person on diet products by 2009, but it will have little impact on obesity rates.

Both the UK and Germany have the highest proportion of seriously overweight consumers in Europe – with 21 per cent of people having a Body Mass Index (BMI) over 30. However, the growing number of diet-alternative food products is unlikely to reduce this figure.

The UK diet food and drink industry was worth around £4.6 billion in 2004 and it is predicted to expand to around £5.3 billion over the next three years. In particular, consumer expenditure on low-fat dairy products accounts for nearly 40 per cent of total expenditure on diet food and drink.

John Band, Data monitor analyst and author of this study, commented: "High-fat ice cream, milk, cheese and cream products are often considered unacceptable when dieting, and many consumers following a healthy lifestyle will also avoid these foods which are considered to be high in fat and cholesterol."

"As such, diet dairy products will remain very popular."

No further information.

DoH stands by fruit & veg scheme

Date

03/02/2006

Article Text

The Department of Health (DoH) has pledged its commitment to its National Fruit & Vegetable Scheme (NFVS), saying that it has yielded significant results among Britain's schoolchildren.

With regional contracts coming to their renewal stage next month, the success of the programme has come under media scrutiny.

A DoH spokeswoman defended the initiative, saying: "The most recent evaluation shows that children participating in the scheme ate more fruit and vegetables than those not in the scheme, plus there was increased awareness and knowledge of the 5-A-DAY message among those children and their families."

She added: "Since this evaluation was undertaken, the scheme has expanded enormously.

"It now reaches nearly two million children in more than 16,000 schools.

"In some areas of the country the scheme has encouraged local initiatives to provide fruit and vegetables to other age groups."

She was quick to announce that coordinator contracts would be renewed for at least another three months beyond the end of the financial year while long-term plans for the scheme are discussed.

No further information.

Electrolysed water could replace chemical cleaners

Date

03/02/2006

Article Text

An American firm has announced the advent of an oxidative water technology that it claims could make traditional chemical cleaners redundant for the disinfection, hydration and moisturisation of food products.

EAU Technologies has developed a non-toxic water treatment that cuts down on bacteria, virus and mould proliferation, with special generators that create acidic and alkaline fluids with cleansing and sanitising properties.

Currently, chemicals such as trisodium phosphate, acidified sodium chlorite and quaternary ammoniums are used to disinfect foods.

EAU stated: "The fluid is also extremely cost-effective when compared to antimicrobials such as trisodium phosphate (TSP), among others."

The facility is sold by EAU as a water electrolysis generator which contains a mixture of cell technology, salt and electricity that can kill pathogens in under a minute.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=65446-eau-bacteria-pathogens>

Supplements could make fish safer for pregnant women

Date

03/02/2006

Article Text

Taking vitamin E and selenium could reduce the danger of mercury from fish, meaning that pregnant women could eat more and allow their babies to benefit from omega-3 oils, according to a new report.

Methylmercury (MeHg) is found in varying concentrations in all fish, and can harm unborn foetuses if consumed in excess. The US Federal Drugs Association has recommended that expectant mothers eat no more than two or three portions of fish a week.

The recent study, conducted by the McGill University in Quebec, found that vitamin E and selenium significantly reduced the effects of mercury toxicity in rat offspring.

Peter Beyrouthy, lead researcher, said: "[We] found that when selenium and vitamin E were given together MeHg toxicity in adult rats was reduced, and improved growth, fewer clinical signs of toxicity and longer survival time occurred."

Recent estimates from the US Environmental Protection Agency gauge that one in six American women has blood mercury levels high enough to pose danger to a foetus.

The new discovery could result in supplements reducing the risk of foetal damage to the 650,000 babies born in the US every year.

For more information go to

<http://www.foodanddrinkeurope.com/news/ng.asp?n=65560-omega-selenium-merthylmercury>

White bean extract could help weight loss

Date

03/02/2006

Article Text

A starch neutralising agent in certain white beans could lower the glycemic index (GI) of white bread, giving consumers a longer feeling of satiety and releasing energy more slowly, according to a new study.

The study, presented at the Third Annual Supplements Conference, suggested that Phase 2 Starch Neutraliser could be used in a variety of products such as pizza, bread and cake, to encourage weight loss.

Foods containing a high GI are digested and metabolised quickly, leading to large variations in blood glucose levels and insulin demand, whereas low-GI products are digested at a calmer rate and leave the eater feeling full for longer, meaning they ultimately feel like consuming less.

Mitch Skop, new product development manager for Pharmacem Laboratories, one of Phase 2's manufacturers, said: "With the appropriate dose and formulation, the Phase 2 white bean extract appears to be a novel and potentially effective method for reducing the GI of existing foods without modifying their ingredient profile."

According to its creators, the ingredient has no effect on the taste and texture of target products and can be incorporated at different stages of production.

For more information go to <http://www.bakeryandsnacks.com/news/ng.asp?n=65430-pharmacem-phase-gi>

Consumers urged to 'Be Treatwise'

Date

06/02/2006

Article Text

Chocolate giants Cadbury's and Mars have announced plans to put health warning labels on their products.

The two confectioners claim that the warnings will consist of a Be Treatwise logo and an explanation of how chocolate bars and other sweets can play a part in a balanced diet.

The companies have stated that the healthy eating messages will be placed on millions of "treats", providing consumers with information about guideline daily amounts (GDAs).

Cadbury Schweppes and Masterfoods UK, owner of the Dairy Milk and Mars brands, said that the labels on wrappers will also advise people to "Be active for 30 minutes" and direct them to the betreatwise website.

The Be Treatwise campaign was launched by industry trade group the Biscuit Cake Chocolate and Confectionery Association (BCCCA).

Simon Baldry, managing director of Cadbury Trebor Bassett, said: "Communicating our 'Be Treatwise' message to millions of consumers daily by our packs is the most powerful way we can help people to understand and enjoy our products as part of their diet."

Penny Hawley, director general of the BCCCA, added: "People understand that chocolate and sweets are treats which can and should be enjoyed in the context of everything people eat and do."

For more information go to

http://www.cadburyschweppes.com/EN/MediaCentre/PressReleases/cadbury_be_treatwise.htm

Manchester enjoys local wine boom

Date

06/02/2006

Article Text

Despite the increasingly cosmopolitan fame of its restaurant industry, Manchester has never been known for its vineyards.

But all that is set to change if a group of allotment owners succeed in their project to introduce the first, authentically home-grown Mancunian wine.

Company boss Michael Tait has appealed for fellow enthusiasts to join him in setting up a grape growers' co-operative, after the success of 100 vines growing on his allotment plot since 2001.

Having spent years searching for the best variety to grow in Manchester, Michael selected French and German grapes and has now produced dozens of bottles of red and white, all named, packaged and labelled.

Speaking to the Manchester Evening News, he described local wine production as "a totally viable idea", but added: "I am still looking for someone to help with the actual winemaking side, someone with a lot of knowledge to get the best from the grapes."

Wine is fast becoming an unlikely regional delicacy, after Didsbury resident John Firth set up his own vineyard last year.

Although English wine has mainly been the preserve of Gloucestershire and Sussex, with the most northerly vineyard residing in Leeds, the new growers hope to exploit the cool summer breezes in Manchester, with grapes known to flourish best in such conditions.

For more information go to

http://www.manchesteronline.co.uk/men/news/s/202/202337_heres_to_chateau_dids_bury.html

Children are 'staying quiet' over eating disorders

Date

06/02/2006

Article Text

Over half of children suffering from eating disorders wait at least six months until talking to someone about it, according to new research.

The Eating Disorders Association (EDA) examined 1,000 adolescents and infants with eating illnesses.

According to the survey, 40 per cent of parents thought they would recognise symptoms in their child, while just 21 per cent of children said that their parents had noticed it.

Susan Ringwood, chief executive of the EDA, emphasised the importance of communication between offspring and parents.

"By talking about eating disorders with their teenage children, parents can help to destigmatise it, just like they do with 'the talk' on drugs and sexual health," she said.

"You can't cause an eating disorder by talking about it, but you can prevent it."

An estimated 1.1 million people in the UK suffer from an eating disorder, with the 15-25 year-old age group particularly at risk.

Among other things, media presentation of models and celebrities was found to be responsible for the increase in eating-related illnesses, with 42 per cent of those asked saying that "normal-sized" bodies on television and in magazines would help reduce the frequency of disorders.

For more information go to <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-2027022,00.html>

Industry body suggests shepherd certificate

Date

06/02/2006

Article Text

Shepherds, farmers and vets should be given increased opportunities for formal and informal training, including certification schemes, according to industry body the Sheep Vet Society (SVS).

In a report entitled Sheep Welfare in the UK, the SVS outlined the decreasing number of experienced shepherds in Britain, emphasising the need for improvement programmes and monitoring.

Linda Lowseck, president of the SVS, also suggested that regular vet visits should become a standard feature of flock management.

"All flocks under the care of a vet should receive at least one vet visit a year, when routine management and treatment of the flock should be discussed," she said.

Ms Lowseck added: "Only medicines discussed and noted at this visit would be supplied by the vet."

The National Sheep Association criticised the proposals, deeming them unrealistic.

Peter Morris, chief executive of the association, said: "There is always a need for people involved in livestock farming to be appropriately trained, but this may not always be best recognised by a formal qualification."

He added that the current lack of vets with the relevant expertise in sheep farming would make regular visits difficult to work.

For more information go to

<http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2006/02/03/92177/Certificate+to+keep+sheep.html>

Famous Grouse rolls out new whisky

Date

06/02/2006

Article Text

Scotch whisky firm Famous Grouse has announced a new product to join its existing portfolio.

The new ten-year-old whisky, designed specifically for the UK market, will be rolled out this month across the country.

Emma Heath, Maxxium UK's senior marketing manager for Famous Grouse, said: "The ten-year-old malt is an excellent addition to The Famous Grouse family and we're delighted to be rolling out this fantastic new product from Scotland's best loved whisky."

She added: "Our new malt marries the finest whiskies including the award-winning Highland Park and the Macallan.

"It will particularly appeal to whisky drinkers looking for a premium yet accessible malt whisky with a competitive price, perhaps even introducing them to the malt category for the first time."

Ms Heath emphasised that the product's distinctive purple packaging was sure to lure customers in.

For more information go to <http://www.thefamousgrouse.com/>

Arla losing £1m a day to boycott

Date

06/02/2006

Article Text

Arla Foods, the Danish dairy produce giant, estimates that it has lost in the region of £50 million at the hands of the Middle East boycott of Danish goods.

The boycott, which centres around the Muslim world's outrage over cartoons of the prophet Mohammed published in a Danish newspaper, is continuing to cost Arla an estimated £1 million a day.

Louis Honore, a spokesman for the firm, told the BBC that he was "saddened and very depressed" by the ongoing situation, saying that Arla was "caught in the middle" of the dispute.

"We have built up our business in the Middle East countries for 40 years, and have had production in Saudi Arabia for 20 years," he told the BBC.

"And then within five days or so this is all in ruins."

Arla has had to cut 170 jobs from its Danish plant to offset losses.

Despite having put full-page advertisements in the major Saudi newspapers outlining the official Danish line on Islam, goods companies such as Arla are continuing to feel the financial heat of the Middle East's wrath.

For more information go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4676614.stm>

Vanilla imports 'could be key to flavourings market'

Date

07/02/2006

Article Text

Imports of vanilla from Madagascar could be important for the future use of the flavour in beverage products, according to food and beverage development website FoodNavigator.

The website says that the recent decision to allow Synergy to import vanilla pods directly from Madagascar should guarantee supplies and stabilise vanilla prices - crucial for the drinks industry that uses the flavour.

"Synergy is delighted to have obtained this crucial import authorisation, which benefits our customers, consumers and the growers themselves," said Andrew O'Mahony, Synergy marketing manager.

"Organic foods are a large and growing market for our flavours and we're responding to customer needs by offering much improved traceability and provenance for the world's favourite sweet flavouring."

The British government, in association with the Soil Association, has passed the authorisation and Synergy expects to import around 1.5 tonnes of vanilla from Madagascar annually.

For more information go to <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/news/ng.asp?n=65636-synergy-vanilla-madagascar>

Winter Berries campaign off to fruitful start

Date

07/02/2006

Article Text

A campaign to increase soft fruit sales during winter has got off to a staggering start, with more than £1.5 million of publicity in its first few months.

The Winter Berries campaign has been developed to support the idea of berries as a no-fuss super-food. It provides a counterpoint to the yearly British Summer Fruits campaign.

Nine importers are cooperating on the initiative, which is being managed by Sputnik Communications.

So far the promotion has seen sampling events and the inclusion of berries on the menu at a number of high-profile and celebrity events including the Mencap Ball and parties held by glamorous underwear company Myla.

Kate Shanahan from Sputnik said: "We've had a huge amount of press coverage. Just in December and January we've generated around £1.5 million worth of editorial coverage across a range of national media."

Laurence Olins, chairman of Winter Berries, said: "Speaking on behalf of the nine importers who support the Winter Berries campaign, we are delighted with the results so far.

"The campaign has generated tremendous media coverage which appears to have increased sales across the categories."

For more information go to <http://www.winterberries.co.uk/index.htm>

Food industry seeks worker protection

Date

07/02/2006

Article Text

A coalition of stakeholders in the food industry has written to Tony Blair, calling for his backing for a raft of delayed worker protection laws.

The consortium of farmers, trade unionists, manufacturers and retailers is campaigning for the introduction of the Gangmasters Licensing Act, two years after the widely-publicised deaths of 23 immigrant cockle pickers at Morecombe Bay.

The letter claimed to speak for a consensus across the industry, in calling on the government to minimise exemptions from the Act, which covers the working conditions of 600,000 employees.

"Exclusions must be kept to a minimum, food processing must not be removed from the scope of the Act and the timetable for issuing licences must be adhered to," the letter said.

The Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004 establishes the Gangmasters Licensing Authority to set up and operate the licensing scheme for labour providers working in agriculture, shellfish gathering and associated processing and packaging sectors.

New offences, including operating without a licence, engaging the services of an unlicensed gangmaster and using false documentation, carry a maximum penalty of ten years in prison.

For more information go to <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040011.htm>

Food will whistle when ready

Date

07/02/2006

Article Text

A new technology that lets food whistle when ready to eat could be set to revolutionise the ready-meal sector across the UK.

Swedish firm MicVac has created a patented valve in a peelable lidding film that comprises part of the food's packaging.

Food is packed and sealed raw into the container, and is then cooked at the factory in a microwave tunnel.

During the heating process, the valve opens and releases steam and oxygen. The food is cooked, vacuum sealed and sent to supermarkets.

When the meal is re-heated by a consumer the valve whistles to alert the diner that the food is ready.

Although the food has an extended shelf-life of 28 days, MicVac insists that the technology it uses does not alter the taste or texture of its products.

MicVac has joined forces with David Salkeld, the former head of the Grampian Food Country Group, and is currently looking to market the technology in the UK.

For more information go to <http://www.micvac.com/>

Premier Foods announces product expansion

Date

07/02/2006

Article Text

UK-based manufacturer Premier Foods has announced its intention to move into the table sauce and condiments sector.

The company will market its new lines under the Branston brand in an attempt to "revitalise and add value to the stagnation being seen last year in the table sauces sector".

Helena Jevons, Branston brand controller at Premier Foods, said: "We believe the table sauces category is starved of innovation and, in order to enjoy growth, now needs a second, great tasting alternative to the brand leader."

The firm hopes to bring in revenues of £20 million a year from sales of the new table sauces by 2008, with an overall aim to make Branston a £70 million a year brand by the same time.

All new sauces will be marketed via a TV advert campaign, as part of a £5 million advertising programme that carries the slogan "get saucy with Branston".

For more information go to http://www.just-food.com/news_detail.asp?art=63319&lk=rss

Retailer association issues supplier guidelines

Date

07/02/2006

Article Text

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) has published guidelines to help suppliers meet and understand its certification standards on food.

The consortium, which has accredited a total of about 5,500 production sites globally so far, decided to issue the guidelines after some smaller companies, particularly those from the new EU member states, asked for help comprehending the standards required for certification.

"Most large UK retailers will require their supplier to have gained certification to the appropriate BRC global standard so we are pleased to be able to offer these guidelines," Kevin Swoffer, head of technical services at BRC said.

"They outline in simplistic terms exactly what needs to be done to meet the requirements of the Standard."

He added: "We have produced these guidelines as a direct response to requests from companies seeking to meet accreditation for the first time and from smaller suppliers who don't have the technical knowledge some of the larger organisations have."

The standards were originally developed in 1998 after retailers in the UK decided to consolidate the various requirements they required suppliers to meet into one standardised certificate.

For more information go to <http://www.brc.org.uk/defaultnew.asp>

Study begins into fatty food and mood link

Date

08/02/2006

Article Text

A UK university is studying the link between fatty food and how it affects our mood.

Scientists at Nottingham University have received funding from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council in order to discover why food that is damaging to our health is so tasty to us.

Results of the three-year study could help manufacturers design low-fat foods that give us the same feelings of satisfaction that less healthy foods create.

Texture, as well as chemical signals given to the brain, will be examined during the study.

Professor Robin Spiller, of the university's Wolfson Digestive Diseases Centre, said: "The taste and texture signals from the mouth and the aroma signal from the nose interact with each other in the association areas of the brain to influence our likes and dislikes for food.

"Nottingham food scientists have shown that swallowing a food increases the delivery of the food's aroma to the nose and the thickness of food in the mouth alters taste, but we still do not know why fat has such a strong effect on increasing our preference for food."

Unilever have also backed the research, as any information on how to make low fat options tastier would be vital for the food industry.

For more information, see www.nottingham.ac.uk/public-affairs/press-releases/index.phtml?menu=pressreleases&code=NOTT-14/06&create_date=30-jan-2006

PepsiCo to release new milkshake product

Date

08/02/2006

Article Text

PepsiCo is to release a new range of milkshake products based on the ice cream brand, Ben & Jerry's, Associated Press has reported.

The deal between PepsiCo and the ice cream producer will be Ben & Jerry's' first licensing agreement.

"What we're really trying to do is bring the indulgence and reverence," of Ben & Jerry's to the new range, said Elizabeth McDonough, Ben & Jerry's associate new product manager, according to the press agency.

"For us it's about leveraging Pepsi's expertise in beverages combined with our experience in making indulgent products."

She revealed that the new product should hit the shelves in the summer.

The production of the new drink is in line similar moves from PepsiCo and the Coca-Cola company to increase their non-carbonated range in the light of changing consumer tastes.

Both companies are launching new coffee flavoured drinks this year and Coca-Cola recently reported decreased profits as a result of a marketing push for its new water and orange juice brands.

Further information:

www.boston.com/news/local/vermont/articles/2006/02/06/pepsi_to_sell_ben__jerrys_drink/

Europe unfairly blocked GM products, says WTO

Date

08/02/2006

Article Text

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has decided that the European Union did unfairly block imports of GM products from the US.

Argentina, Canada and the US complained to the WTO back in May of 2003 that the EU's refusal to allow the crops in between 1998 and 2004 was a move to protect European farmers from competition.

The EU had argued that it called the moratorium on imported GM crops in order to give itself enough time to collect relevant data and implement legislation dealing with the issue.

In its preliminary decision, the WTO said that the moratorium was in effect a ban on GM imports - a move that contravenes its international trade rules.

The EU has responded by saying that there is no ban in place, with over 30 genetically modified organisms (GMOs) having received marketing approval within its borders. It says it is actually one of the largest GMO importers.

"The claim that there is a moratorium on approval of GM products in Europe is self-evidently untrue," it said in a statement.

"The EU has always acknowledged that biotechnology offers promising avenues to develop agricultural production, in particular for developing countries, and it can contribute to the fight against food insecurity."

The final verdict from the WTO should appear later this year.

The EU's full response to the verdict can be seen at europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/06/61&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

DSM develops new flavours production technology

Date

08/02/2006

Article Text

DSM, the pharmaceutical, food and agrochemical product production company, has announced that it has developed a new method of producing its processed flavours.

The technology should improve product range, consistency and food safety, the company said.

It also announced that it is to invest in a new plant that will use the new technology that was developed in partnership with food technologists.

The facility is to be built in Shanghai, China, and will double DSM's production capacity of processed flavours. Construction on the plant should begin in March. Investment in the project is around €10 million.

Feike Sijbesma, a member of DSM's managing board, said: "The investment in a new facility provides an accelerated growth path into the Asian and Chinese process flavours market, from which our new and existing customers will benefit."

Fedde Sonnema, business unit director, savoury ingredients, added: "Demand for our process flavours has increased significantly over the past few years.

"This new plant will support us in our ambitious future growth plans and gives us the opportunity for expanding our presence in the emerging Chinese market."

Process flavours are used in many food products to enhance specific tastes within them.

It is hoped that production at the new plant will begin in April of next year.

More information is available at
www.dsm.com/en_US/html/media/press_releases/05_06_china_investment_dfs.htm

Unilever close to Bird's Eye sale

Date

08/02/2006

Article Text

Unilever has reportedly found a buyer for its frozen foods brands.

The company announced that it was to sell its frozen foods operations last year. Bird's Eye is the company's UK frozen foods supplier. It also owns the Findus and Igloo brands outside of the UK.

A report that appeared in the Independent on Sunday suggested that the private equity firm Capvest was one of the leading candidates for the purchase.

The latest speculation suggests that Unilever will make an announcement on the purchase by the end of the week.

Frozen food sales from the company's brands are thought to have dipped as a result of consumers opting for fresher produce.

Unilever reportedly had the third largest packaged foods business behind Kraft and Nestle. It also produces brands such as Flora, Knorr and Hellmann's mayonnaise.

Unilever's fourth quarter results are also released this week.

For more information on Unilever's food brands, see:
www.unilever.com/ourbrands/foods/default.asp

McDonald's launches nutritional information packaging

Date

08/02/2006

Article Text

The fast food giant McDonald's has today launched new packaging which includes nutritional information about the company's products.

Calorie, carbohydrate, fat and protein content are all documented on the new packets, as the company seeks to further its more healthy reputation.

The move will be backed up with literature in McDonald's outlets and also details on its website.

The first stores to feature the new packaging were in Torino – the location of the Winter Olympics of which McDonald's is a sponsor.

"We listen closely to our customers and understand how important transparency is to them. That's why we're putting nutrition information right into their hands," said Mike Roberts, McDonald's president and chief operating officer.

"Our ongoing efforts to provide menu choice and variety and be an advocate for physical activity are further demonstrated here today."

The packaging information will also give customers a list of recommended daily amounts of the ingredients, so that they have something with which to compare the content of McDonald's foods.

Last year saw revenues for the company increase by seven per cent, while like-for-like sales increased by 4.2 per cent in the last quarter of 2005.

The company invested in marketing itself as a healthy restaurant offering new ranges of salads and abolishing the 'super size' meal option, after it came under heavy criticism for its unhealthy menu.

For more nutritional information, see www.mcdonalds.com/usa/eat/nutrition_info.html

Grapefruit can reduce cholesterol

Date

09/02/2006

Article Text

It is not an apple a day that keeps the doctor away but a grapefruit, a new study has suggested.

Israeli researchers from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem found patients who ate the equivalent of one grapefruit a day had lower cholesterol levels than those who did not due to the antioxidants in the fruit.

High cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, a condition which killed 114,000 Brits in 2003.

Lead investigator Professor Shela Gorinstein said fresh grapefruit juice and the fruit itself had equal heart-boosting benefits. One cup of fresh grapefruit is roughly equivalent to half a cup of juice.

During tests, the research team found that patients who ate red or white grapefruits experienced lower cholesterol levels than those who did not.

The team plans to study the fruit's effect on cholesterol levels further as grapefruit can react adversely with some medication.

For more information go to http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2006-02/acs-rga020806.php

Scientists investigate food and mood

Date

09/02/2006

Article Text

A UK university is studying the link between fatty food and how it affects our mood.

Scientists at Nottingham University have received funding from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council in order to discover why food that is damaging to our health is so tasty to us.

Results of the three-year study could help manufacturers design low-fat foods that give us the same feelings of satisfaction that less healthy foods create.

Texture, as well as chemical signals given to the brain, will be examined during the study.

Professor Robin Spiller, of the university's Wolfson Digestive Diseases Centre, said: "The taste and texture signals from the mouth and the aroma signal from the nose interact with each other in the association areas of the brain to influence our likes and dislikes for food.

"Nottingham food scientists have shown that swallowing a food increases the delivery of the food's aroma to the nose and the thickness of food in the mouth alters taste, but we still do not know why fat has such a strong effect on increasing our preference for food."

Unilever have also backed the research, as any information on how to make low fat options tastier would be vital for the food industry.

For more information go to

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/nottinghamshire/4690022.stm

Crunchy food 'talks to us via ultrasound'

Date

09/02/2006

Article Text

Researchers at the University of Leeds have discovered that large bursts of ultrasound are produced during the first second of someone biting into crunchy food.

This allows us to understand the texture of the food and according to the scientists it plays a big factor in deciding whether or not we like a food or not.

Using a microphone, an acoustic microscope, some software and a large range of biscuits to snap, these sound waves which humans cannot hear could be slowed down and a graph with a series of tall peaks was formed.

In testing, the researchers discovered that the public could recognise levels of crispiness in food as most of its deductions matched the machine results.

Food physicist Professor Malcolm Povey said: "Our research shows that the sound and feel of food in the mouth is as important as taste, look and smell in deciding whether we like something or not.

"Food is, in effect, talking to us and we innately understand what it's saying about texture by interpreting the sensations through our ears and mouths.

"We had no idea that the human ears and mouth were so adept at capturing and analysing this information, especially in the space of milliseconds; it's incredible."

For more information go to

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=37310>

Broccoli and brussels sprouts 'may prevent cancer'

Date

09/02/2006

Article Text

Scientists say they have discovered how vegetables such as broccoli and brussels sprouts can prevent cancer.

The team from Georgetown University in the US say a chemical found in cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli can boost DNA repair in cells, potentially stopping them from becoming cancerous.

The researchers found the vegetables contained a compound called I3C and a chemical called genistein. In tests they were shown to boost the amount of essential BRCA proteins in the body.

BRCA proteins prevent damaged genetic information, such as cancer, from being passed on to the next generation of healthy cells.

Since low levels of essential BRCA1 and BRCA2 proteins are found in cancer cells, the scientists suggested that by increasing the levels of the proteins, cancer could be prevented from developing.

Professor Eliot Rosen, who led the research, said: "Studies that monitor people's diets and their health have found links between certain types of food and cancer risk.

"However, before we can say a food protects against cancer, we have to understand how it does this at a molecular level."

"It is now clear that the function of crucial cancer genes can be influenced by compounds in the things we eat.

"Our findings suggest a clear molecular process that would explain the connection between diet and cancer prevention."

The findings were published in the British Journal of Cancer.

For more information go to

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/food/Story/0,,1704978,00.html?gusrc=rss>

'Too late' for effects of low-fat diet

Date

09/02/2006

Article Text

Adopting a low-fat diet in later life does not reduce the overall risk of cardiovascular disease in women, a new study has revealed.

The research – which examined almost 50,000 postmenopausal women in the US – found that those on a low-fat diet later in life did not significantly reduce their heart risk.

However, the Women's Health Initiative study, lead by authors from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Centre in the US, did find trends towards heart risk reduction in the subset of women in the low-fat diet group who cut their consumption of saturated fat and trans fat.

Nevertheless, only a 2.4 per cent reduction in low-density lipoprotein – known as LDL or "bad cholesterol – and a three per cent reduction in heart disease risk was noted overall.

"For heart-disease prevention, the data suggests that a greater emphasis on reduction of saturated and trans fats will be needed to have a major difference," said biostatistician Ross Prentice.

However, he also pointed out that the test was not as accurate as it should be, as many women involved in the study found it difficult to keep to the low-fat diet.

"In spite of their efforts, we achieved only 70 per cent of the difference in dietary habits between the two groups that we needed to get," he said.

For more information go to

<http://www.columbian.com/news/localNews/02082006news159246.cfm>

Marks & Spencer launches new banana

Date

09/02/2006

Article Text

Marks & Spencer is to begin stocking the Red Macabu banana, which has a distinctive flavour sweeter than most other types.

Whereas yellow bananas are considered too soft once their skin goes dark, the Macabu's skin turns from pinky red to dark maroon when the fruit is at its maturest and sweetest.

The banana's skin is coloured red by the presence of beta carotene, the same substance that gives carrots their orange colouring.

Emmett Lunny, fruit specialist at Marks & Spencer, said: "We are very proud to be the only retailer selling one of the best-tasting, best-looking bananas on the high street.

"Its awesome colour makes it perfect for the fruit bowl and its appealing flavour will add an exciting twist to fruit salads."

Jeanette Jackson, a nutritional biochemist from the University of Salford, said: "Bananas are fantastic fruit - they are naturally a great source of energy and contain potassium which has an important role in regulating fluid balance within the body.

"This new variety has an added bonus as it contains more of the antioxidant beta-carotene."

The bananas originate from Costa Rica, and have been on the high street chain's shelves since Monday.

For more information go to

http://www.manchesteronline.co.uk/men/news/s/203/203594_red_bananas_slip_into_shops.html

Scotland on track with organic targets

Date

10/02/2006

Article Text

The Scottish Executive has claimed that the country is on course to reach its targets for organic food.

Rhona Brankin, deputy minister for environment and rural development, said that farmers north of the border were on their way to satisfying 70 per cent of Scottish consumer demand for organic produce.

Speaking at Cairns Farm, a livestock farm in West Lothian funding through and Organic Aid Scheme grant, Ms Brankin said that the executive was committed to helping the sector continue to grow.

"Cairns Farm demonstrates how important the funding for organic farming is, and the extent to which it can be utilised," she argued. "They have embraced change and identified niche markets to make their quality organic produce available in the local area."

Using its own brand name, 'Mrs Hamiltons Beef and Lamb', the farm sells meat products directly via farmers markets in Scotland. As well as winning a West Lothian Environmental Award, the business also was granted funding for an on-site cutting facility completed in 2005.

Currently the largest product produced by Scottish organic farmers is finished lamb, followed by finished beef.

More information: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2006/02/08161402>

Food festival focuses on children

Date

10/02/2006

Article Text

A north Scotland food festival is set to kick off for the seventh time this coming June, according to the Press and Journal.

This year's Taste of Grampian festival will focus on highlighting to children how the local food industry shapes the region. Taking place at the Thainstone Centre in Inverurie, the event includes a variety of activities including outdoor Scottish music, cookery demos and dancing.

Last year the show attracted 12,000 people, and consumers are expected to spend £100,000 in 2006. It is hoped that 100 food firms from the local area will sign up for the event.

"One of the targets for the Grampian Food Forum is to create more awareness of the food that is produced locally. Here is the ideal opportunity to show the consumer what is made locally," said James Knowles, Aberdeenshire Council's head of economic development.

"There is room for many more companies to show their innovation and their new products in the marketplace."

Events already planned include a cooking dual between chefs Kevin Woodford and Phil Vickery, and an outdoor demonstration from the Two Fat Laddies.

More information: <http://www.tasteofgrampian.co.uk/>

Quest makes 'flavour breakthrough'

Date

10/02/2006

Article Text

Quest, the flavour company, has said that it has made a "major breakthrough" in the food and drink flavouring market with its latest innovation.

ImpaQ Taste Technology allows manufacturers to dramatically reduce the amount of sugar, salt and fat in food and drinks products.

"We always knew this was going to be a major breakthrough: the Quest approach to delivering deliciousness and at the same time allowing for low salt, fat and sugar content in products is unique in the industry," said Quest's flavours group vice president, Cees de Jong, according to Nutrition Horizon.

Since 1999, the company has submitted a total of 35 patent applications related to this flavour work to the relevant bodies and six have been granted.

The announcement comes following ten years of research and development into the company's flavouring technique as a solution for the use of quantities of salt, fat and, most poignantly for the beverage industry, sugar.

More information:

http://www.nutritionhorizon.com/newsmaker_article.asp?fSite=AR283&nw=hd&size=ld&sno=1&main_page=1&id=384

Growth in still drinks market

Date

10/02/2006

Article Text

The emergence of high quality premium still drinks has encouraged growth in the market, according to the latest research.

Beverage industry analysts Canadean has also revealed that the market is experiencing a much faster rate of growth than the carbonated soft drink market, spurred on by brands such as Snapple, Oasis and Minute Maid.

As part of the 2005 Global Still Drinks Report, Canadean said that the market for still drinks worldwide experienced a 5.5 per cent growth in sales in 2005, taking the total consumption to almost 32 billion litres.

This total, however, is still small when compared with the 194 billion litres of carbonated soft drinks that were consumed last year.

Canadean expects the still drinks market to expand by a total of four billion litres by 2008, encouraged by the average five per cent growth experienced annually since 1999.

Western Europe is the second biggest consumer of still drinks in the world, with approximately 11 billion litres consumed in 2005.

More information: http://www.canadean.com/richtext.asp?page_id=3&content_id=307

Welsh town opts to slow down the gastronomic experience

Date

10/02/2006

Article Text

A Welsh village is hoping to gain a reputation for being the slowest in the land. At producing food, that is.

The Slow Food revolution began in Italy during the 1980s in reaction to the spread of fast food outlets across Europe and their impact on our tastes and the environment.

Now Llandeilo, in Carmarthenshire, wants to be a poster town for the movement in Wales. Margaret Rees, the campaigns leader, told the Western Mail that the village was already set for the challenge, with a variety of home made food shops and gastronomic experiences on its door step.

"The main thing is to increase awareness of the natural environment and also increase the economic growth of Llandeilo," she said.

Fast food fans would be shocked to find that the village, with a population of 3,000 people, has only one fish and chip shop and no burger, kebab or coffee shop outlets.

Instead, patrons of the town will have to wait patiently for their food to be served to them. They can visit the Angel Hotel, which hides a brassiere behind its pub exterior, or visit local delicatessens, such as Barita's, that serve a variety of Welsh-made cheeses and Italian coffees.

More information: <http://www.slowfood.com/>

Parma ham sales rocket

Date

10/02/2006

Article Text

Parma ham, the dry cured meat that can only be made in a certain part of Italy, is being gobbled by more Brits than any other nation.

Figures from the Parma Ham Consortium (PHC) showed that sales in Britain during 2005 were up by 17 per cent on the year before. UK consumers got through 7.5 million packets of the food, totalling 722,598 kilos.

As a result, the industry body said that Britain kept its position as the largest export market for Parma ham producers, having boomed in popularity since the introduction of plastic packs for the food in 1992.

"It's an extremely positive result and reassures us of the value of the investment and marketing policies we have pursue," said Stefano Tedeschi, president of the PHC.

Unlike much of the ham consumers buy from the supermarket, Parma ham can take up to a year and a half to prepare and produce. It is made by hanging dry ham for long periods of time in the shade, and is free of chemicals and additives.

Parma ham was given a protected designation of origin by the European Union, disallowing other countries or regions to manufacture the food.

More information:

<http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=163577>

Ongoing growth for private label sales

Date

13/02/2006

Article Text

Private label sales of food and drinks in Europe and America are continuing to grow, a new study states.

Market research firm Research and Markets (R&M) reveals annual growth in private label goods between 2000 and 2005 was 7.4 per cent in Europe and 5.3 per cent in the US.

Own label share in almost every category of food and drinks had also shown growth.

The report claims branded manufacturers should address this worrying trend by learning from supermarket innovations as well as trading on their own advantages.

For example while customers may choose lower-price private label goods on cost grounds they could be swayed by branding used to indicate quality, taste or even luxuriance.

R&M have also compiled projected market growth figures for the next five years and suggest that manufacturers will have to widen their range of brands to compete with the private label market.

For more information go to

http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reportinfo.asp?report_id=316500

New mustard puts sizzle in condiments market

Date

13/02/2006

Article Text

A condiments manufacturer is seeking to capitalise on the demand for innovative and novelty foods with the launch of "the world's strongest mustard".

Ashley Food Company states the 357 Extreme Mad Dog Mustard contains a spiky mix of Colman's English Mustard, fresh ground horseradish, habanero peppers and turmeric.

The company also ambitiously claims the brilliant ochre product will eclipse any other mustards a consumer may own.

And certainly in the past Ashley has managed to turn consumers on to their innovative sauces.

They have previously won awards for all-natural products which use ingredients ranging from aged Japanese Tamari sauce to unsulphered molasses and extracts.

For more information go to
<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2006/2/prweb345199.htm>

Government urged to support "welfare label"

Date

13/02/2006

Article Text

The Conservatives have called on the government to back EU proposals for a "welfare label".

Shadow minister for agriculture and rural affairs Jim Paice said the government should support the proposals, which would see a label guaranteeing the welfare conditions of meat and fish products.

He said: "I hope the government will finally end its resistance to an honest food labelling scheme and get behind the commission proposal for an animal welfare label which would provide consumers with clear information about standards of production."

Mr Paice claimed the label has the potential to increase animal welfare and boost domestic farming, which currently has to contend against low quality imports.

The minister will today table an early day motion calling for the government to take the action he proposes.

For more information go to <http://www.epolitix.com/EN/News/200602/e489cbe5-f25b-4428-b9a4-fcb1d5852f34.htm>

Manufacturers complying with labelling guidance

Date

13/02/2006

Article Text

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has found that the majority of food manufacturers are fulfilling their labelling requirements.

The agency has published two surveys that explored whether food producers were meeting country of origin and clear labelling guidance.

The research revealed that of the 750 products tested, few issues were found and many actually exceeded FSA suggestions.

The FSA states 69 per cent of all meat and meat products were marked with country of origin, 89 per cent of all products carried nutrition information and 46 per cent of products which contained allergens had alert panels such as "contains" boxes.

One area where improvements would be welcome was clarity, with a number of instances of too-small text making labels and information unreadable.

The agency reports the findings will be discussed with relevant stakeholders in March in a bid to find out why some of the guidance is used more than others.

For more information go to

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/feb/label>

Agriculture workshops to improve supply

Date

14/02/2006

Article Text

The agriculture industry is to benefit from a series of government-run regional workshops.

Farmers, growers and suppliers of food to the public sector will be given advice on how to better supply schools, hospitals and prisons with fresh produce in the workshops, which are to run across the UK throughout February and March.

Backed by a number of institutions including the National Farmers Union and English Farming, the workshops will help to clarify how the public sector works as well as helping farmers who may wish to supply the sector indirectly through primary suppliers.

Lord Bach, the sustainable food and farming minister, said that the workshops would provide "the ideal opportunity" to understand the sector.

"The potential for farmers to capitalise on contracts to supply the public sector is immensely encouraging," commented Lord Bach.

"I would urge farmers, growers and farmer co-operatives to consider forging links with this sector via contractors and catering suppliers and to attend the workshops."

According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the public sector market is worth around £1.8 billion a year.

For more information go to

<http://www.24dash.com/content/news/viewNews.php?navID=7&newsID=2974>

WWF emphasises need for sustainable procurement

Date

14/02/2006

Article Text

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has called on Unilever to ensure the buyers of its frozen food businesses have sound environmental credentials.

Unilever, which is one of world's biggest fish buyers, has announced it is to sell its Birds Eye and Iglo brands.

The WWF states the company should only sell to firms that guarantee a continuation of sustainable fish purchase practices currently in place.

"Unilever's commitment to buy its fish only from sustainable sources contributes significantly to global efforts to combat overfishing and marine destruction," said Dr Simon Cripps, director of the WWF's Global Marine Programme.

"It's vital for the health of our oceans that Unilever ensures the new owners of its European frozen food business make the same commitment."

In 1996 Unilever and the WWF created the Marine Stewardship Council which provides a mechanism for identifying and accrediting sustainable fisheries and so enables consumers to make ethical purchasing decisions.

For more information go to

http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/3850/Unilever_sale_raises_concerns_about_supply_of_sustainable_seafood,_says_WWF.html

Rosemary extracts to hit UK market

Date

14/02/2006

Article Text

UK food manufacturers will soon be able to utilise an exclusive line of rosemary extracts imported from Slovenia.

Food Ingredient Technology (FIT), an established supplier of speciality ingredients has formed a new agreement to market Vitiva's rosemary extracts line.

Ohad Cohen, Vitiva's CEO said: "Our new partner FIT is an expert in the British and Irish food markets and in particular in the processed meat and poultry industries. We decided to choose FIT thanks to its complementary product line and its extensive infrastructure of technical support."

David Gray of FIT said his organisation was equally satisfied by the partnership and thinks it has significant scope for success in the UK.

"The UK market has greater awareness of the importance of developing healthier foods and this innovative product line can improve the quality of their products and sets new standards in extending shelf life for a wide range of applications," he said.

Among the product range is AquaROX, an extract highly soluble in water with great antioxidative properties.

For more information go to <http://www.vitiva.si/>

Black packaging could boost sales

Date

14/02/2006

Article Text

Asda, the supermarket chain, has suggested that the packaging in its produce section could lead to improved sales.

In an ever-competitive sector, the supermarket owned by American giant Wal-Mart has said that since switching to black produce packaging, customers have found the Asda shopping experience easier.

"Customers told us when they walked into our produce department all they saw was a mass of colour. It was hard for them to quickly spot the products they wanted to buy," said Mary Ling, produce marketing manager, to Freshinfo.

"We realised we needed to improve the ease of shop for our customers, so we started the process of redesigning the look and feel of our packaging. We're really chuffed with the results."

The claims from Asda follow a Tesco announcement last week that their front-of-packet nutritional labelling was also enhancing the consumer shopping experience.

Asda is currently battling it out with Sainsbury's to be the number two supermarket, while Tesco is way out in front as the number one.

No further information.

Organic salmon standards 'need development'

Date

14/02/2006

Article Text

The Soil Association is holding a conference to help develop a recognised standard for organic salmon farming.

The event is being held in partnership with Aquascot and Waitrose on March 23rd and will be looking at ways of introducing a three-year development programme to establish a firm organic level of certification. Discussions will also debate issues such as feed sustainability, wild salmon interactions and nutrient losses.

Speaking to Fish Update, aquaculture development programme manager Peter Bridson said the industry still faced a number of challenges in developing a standard.

"Despite the availability of organic salmon on shop shelves and a huge demand from consumers, there is still a need for continued development of the standards and to address the specific concerns of a variety of stakeholders," said Mr Bridson.

He added: "The Soil Association is keen to promote the positive aspects of its salmon standards, but has taken the bold move for this conference of choosing to debate the most controversial ones in a public forum."

For more information go to

http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/3863/Organic_salmon_standard_to_be_debated_at_Soil_Association_conference.html

Consultation calls for change in food waste process

Date

14/02/2006

Article Text

New targets to slash the amount of household waste produced by targeting manufacturers and packaging firms as well as households, is just one of a raft of proposals contained in major consultation on the government's strategy for waste.

Launching the consultation, minister for local environment quality, Ben Bradshaw, said the government needed to broaden its approach and change emphasis.

While he said positive progress had been made since 2000, with almost twice as much household waste now recycled and composted, more needs to be done.

"We need to put more effort into producing less waste in the first place, before considering how to make more use of the waste which is left by reusing, recycling, composting or using it as a fuel," explained Mr Bradshaw.

"This means thinking about the whole life cycle of a product, identifying and targeting products with the most significant waste impacts before it even reaches the consumer and using what waste is left as a resource to produce economic as well as environmental benefits."

Among the measures contained in the proposal are greater emphasis on reducing the amount of waste produced in the first place, developing a recycling culture and recovering more resources from business waste.

For more information go to <http://www.epolitix.com/EN/News/200602/a6a070bb-6f26-464d-ba87-099e4acaa927.htm>

New study into healthy sugar alternatives

Date

15/02/2006

Article Text

A new low-calorie sugar alternative has been developed that promises to actually protect teeth against the risk of decay.

Xylitol, which was initially used only in chewing gums and toothpastes, will now be released in a powdered form as an alternative to white refined sugar, which can cause decay and obesity, and artificial sweeteners, which have been linked to cancer.

It is better for teeth as bacteria cannot grow in it, lessening the risk of decay, as well as containing 40 per cent fewer calories than ordinary sugar, and is apparently far more appetising.

Anthony Haynes, a Harley Street nutritionist, told the Daily Mail: "It looks and tastes like ordinary sugar, because it is from the same family, but chemically it is quite different and it behaves in a completely different way.

"Cane sugar burns off rapidly when it gets to the digestive system and so people still feel hungry after eating a food containing sugar."

In contrast, a study at Leeds University showed that people who had yoghurt containing xylitol for breakfast ate ten per cent less for lunch than those who had had ordinary yoghurt.

Also, because its glycaemic rating is only a fraction of that of conventional sugar, xylitol puts far less pressure on the pancreas to create insulin, thereby reducing the risk of diabetes.

For more information go to

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/dietfitness.html?in_article_id=377143&in_page_id=1798&in_a_source=

BPEX to start using 'five-a-day' logo

Date

15/02/2006

Article Text

The British Pig Executive (BPEX) is to join the drive to promote a healthy and balanced diet by featuring the five-a-day logo in recipe books and leaflets that it produces.

The Department of Health has granted BPEX with a license to use the logo, which denotes that a recipe contains one of the five 80g portions of fruit and vegetables that should be consumed daily.

BPEX foodservice trade manger, Tony Goodger, claimed that BPEX completely supports efforts to increase consumption of fruit and vegetables.

He said: "We support the need for consumers to eat a variety of at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day as part of a healthy, balanced diet. This is reflected in our recipe development work.

"In addition, all of the recipes developed for foodservice on behalf of BPEX contain no additional salt or sugar and no unnecessary fat."

He added that lean pork now generally contains less than four per cent fat, and is a great source of protein, vitamins and minerals.

This is the first case of a publication promoting recipes in which fruit or vegetables are not the main ingredients being authorised to carry the logo.

For more on BPEX go to <http://www.bpex.org/home.asp>

CSIR develops drinks bottle barrier

Date

15/02/2006

Article Text

The South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has announced that it has invented a barrier to improve the shelf life of beverages sold in PET (polyethylene terephthalate) bottles.

Oxyplete is rumoured to perform 30 times better than regular PET packaging when it comes to preventing oxygen and other gases permeating the packaging and impairing drink flavour.

"Oxyplete meets all the technical requirements for beverage packaging, including 100 per cent adhesion testing, scuffing, oxygen permeability and expansion testing with no adverse affects on recycling," said the CSIR, according to FoodProductionDaily.com.

PET is a popular packaging in the beverage industry, but it is often neglected for drinks such as fruit juices as they can eventually be spoiled by oxygen.

According to the food processing and packaging website, the invention is based on a double layered outside coating and the CSIR said Oxyplete performs better than any other available passive barrier.

For more information go to <http://www.beveragedaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=65808-constar-international-pet-pp>

Sodexho to tackle workplace obesity

Date

15/02/2006

Article Text

The catering company Sodexho is joining forces with a health organisation to encourage healthy eating in the workplace in the US.

Along with the National Business Group on Health, it has launched a toolkit designed to help employers create and implement healthy workplace dining menus.

It was developed after extensive research in to how such implementation may best be carried out and how to educate workers on the importance of a healthy workplace diet and routine.

"The ultimate goal for employers is to operate a health promoting dining facility that encourages employees to consume healthy foods at work. As the food service provider to more than 1,600 dining facilities across corporate America, we feel strongly about this issue," said Michael Norris, market president and chief operating officer, Sodexho USA.

"With this toolkit, we are able to work directly with employers to create an environment that improves employee health. This requires several steps including designing a facility, offering educational programs and incentives and training staff properly. Employees value this type of program as a significant benefit of working for the employer."

Helen Darling, president of the National Business Group on Health, added: "Obesity continues to be a major challenge and looming crisis in this country and one that requires lots of parties to find solutions together."

For more information go to

<http://www.emediawire.com/releases/2006/2/emw343317.htm>

Packaging deregulation for food industry

Date

15/02/2006

Article Text

The European Parliament has agreed to the deregulation of food and drink package sizes, following analysis of legislation proposals.

Deregulation means that certain food and drinks will no longer be constricted by restrictions concerning package size, which can vary from country to country.

While certain products – such as drinking milk, sugar, butter and coffee – will retain the regulation demanding they be produced in packets of certain volumes, other products will not and companies could benefit from the deregulation.

Food and drink companies could save money and maximise profits by not having to produce different containers for different markets.

The European Commission has said that deregulation of product packaging sizes will increase cross border competition.

For more information go to <http://www.eu-packaging.org/EN/content.php>

Compass announces new fish purchasing policy

Date

15/02/2006

Article Text

Compass has announced that it is to make changes to its purchasing policy that will see it move away from endangered fish species.

The company says it will replace these purchases with types of fish with sustainable sourced supplies.

Around one million pounds of fish purchased annually by Compass could be affected by the change, which is scheduled to take effect from the start of March.

"Compass Group is proud to embrace a sustainable seafood policy that will support the health of our oceans. When we learned about the significant impact that our purchasing shift could make, it was clear that this was the right thing to do," said Gary Green, chief executive of the Americas Division at Compass.

The new policy will mean that the purchasing of Atlantic cod, which consumers have been warned to avoid, will switch to the purchasing of Pacific cod, Pollock and other alternatives.

It also plans to lessen its purchasing of shrimp and salmon – species that are also the objects of the concern of conservationists.

"We applaud Compass Group North America for its leadership," said Michael Sutton, director of the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Centre for the Future of the Oceans.

"Its commitment, and a similar decision by major food retailer Wal-Mart, is a significant step toward transformation of the seafood market in ways that support sustainable fisheries and healthy ocean ecosystems."

For more information go to

<http://charlotte.bizjournals.com/charlotte/stories/2006/02/13/daily9.html>

New support for sustainable procurement

Date

16/02/2006

Article Text

Sustainable fisheries are to receive a considerable boost from German firm Metro Group's decision to obtain more fish from sustainable sources.

Metro has announced that it is now working in close partnership with WWF to develop a far more ecologically friendly procurement programme.

In order to increase consumer awareness about this move, these products bearing the label of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), informing them that their ingredients were indeed procured from sustainable fisheries.

Hans-Jurgen Matern, manager of quality assurance at the Metro Group, commented: "We want to offer our customers all popular fish species such as codfish, plaice or hake also in the future. We can only achieve this over the long term if the marine diversity is preserved."

In addition, Metro has also removed nearly all shark products from its portfolio of fish products currently being sold in Germany.

Metro Group has a long involvement in ecologically friendly fishing, having been buying tuna only from suppliers affiliated with the Earth Island Institute for ten years now, as well as being the first German retailer to include products from MSC-certified fisheries.

For more information go to http://www.metrogroup.pl/servlet/PB/menu/1053980_12/

Consumers turning towards value added milk

Date

16/02/2006

Article Text

The increasingly competitive nature of the dairy industry is forcing many British companies to look to move away from commodity products towards the value added milk market.

The value added sector currently constitutes six per cent of drinking milk sales, but it is set for a period of rapid growth, with a 39 per cent rise for last year expected to be replicated in 2006.

Organic Monitor, which released the findings, has claimed the surge reflects the rising popularity of organic milk, with retailers reporting growth in excess of 50 per cent during 2005.

This trend is testament to the success achieved by advertising health benefits, with consumers responding to surveys showing organic milk to have higher levels of vitamin E, omega acids and conjugated linoleic acid.

However, flavoured milk could boast the greatest expansion within the value-added sector as it is increasingly purchased as an alternative to soft drinks.

Small dairies and large food companies such as Nestle and Unilever are all re-aligning their businesses to suit consumer trends; taking advantage of the low market barriers to entry in the value-added sector.

For more information go to

<http://www.npicenter.com/anm/templates/newsATemp.aspx?articleid=14883&zoneid=6>

Eco-friendly plastics in development

Date

16/02/2006

Article Text

An innovative new development could see food packaged in eco-friendly plastics.

In a joint venture Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and Metabolix plan on making plastics out of agricultural raw materials rather than petrochemicals.

The new generation "natural plastics" would be used for a variety of products including plastic wrappings and fast food franchise cutlery.

"The plastics created from PHA polymers are natural, biodegradable and renewable, and we are pleased to begin their commercial production," explained G Allen Andreas, ADM chairman.

"As the world's demand for petroleum continues to increase, ADM believes that this facility is a positive step towards producing renewable plastics that offer the global marketplace an alternative to traditional petroleum-derived plastics."

The plastics are produced using a fermentation process that converts agricultural raw materials such as corn sugar into durable materials that are compostable and biodegradable.

For more information go to <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/11329745/>

SAD sufferers 'drive unseasonal demand'

Date

16/02/2006

Article Text

Customers suffering from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) are behind the unseasonable demand for brightly coloured produce, according to a supermarket chain.

Tesco states retail experts had been baffled by the growing winter demand for vividly coloured fruit and vegetables, which saw sales of peppers, citrus fruits, tomatoes and carrots soar when the nights drew in.

Colour psychologist Ingrid Collins states sufferers from the winter blues condition are subconsciously drawn to these foods to alleviate SAD symptoms.

And she says this form of self-medication is effective, with a bowl of brightly coloured foods offering one of the cheapest and easiest ways of alleviating the symptoms.

Tesco spokesman Jonathan Church explained: "We first saw an unseasonable rise for brightly coloured fruit and vegetables last winter which lasted from November until March.

"When demand rose again this winter we carried out research to determine what was driving the increased sales.

"Our findings led us to consult a colour therapist specialising in SAD who revealed that it was quite natural for humans to be drawn towards bright colours, especially in dark winter months."

As many as one million people suffer from the condition and it seems word of mouth about this cost-effective treatment is creating a retail movement.

For more information go to

http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0200wales/tm_objectid=16675662&method=full&siteid=50082&headline=look-on-the-bright-side-to-survive-grey-winter-days-name_page.html

Bacteria 'could be key to solving drought'

Date

16/02/2006

Article Text

Certain bacteria may be able to keep some plants growing through short spells of drought, thus saving valuable crop supplies, scientists have announced.

Researchers from Lancaster University and the All Russian Research Institute for Agricultural Microbiology (ARRIAM) claim that inoculating crops with a natural bacterium found growing in the soil could help shield them against the effects of water shortage.

Professor Bill Davies of Lancaster University said: "Our preliminary work, funded by the Royal Society, shows that these soil bacteria can keep plant shoots and roots growing at soil water contents where drought would otherwise restrict growth and development.

"Such results suggest that if we can keep roots growing to access more water and keep leaves growing, then we can continue to produce economically viable seed yield in

drought-prone environments, or, importantly, reduce water use in agriculture without substantial yield penalty."

He added: "This project will tell us more about the science behind this technology and as such the work will be highly relevant for agriculture."

Even mild periods of drought can send shock signals from plants' roots to shoots, resulting in a slower rate of growth and loss of up to 50 per cent yield, meaning that the discovery could stand to save farmers money even through short-term droughts.

For more information go to <http://www.arriam.spb.ru/eng/>

IFST urges nanotech caution

Date

16/02/2006

Article Text

Independent food body the Institute of Food Sciences and Technology (IFST) has said that the industry must err on the side of caution in terms of nanotechnology.

Currently regulations need to be reviewed and strengthened, it said in a recent report, with more safety data required before nanoparticles can be used in food and packaging.

Currently there is little scientific information on nanoparticles, and many are concerned as to their exact properties and ways in which their small size may affect factors such as toxicity in foods.

"Nanotechnology has already provoked public concern and debate," the institute said.

"There are equally vociferous proponents and opponents of this new, emerging technology."

Certain products, such as Aquanova's nanotech antioxidant system for oils and flavours, are already embracing the technology.

The institute emphasised that while it did not wish to hold back food technology firms from innovating, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of nanotechnology's potential benefits and pitfalls.

For more information go to <http://www.ifst.org/>

New drum dryer being trialled in Netherlands

Date

17/02/2006

Article Text

A new drum dryer is being used in a food-grade trial production line in the Netherlands so as to trial production methods for food processors.

The machinery is being provided by research centre Nizo and machine manufacturer GMF-Gouda, and is comprised of mixing tanks, a scraped-surface heat exchanger, a jet cooker, a drum dryer, a double drum dryer, and a powder mill.

Nizo claims that the machinery can be used to produce a variety of flakes and powders, including baby food, lactose and starches within food grade conditions.

It announced: "Drum dryers offer a high capacity and low product loss, and this – in combination with a number of other extremely favourable properties, such as the absence of material circulation and the lack of accumulation of product residues – renders them ideally suited to a wide variety of trial production runs."

In addition, Nizo will also supply food producers with pre-treatment and final-processing equipment, as well as an on-site analytical laboratory.

The advantage of drum dryers is that they are tailored to drying extremely glutinous and viscous products, as well as slurries with a low viscosity.

For more information go to <http://www.nizo.nl/>

Conference debates future of shellfish

Date

17/02/2006

Article Text

Over 60 delegates attended a shellfish conference at the NAFC Marine Centre in the Shetlands so as to hear from a number of key figures about the future of the industry.

The opening speaker was Seafood Scotland's chief executive, Libby Woodhatch, who described both the recent growth of her own organisation, as well as that of the shellfish sector as a whole.

She then proceeded to discuss the findings of a survey carried out by Seafish, which found that the best way to improve consumer confidence in shellfish is for providers to enhance the provenance and quality of their product.

Ms Woodhatch later told Fish Update that the conference "was an excellent opportunity for me to be able to speak to people working in the shellfish aquaculture sector in Shetland and to hear the Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group story".

She continued: "The conference has helped to give Seafood Scotland a clear picture of developments in Shetland's shellfish industry and it was useful to hear about their plans for the future."

Jeremy Ryland-Langley, a fresh fish buyer from Waitrose, also spoke of the great opportunities his own firm saw in expanding the role of shellfish in its range of products.

There were further presentations from representatives from the Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group, describing its marketing strategy and looking at its activities from the viewpoint of the farmers it represents.

For more information go to
http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/3889/Shetland_shellfish_conference_highlights_industry_developments.html

FSA urges more people to eat fish

Date

17/02/2006

Article Text

Two FSA (Food Standards Agency) surveys today have shown that levels of pollutants such as dioxins and PCBs in most fish are continuing to fall, supporting the Agency's advice that most people should eat more fish.

The FSA currently recommends that adults should eat at least two portions of fish a week, and that one should be oily. At present UK consumers eat one third of a portion of oily fish every week, with seven out of ten eating none at all.

Andrew Wadge, director of food safety at the FSA, said: "The results of these surveys are good news. We don't eat enough fish in Britain and we should be eating more."

He added: "Eating fish is a good way to get protein and some essential vitamins and minerals, and oily fish – for example, salmon, sardines and mackerel – also give added protection against heart disease.

"The survey has shown that some people who eat a lot of fish may need to think about eating a wider variety of fish and we are updating our advice to reflect this.

"There is also specific advice for pregnant and breastfeeding women and other groups – but everyone should be aiming to eat at least two portions a week, including one of oily fish."

For more information go to

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/feb/fishsurveys>

New chocolate to contain appetite suppressant

Date

17/02/2006

Article Text

US-based firm Phytobase Nutritionals has joined forces with herbal research and manufacturing company Gencor Pacific to modify its existing ChocoLeans product to reduce appetite in consumers.

The addition of Slimaluma, an extract from the Caralluma Fimbriata cactus used traditionally by tribes in semi-arid areas of India to kill hunger and increase endurance, will give the chocolate satiety-inducing properties, the company claimed.

According to a report, the extract has been tested in India and the US to prove that its appetite reducing properties can lead to clinically significant weight loss.

Dr Sam Gur, chief executive of Phytobase Nutritionals, said: "A year ago we created a new category in the emerging satiety and appetite suppression market with the patent-pending ChocoLeans - appetite control in dark chocolate.

"Today, ChocoLeans help thousands of people control their appetites in the most delicious way."

Other ingredients in the ChocoLeans mix are Hoodia Gordonii, an African cactus extract and Goji berries, used in Chinese medicine for their high vitamin and mineral content.

For more information go to <http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/02-14-2006/0004281652&EDATE=>

South Tyrol to rebrand apples

Date

17/02/2006

Article Text

The South Tyrolean Apple Consortium has announced a new protected geographical indicator (PGI) label for its produce, to coincide with a total image overhaul.

After two years of discussions with the EU, the PGI brand can be used for 11 of South Tyrol's 15 apple varieties.

Matthias Josef Gamper, chairman of the consortium, said: "PGI is a response to the increasing interest in product origins.

"It provides a security that a product comes from a certain region and that this origin can guarantee a certain quality and has something specific to offer, and the product has a special association with the region."

The consortium has also taken the opportunity to rebrand itself, with a new logo and green colour scheme selected for its natural connotations.

No further information.

Marketing giant introduces tomato 'guide'

Date

17/02/2006

Article Text

In response to the ever-growing diversity of the tomato sector, Dutch marketing giant the Greenery has introduced a guide to the fruit entitled 'The Tomato Compass'.

The guide classifies the company's produce into four sections – classic, gourmet, snack and Mediterranean.

Hein Belmans, marketing director at the Greenery, told freshinfo.com: "On the one hand, we want to make it clear to our growers what we are growing because we are finding more and more that our growers are approaching us with very high-tasting tomatoes."

"But we need to ask whether it is better than something we have already," he added.

He said that it is also important that European retailers be made aware of the different varieties of tomato available so that they can stock different selections.

The guide is now available in English.

No further information.

French duck tests positive for avian flu

Date

20/02/2006

Article Text

French authorities have notified the European Commission of a confirmed case of bird flu within its borders.

A wild duck tested in Ain, near Lyon, has been confirmed to have died from the avian influenza virus H5. Samples of the duck have been sent for additional testing at the EU's laboratory in Weybridge, Surrey, to test whether the death is a case of the more deadly H5N1.

The UK Government has now confirmed that bird flu is "likely" to reach Britain and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) now urging people to report any unusual deaths of wild birds.

Fred Landeg, Britain's deputy chief veterinary officer, said: "We understand that the French authorities have not yet identified the specific strain, but they are reporting that it is highly pathogenic and bears close similarities to H5N1 Asian strain."

He has advised that ducks from the Lyon region do not normally fly to the UK at this time of year but "robust surveillance measures" are in place to detect any presence of bird flu in the UK.

France is now the seventh country to be hit by bird flu. Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Germany Austria and Hungary have also reported cases. All EU cases have reportedly involved wild birds, believed to be caused by seasonal migration of birds carrying the flu virus.

For more information go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4731944.stm>

McDonald's in hot water over allergen claims

Date

20/02/2006

Article Text

At least three people in America are taking action against fast food giant McDonald's over its announcement last week that its french fries contain wheat and milk.

Debra Moffatt from Illinois, a sufferer of celiac disease, which is triggered by eating gluten, is seeking unspecified damages for gastrointestinal symptoms that she claims resulted from eating McDonald's chips.

Ms Moffatt's lawyer Thomas Pakenas said: "You cannot sell gluten-free French fries when they have gluten."

LA vegan Nadia Sugish is also suing the hamburger chain, claiming that she would not have eaten its chips had she known they contained milk.

And a couple from Florida are also taking legal action, claiming that their wheat-intolerant five-year-old daughter, Annalise Chimiak, was made seriously ill after eating the firm's fries.

Earlier this month, McDonald's altered its website list of ingredients for its french fries, acknowledging that a flavouring agent in the cooking oil it uses contains wheat and dairy ingredients, dangerous to those with specific food allergies.

The changes to the company's website were made following a revised labelling rule from the US Food and Drug Administration that requires firms to disclose common food allergens in their products.

For more information go to <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0602150170feb15,1,5988996.story?coll=chi-newsnationworld-hed&ctrack=1&cset=true>

Allergy awareness driving 'free-from' sector

Date

20/02/2006

Article Text

As people become more aware of the dangers of food allergies and the relationship between nutrition and wellbeing, the craze for 'free-from' foods offering tailored ingredient lists is growing, according to the Food Business Review.

Current estimates place two per cent of the UK's population as having a food allergy, while as many as 45 per cent may have a food intolerance, which has severe symptoms such as irritable bowel syndrome.

As more consumers attempt to eliminate ingredients such as gluten, lactose and wheat from their diets, the food and drinks industry has been able to capitalise on the growing demand for 'free-from' goods.

Sainsbury's has launched its own allergen-free range of products, while Waitrose's 160 stores around the country all boast an allergen-free section stocking goods such as Trufree's gluten-free biscuits.

For more information go to http://www.food-business-review.com/article_news.asp?guid=4266D612-E67A-4C55-AB9D-5B42E3946682

Connection between feed and black blood vessels in cod

Date

20/02/2006

Article Text

There is a clear connection between an excess of minerals in feed and the development of black blood vessels in farmed cod, according to the Norwegian Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture Research.

Scientists from the institute have said that the pigment melanin is produced in the fish when the mineral content of the feed is too high. This is deposited around the blood vessels, giving them a black appearance.

"Black blood vessels in fillets from farmed cod represent a potential future financial loss," said director of research Even Stenberg.

"Signals from the industry indicate that this can be used as a quality criterion and can lead to a lower sales price," he said.

Scientist Marie Cooper added: "The results show that copper in quantities exceeding the cod's natural needs increase the incidence of black blood vessels."

In experiments, cod that ate feed without any added copper or other minerals suffered no adverse effects, and growth and mortality rates were not different in groups fed unsupplemented feeds when compared to those fed mineral supplements.

The institute's testing will continue into 2006, and will examine whether the extent of black blood vessels in fish that have already developed them can be reduced by altering feed content.

For more information go to

http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/3902/Connection_between_excess_minerals_in_feed_and_black_blood_vessels_in_farmed_cod.html

New code for pesticide use

Date

20/02/2006

Article Text

Defra (Department for environment, food and rural affairs) has produced a new code of practice for the use of pesticides in England and Wales, in line with two new EC regulations that came into effect on January 1st.

Importantly, farmers who grow any crops for human or animal consumption must now keep records of pesticide treatments, in line with European requirements.

The new regulations replace the three existing 'green', 'orange' and 'blue' codes that currently deal with pesticide use.

Lord Bach, sustainable farming and food minister, said: "I am delighted to launch this new and up to date code.

"It is an important development as it will help all professional users of pesticides, whether they work in agriculture, horticulture, forestry or the amenity sector, to better understand and operate within the legislation."

He added: "The latest code provides information on the new legal requirement to keep spray records and advises on the new laws regarding protection of ground water and waste management."

"We are delighted that our close working with the Plain English Campaign has resulted in a code which is clearer, more focused and easier to read and understand."

For more information go to <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/global-1200.shtml>

UK firms show commitment to ethical trading

Date

20/02/2006

Article Text

A significant number of UK firms, including Tesco, signed up to the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)'s new training programme this week, pledging their commitment to improving the ethical nature of their businesses.

The first module of the programme, which kicked off this week, provides a beginner's guide to ethical training, acquaints companies with the ETI's base code, and examines ways in which companies that outsource can work constructively with suppliers to improve their workers' conditions.

Later modules in March, April and May of this year deal with different approaches to labour problems, and overcoming challenges posed by NGOs and pressure groups.

International development minister Gareth Thomas said: "The new training programme will help move ethical trading principles further into the business mainstream."

"This can only benefit some of the world's poorest people whilst also helping UK firms stabilise their supply chains."

A spokesman from Windwards Bananas, one of the firms participating in the programme, said: "As a banana trader owned by the banana farmers of the Windward Islands and the leading trader of Fairtrade bananas in the United Kingdom, we take our responsibilities to the workers growing our products very seriously."

"The ETI training programme will be invaluable in making sure we are at the leading edge of good practice in ethical trade."

For more information go to <http://www.ethicaltrade.org/>

Degussa joins alliance for nanostructured liquid formulas

Date

21/02/2006

Article Text

The Food Ingredients division of Degussa Specialty Chemicals has joined forces with Aquanova to bring food-use safe nanostructured liquid formulas, or solubilisates, to the international market.

Nanotechnology is increasingly being applied to innovative products and ingredients for use in the production of food and this alliance will be involved in the manufacture of food safe solutions.

The two companies will collaborate on the production and marketing of an alpha-lipoic acid solubilisate called Alipure SOL, which is intended to allow the nutritional value of food products to be enhanced efficiently.

Manager of strategic projects at Degussa Food Ingredients, Dr Roland Rabeler, said: "Alipure SOL is overcoming two of alpha-lipoic acids' major obstacles in dietary supplement and food formulations, limited bioavailability and solubility.

"We are very much looking forward to a cooperation with Aquanova in the field of functional ingredients. The partnership will give us the opportunity to boost our alpha-lipoic acid activities in a quickly growing market."

One of the main advantages of this technology is the improvement of the absorption of fat soluble active ingredients.

For more information go to <http://www.degussa-foodingredients.com/>

Sugar industry to face EU reforms

Date

21/02/2006

Article Text

EU plans to make food production more competitive among its member states were advanced today with the adoption of reformed regulations for the sugar industry.

The agreement formalises plans declared in November 2005 to extend the methods of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) into a sector largely untouched for 40 years, NutraIngredients reports.

The guaranteed price for white sugar will be cut by 36 percent over four years, with farmers receiving compensation for 64.2 percent of the price cut providing they can demonstrate compliance with environmental and land management standards.

Countries which give up more than half of their production quota will be entitled to an additional payment of 30 percent over five years, and a voluntary restructuring scheme will provide incentives for less competitive producers to leave the market.

It is feared the deal will drive a wedge between larger EU nations and new member states such as Poland, where the sugar industry provides an important outlet for the workforce in a time of high unemployment.

For more information go to <http://www.bakeryandsnacks.com/news/ng.asp?n=65927-sugar-eu-cap>

No UK safety problem with avian flu, stresses NFU

Date

21/02/2006

Article Text

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) has stressed that there is no food safety problem associated with avian flu.

More cases of the H5N1 virus strain have been found in wild bird populations on the continent, and consumers are beginning to respond by avoiding chicken products.

Tim Bennett told BBC One's lunchtime news that if the virus reaches the UK, farmers are confident they can handle it.

"We are concerned about consumer reaction," he said.

"There is no link to food safety, so obviously we've got to rely on the common sense of the great British consumer."

A spokesman for the EU Agriculture Commissioner has said poultry consumption has reportedly fallen by 70 per cent in Italy.

Separately, Defra (Department of the Environment, Food and Agriculture) confirmed that the nine dead swans found in Britain earlier this week were not killed by the H5N1 virus.

For more information go to <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=265242006>

Smoothly does it for UK drinks industry

Date

21/02/2006

Article Text

Smoothies have become one of the UK's quickest growing drink sectors, with demand shooting up by 84 per cent over the last 12 months, according to the latest report from Tesco.

The drinks, which have won the enthusiasm of adults and children alike, are now worth a total of £79 million in the UK.

Their success has been attributed to the cocktail of flavours they contain and the ease with which they allow parents to supply vitamins and nutrients to children.

Zoe Parker, juice buyer for Tesco, said: "Smoothies are a godsend for which every parent has been asking – the easiest way ever to get their kids to take fruit.

"For years parents have been searching for this holy grail but now more and more are realising that smoothies are the easiest way to achieve this.

"Now by parents cunningly serving fruit as a delicious tasting cocktail kids are able to get many of the vital nutrients needed for healthy growing bodies.

"Of course the drinks are equally beneficial to adults which is why they've become so popular, so quickly."

Innocent is the UK's top selling brand of smoothie. Tesco also sells PJ smoothies, along with its own-brand range.

For more smoothie recipes go to

http://50connect.co.uk/index.asp?main=http%3A//50connect.co.uk/50c/articlepages/health_index.asp%3Fsc%3Dhealthyating%26aID%3D13830

Organic aquaculture conference on the horizon

Date

21/02/2006

Article Text

The UK's first ever conference on organic aquaculture is set to take place in Scotland next month, under the organisation of organic standards authority the Soil Association.

To be held in Stirling on March 23rd, the conference will deal with all aspects relating to organic aquaculture and will encourage public debate on the various topics surrounding the subject.

Hugh Raven, director of aquaculture at the Soil Association, said: "Transparency has always been the organic movement's trump card.

"In that spirit we are giving the floor to some of our most important stakeholders, and encouraging the maximum participation of the most important influence of all - namely consumers.

"As far as we are aware, this is the first aquaculture event that seeks actively to engage the general public."

Aquaculture programme manager Peter Bridson said: "Consumers are increasingly savvy.

"They know about the nutritional benefits of omega 3 oils, but are also rightly concerned about sustainability of fish feeds, impacts on local wild fish stocks, and waste discharges."

He added: "This event will give a platform to prominent experts to explore these issues."

For more information go to

http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/3921/Scotland:_Organic_aquaculture_conference_to_be_held_next_month.html

UK is target for Palestinian growers

Date

21/02/2006

Article Text

The UK, along with Germany and the Netherlands, is set to become a key marketing area for Palestinian growers of fresh produce, according to freshinfo.com.

Palestinian farmers have been using greenhouses that originally belonged to Israeli settlers in the Gaza region to grow strawberries, vegetables and fresh herbs.

Newly established export firm Adafresh will handle the transfer of goods from Palestine to European countries, valued at a total of €12 million.

Adafresh recently reached an agreement with Marks & Spencer, and is set to expand its trade by supplying the supermarket giant with 200 tonnes of special tomatoes.

The company is also planning to export Palestinian produce to France and Russia, commencing with a 2,000 tonne shipment of vegetables to the two countries.

For more information go to <http://www.adafresh.co.il/profile.asp>

Celebrities lend names to Fairtrade launch

Date

22/02/2006

Article Text

Numerous celebrities have been recruited to pose in publicity photographs promoting the good work done by the Fairtrade Foundation in combating poverty.

The likes of Vic Reeves, Donna Air and Adrian Edmondson will feature in photos of them having fun with Fairtrade products such as pineapples, which will be exhibited alongside quotes from the celebrities explaining why they buy Fairtrade products.

They are being put on display during the Fairtrade Fortnight, the organisation's annual promotion event, which will run from March 6th to the 19th.

Harriet Lamb, director of Fairtrade Foundation, explained: "The theme of Fairtrade Fortnight and the photo exhibition, Make Fairtrade Your Habit, aims to encourage everyone to get into the habit of buying a broad range of Fairtrade products, now so many more are available.

"We are delighted celebrities are showing how we can play our part in effecting real change in people's lives. By making Fairtrade our habit we can, cup by cup, banana by banana, help Make Poverty History."

Trevor Leighton, who took the photographs, said that they illustrate how people can make a small change in the way they shop that could be enormously beneficial to developing countries.

There are currently over 1,300 Fairtrade products available, many of which are food and drink products such as fruit, teas and wines.

For more information go to <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>

EU packaging industry set for growth

Date

22/02/2006

Article Text

A new report has highlighted the growing role being played by plastics in flexible food packaging and the benefits that it can offer in this field.

Citing the value of the very lucrative European food packaging market at €40 billion (£27 billion), research firm Frost & Sullivan claimed that 30 per cent of this market was made up by plastics and predicted an increase in demand for this type of flexible food packaging in the future.

It said that the main benefit offered by plastics as a form of flexible food packaging is the extended shelf life that they promise, thus simplifying logistics management for food retailers, as well as providing great potential for growth.

Dr Lucia Castro Diaz, a research analyst at Frost & Sullivan, stated: "Plastics are emerging as a vital tool for packaging manufacturers in reducing packaging weight, eliminating design constraints and promoting new packaging solutions, while also assisting food manufacturers in preserving their products longer."

One of the major benefits of packaging constructed from plastics such as polyethylene, polypropylene and polyamide is that their various qualities allow for longer shelf life to be attained without the use of preservatives.

Frost & Sullivan predicted that a growing demand for pre-processed food will lead to low-weight stand-up pouches rapidly replacing alternatives such as cans and glass jars.

For more information go to <http://www.frost.com/prod/servlet/press-release.pag?docid=61362149>

Good nutrition linked to psychological benefits

Date

22/02/2006

Article Text

Director of nutrition and dietetics at King's College London, Rick Wilson, has outlined the benefits that can be brought to patients by resolving problems associated with malnutrition whilst in hospital.

His comments came as the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (Nice) published guidance calling on doctors, nurses and care home workers to monitor nutrition in patients and residents. The institute announced that improving nutrition can greatly reduce the levels of suffering and potential for complications in many cases.

Speaking on BBC One's Breakfast Mr Wilson said improved nutrition also had a psychological benefit: "As soon as people feel that they can nourish themselves and drink it's a massive boost."

"It psychologically makes you feel you are going to get there, you are going to get better, things are going to improve, you are going to get your independence back."

According to Nice, 40 per cent of patients admitted to hospitals or care homes are suffering from some form of malnutrition, with the figure rising to 60 per cent for those over 65.

The new guidelines call for patients to regularly be weighed and checked for nutritional problems. In addition healthcare workers will be given nutritional training aimed at stopping the development of malnutrition early on.

Nice estimates that malnutrition costs the NHS £7 billion every year, and believes that screening could save the NHS £45 million a year in England and Wales.

For more information go to <http://www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=293252>

Dairy UK pledges to drive forward industry efficiency

Date

22/02/2006

Article Text

Dairy UK, the body that represents the UK's dairy producers, has vowed to help drive forward industry efficiency with the announcement of a three-year project.

The programme, which will be supported by a £460,000 grant from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), will be administered under the Agricultural Development Scheme.

As part of the programme, Dairy UK will be implementing a benchmarking scheme which will encourage producers to measure their performance against London Business School models of world-class excellence.

Jim Begg, director general of Dairy UK, said: "I am delighted that Defra has recognised the benefits that this programme will bring to all elements of the supply chain and I am grateful for its commitment to improving competitiveness in this sector."

He added: "We recognise the need to maintain an aggressive drive in industry efficiency in order to retain the UK dairy industry's position in what is an increasingly global and therefore highly competitive marketplace."

Dairy UK was originally formed in October 2004 to represent processors and distributors of liquid milk and dairy products, as well as farming interests and milk producer co-operatives.

For more information on Dairy UK go to <http://www.dairyuk.org/>

'Simply eat less fat' BHF expert advises

Date

22/02/2006

Article Text

The key message on fat in diets is to eat less, according to the direction of prevention and care at the British Heart Foundation (BHF).

Dr Mike Knapton was responding to claims made by Graham Harvey, author of *We Want Real Food*, that the method in which our food is farmed produces fat with low nutritional content and contains less of the beneficial fats we need such as Omega 3.

Dr Knapton told BBC Radio Four's *Farming Today*: "Fat in and of itself is not bad for you. It's too much or too little is the issue.

"Trying to reduce the amount of fat, particularly the saturated fat is where Graham Harvey and I would differ."

Given the rather complicated message about which fats are beneficial, Dr Knapton said he tried to keep it simple for his patients, else the information will be confused by other evidence they may receive.

"In this country we eat too much fat, so you should reduce the amount of fat you eat. Of the fat you eat, you should try to shift to plant oils rather than animal fats."

And he agreed with Graham Harvey that there are some fats which are good for you.

"These are the Omega 3 oils that come from plants and oily fish, but that starts to complicate matters.

"The key message for our population is to eat less fat, and confusing that by saying saturated fat is good for you – which I think is wrong – muddles that.

"We need to have a very clear public health statement."

Dr Knapton said he would welcome a dialogue between farmers and doctors, and there are many more issues than fat that would benefit from this.

No further information.

China poised to approve GM rice

Date

22/02/2006

Article Text

China could be set to become the first country in the world to approve the growing of genetically modified rice, according to just-food.com.

Although GM rice was not approved at last year's three-day meeting of the State Agricultural GM Crop Biosafety Committee in Beijing, sources suggest that the opportunity to swing back the decline of rice production coupled with the reduced need for potentially lethal pesticides could be deciding factors.

According to agriculture ministry statistics, rice production in China fell from 198.5 million tonnes in 1999 to 179 million tonnes in 2004, with prices shooting up by 27 per cent as a result.

The current need for pesticides is also causing serious problems. Although cheap, they poison an estimated 500,000 farmers a year, causing 500 fatalities annually.

The Chinese government is thought to be putting aside about \$1 billion to hasten the commercial release of GM rice should it decide to give the all-clear.

For more information go to http://www.just-food.com/features_detail.asp?art=1062&lk=rss

Taylor Farms to produce 'convenience fruit'

Date

23/02/2006

Article Text

Taylor Farms, supplier of cut vegetables to companies including Burger King and Subway, is to embark on a joint venture with Sunkist Growers to produce small bags of sliced fruit.

The product is aimed at making fruit more accessible to those who are more used to the convenience of snack foods such as crisps and chocolate.

Rick Harris, who will be president of the new venture, Sunkist Taylor LLC, said: "It's an exciting opportunity. With this new venture, we're dedicated to bringing the most innovative, healthful, and convenient fresh-cut products to customers nationwide."

Taylor Farms has produced fresh-cut produce since 1995 from its eight production locations and is the largest supplier of freshly cut vegetables to the US food service industry.

Sunkist, the largest citrus marketing cooperative in the US, has been producing fresh-cut produce since 2004.

A survey released on Tuesday by Del Monte Foods and carried out by Braun Research showed that most Americans do not think that they are eating the recommended daily amounts of fruit and vegetables.

For more information go to

http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20060222005832&newsLang=en

Campbell to cut salt in top soups

Date

23/02/2006

Article Text

Campbell is to cut sodium levels in top-selling soups by at least 25 per cent, it was announced on Wednesday.

New versions of top-selling soups such as Chicken Noodle and Cream of Mushroom are to be made available containing 25 per cent less sodium and a range of soup varieties aimed at children to be reformulated to contain less sodium.

Four new Campbell's Chunky Healthy Request soups will also be launched, containing 45 per cent less sodium than regular versions.

The move will affect one third of Campbell's soup volume in the US and will be achieved by using a natural lower-sodium sea salt in place of ordinary sea salt.

Campbell's president and chief executive officer Douglas R Conant said: "The initiatives we've announced today represent a breakthrough in our sodium reduction work and our commitment to offering consumers more choices without asking them to compromise on great taste.

"Offering more soups at lower sodium levels enhances soup's appeal to consumers and represents an important growth opportunity for Campbell."

Healthy 19 to 50 year old adults should limit their sodium intake to 1.5 grams a day to avoid elevated blood pressure, according to US body the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies.

For more information go to

http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20060222005465&newsLang=en

Unions agree beef ban priority

Date

23/02/2006

Article Text

Presidents from the UK's leading farming unions met for discussion on Wednesday, and decided that bringing an end to the EU ban on British beef is their top priority.

Leaders from the UK's four farming unions met at the National Farmers Union (NFU) headquarters in Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, to discuss the most pressing issues facing farmers in Britain.

At the top of their agenda was the need to get the EU ban on the exportation of British beef lifted – an issue on which they have already taken action, with the writing of letters to several high-profile political figures in both the UK and the EU.

Another EU-related issue that was discussed was the economic bloc's rural development schemes, and the need for compulsory government match funding to ensure these are not affected by national modulation.

The union representatives also decided that continuing financial support for hill and upland farming and immediate action in tightening the statutory code of practice and redressing the imbalance in the food supply chain are all urgently needed.

Also debated and decided on were the NFU's approaches to the World Trade Organisation talks, the difficult situation with tuberculosis, and the immediate threat posed by bird flu to the poultry industry.

For more information go to http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4644062.stm

Soil Association slams organic rules

Date

23/02/2006

Article Text

The Soil Association has condemned plans to review current EU legislation on organic food, claiming that this will open the way to GM contamination.

The group's policy director, Peter Melchett, has warned that the revision being proposed by the European Commission would see one out of every hundred mouthfuls of organic food being genetically modified, Food Navigator reports.

He also criticised plans to introduce a compulsory 'EU-organic' label as likely to obscure the geographical origin of food products, therefore denying consumers the option of choosing to buy local produce.

Mr Melchett explained: "This draft revision runs completely counter to the spirit of the pioneers of the organic movement, which grew from the grassroots, prioritising local distinctiveness, care for the environment and animal welfare.

"In contrast, the commission's draft organic regulation mimics the agribusiness model of globally competitive, freely traded commodity production."

Sections of the proposed new legislation would appear to validate his concerns, such as the article placing economic viability highest in the list of criteria for judging the merits of a production system.

Mr Melchett also criticised the new legislation's approach for being unconstructive, claiming that it focuses on limiting negative effects on the environment, rather than seeking to have a truly positive impact.

For more information go to <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=65981-organic-gm-wto>

Del Monte expands into Asia

Date

23/02/2006

Article Text

US canned food giant Del Monte has announced that it has selected Thailand as its production hub for Asian markets, owing to its abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the year.

Del Monte has established joint ventures with local sweet corn producer Agripure, Thai pineapple grower Samroyod and Japanese soy sauce manufacturer Kikkoman in order to cement its expansion.

"It is our first foray into Asia," said Andrew Cushman, managing director of Del Monte Asia.

He explained that the venture's objective was value-added production, with each partner putting in its best resources.

"Doing things in unison will consolidate our competitive advantage," Mr Cushman said.

"We chose Thailand as it seemed a good agricultural country with such fruits as rambutan and longan, and vegetables.

"There is also a 12-month growing cycle for fruit of top quality."

Seaport facilities and investment privileges also add to the kingdom's commercial appeal, he said.

The company's Asian sales are projected to hit Bt400 million this year, with optimistic estimates that it will break even within four or five years.

For more information go to
http://www.freshplaza.com/2006/20feb/2_us_delmonte.htm

McDonald's defends safety of fries for allergy sufferers

Date

23/02/2006

Article Text

Fast-food giant McDonald's has stood by the gluten-free claims it makes for its fries.

At least three people in America threatened to take action against the restaurant chain after it altered its website list of ingredients last week.

Jack Daly, senior vice president of McDonald's, said: "We understand the concern that individuals in the Celiac community and others with food allergies may have regarding foods that meet their individual needs.

"That is why we are eager to provide them with the most factual information we can."

He added: "Scientific evaluation by one of the world's leading experts on gluten sensitivity and allergenicity, Dr Steven Taylor of the Food Allergy Research and Resource Program of the University of Nebraska, has confirmed again that our fries are gluten free and allergen free.

"Based on this analysis, we believe the lawsuits filed are without legal merit."

For more information go to
<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/healthnews.php?newsid=38129>

Seaweed 'could help treatment of diabetes'

Date

23/02/2006

Article Text

Scientists in Australia are hoping that seaweed could be used in the treatment of type-I diabetes, ABC News Online has reported.

If the trials prove successful, the result may be that patients no longer have to inject insulin or take anti-rejection drugs.

Researchers from the Prince of Wales Hospital and the University of New South Wales extracted insulin cells from a donated pancreas, which were then placed in tiny capsules coated in seaweed and injected into the patient's pancreas.

"There are pores on the surface of the capsules which allow nutrients to come in but are too small to allow immune cells, which would destroy the cells to enter," Prince of Wales hospital spokesperson Professor Bernie Tuch told ABC News.

Because immune cells cannot penetrate the seaweed, there is no need to take traditional anti-rejection drugs that can cause serious side-effects, he explained.

Doctors are now hoping that the treatment could be used to help up to 130,000 Australians who suffer from type-I diabetes.

For more information go to

http://www.abc.net.au/news/health/sophie_scott/newsitems/s1575319.htm

Public 'misunderstands food safety risks'

Date

23/02/2006

Article Text

The general public tends to under-assess the risks posed by bacteriological hazards while overestimating the danger of rarely-occurring problems such as mad cow disease, according to a recent survey by the University of Cork in Ireland.

Published in the Journal of Food Safety, the study canvassed 400 food safety experts to determine their views on the public's awareness of common food and drink health risks.

The majority of experts thought that the news media often communicates material regarding food safety that is misleading.

"Public perception of risk is very different from scientists' understanding of risk, hence the meaning and response to 'risk' differs between the public and scientists," researchers said.

Early education on the variety and nature of food safety risks via the school curriculum was thought to be the best method in improving public awareness long-term.

For more information go to

http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?idNewsMaker=10289&fSite=AO545&next=2

New milk analyser reduces waste

Date

24/02/2006

Article Text

Denmark based Foss has produced a new milk analyser which reduces waste products by thousands of kilos.

Milkoscan FT2 allows producers to bring standardisations closer to production targets, allowing firms to save as much as 12,600kg of protein when producing 300 tons of dairy product per day. It claimed that FT2 offers 20 per cent better accuracy than previous product Milkoscan FT 120.

"Improvements in instrument design speeds up analysis of viscous dairy products such as condensed milk that can now be measured directly without dilution," it added in a statement.

It said that the analyser's "highly stable FTIR interferometer" is both splash and dust proof and reduces vibration concerns, delivering accurate results near the production line thanks to its increased stability.

"The durable design also allows significant reductions in maintenance work by up to 30 per cent compared to the MilkoScan FT120. The Foss Integrator software keeps an automatic record of everything that goes on, giving dairy producers an answer to growing demands for product documentation," it added.

Foss said that the now-outmoded FT120 would remain on sale in a budget version.

More information: <http://www.foss.dk/c/p/default.asp>

Omega 3 benefits beat risks for health

Date

24/02/2006

Article Text

Experts are claiming that the benefits of eating omega 3 rich products like oily fish greatly outweigh the risk of consuming any pollutants that they may contain.

It had been suggested in some quarters that the pollutants often contained in oily fish – such as methyl mercury, dioxins, and polychlorinated biphenols – make them harmful to consume, especially for pregnant women.

However, a study of over 700 children in the Seychelles Islands, where women average 12 meals of fish a week, showed none of them to be afflicted with the cognitive defects that are normally caused by mercury absorption.

Commenting at the recent meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Michael Morrissey from Oregon State University's Seafood Laboratory stated: "The best science coming out over the last two years has overwhelmingly been in favour of the benefits of seafood consumption."

He also speculated that there might in fact be something beneficial in consuming the fish that negates any adverse effects of mercury, although he admitted that this had yet to be proven, NutraIngredients reports.

Meanwhile, Britain's Food Standards Authority has confirmed that the level of pollutants found in fresh fish in the UK is continuing to fall, and it has expressed its concern at the absence of fish from the diets of many Brits.

More information:

<http://osuseafoodlab.oregonstate.edu/seafoodlab/faculty.htm>

Jersey Royal seeking mainland expansion

Date

24/02/2006

Article Text

Jersey Royal bosses are in talks with UK mainland-based potato firms, with the aim of buying into them so as to improve its own brand.

The company currently produces 60 per cent of the volume that it markets under its own name, with the remaining volume being produced by seven other contracted growers.

Tom Binet, managing director of Jersey Royal Potato Marketing, has now told Freshinfo that his company will be looking to integrate more contract growers into its business, and is now talking to some of the major UK firms regarding the issue.

He said: "We're in discussions, we've spoken to all of them and there's been a lot of interest.

"We want our brand to be fronted from the UK by the businesses that are talking to the multiples. We're looking for them to be brand champions for us."

However, Jersey Royal does face a huge stumbling block, as the Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority has opposed its plans to restructure and expand its growing operations.

Mr Binet commented: "It is frustrating because we'd done a huge amount of planning on it, and never thought we'd run foul of the competition laws.

"Our intention is still to go ahead with our plans, but it's been an unwelcome own goal from the authorities."

More information:
<http://www.jerseyroyals.co.uk/>

Nanotechnology utilised for food safety

Date

24/02/2006

Article Text

A research project funded by the EU has made progress in the development of micro and nanotechnology for the safe screening of food items.

The process allows food producers to test food for contamination by chemicals, toxins and pathogens quickly and on-site, eliminating the need to send samples to laboratories.

The Good Foods project is focused on innovative biomechanical and microelectronic sensors.

It is hoped that once the research is completed, the portable devices will be applied in the dairy, fruit and wine industries to efficiently detect foreign bodies.

The scientists hope that this would have positive cost benefits for food manufacturers as a result of improved food safety, for example in the detection of salmonella, as well as reduced lab test costs.

More information:

<http://istresults.cordis.lu/index.cfm/section/news/tpl/article/BrowsingType/features/ID/80655>

Kebabs 'worst for harmful fat'

Date

24/02/2006

Article Text

Kebabs are the worst kind of fast food for you, six times more so than a Big Mac meal, according to a new study.

Levels of trans fat, which is banned in Denmark, were highest in the popular take-away dish.

According to the study by Tom Sanders at King's College, London, an adult's recommended daily intake of trans fats is four to six grams, but a kebab contained 5.8g. Professor Sanders said that kebabs were amongst the "worst" things a person could eat because of this.

Trans fats have no nutritional value but extend the shelf life of food and are found in cooking oil and other manufactured foods.

Packaged food in the UK indicates the levels of these fats, but this is not displayed in restaurants and takeaways.

In the report, sweet and sour chicken had the lowest level of trans fat at 0.27g, a Burger King Whopper 2g and a Big Mac Meal 0.87g.

More information:

http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kis/schools/life_sciences/health/nutrition/academics_staff/tabs/tabs.html

Guinness moves from widget to 'Surger'

Date

27/02/2006

Article Text

Guinness is promising its home drinkers an enhanced version of their canned drink due to a new gadget.

The Surger, an ultrasound device that plugs in to your wall, will bring the pub pint into the home, the company claims.

The firm states that the gadget sends a signal through the can that makes the creamy head of the pint separate more easily from the main body of the drink.

It is believed the device can only be used on Guinness Surger cans, which contain a different mixture of gases from the regular stout.

The Surger is seen as the next step along in home drinking from the widget, which was released in the 1980s in an attempt to emulate the consistency of a pub pint.

Teresa Octavio, the innovation strategy director at Diageo, which owns Guinness, said: "Guinness Surger creates the theatre and anticipation around the Guinness serve that we know many Guinness drinkers expect and enjoy."

It will be available in a £16.99 pack that includes two 520ml cans and a pint glass.

Four packs of Guinness Surger will be offered at a similar price to the traditional draught cans.

The device is already available in Japan and Singapore and will initially be available in Tesco Extra Stores from this week.

For more information go to: http://www.drinks-business-review.com/article_news.asp?guid=4C6E4065-3795-47CB-A291-A7C0ADBE0FE2

SAB in search for super sports drink

Date

27/02/2006

Article Text

The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) met in Turin last week in an attempt to push the composition of sports drinks forward.

The group, which represents a number of sports nutrition companies, concluded at the event that the addition of protein to sports drinks containing carbohydrates could improve their qualities.

The SAB, which consulted the findings of recent scientific and clinical trials at the meeting, believes that the addition of protein improves the body's ability to use carbohydrate, lessens muscle fibre damage and expedites muscle tissue repair.

"The SAB recommends that manufacturers focus on the addition of specific ingredients such as high performance peptides, antioxidants and other nutritional ingredients," said SAB chairman, Jose Antonio.

"The development of novel ingredients for sports beverages and their contribution to the athletes health and performance in the past few years has been astonishing," he added.

Drinks consultancy Zenith International claims the sports drink market rose by ten per cent in 2005 to 9,700 million litres.

For more information go to:

<http://www.npicenter.com/anm/templates/newsATemp.aspx?articleid=14989&zoneid=6>

Scientists move closer to understanding sense of taste

Date

27/02/2006

Article Text

Scientists in the US have made a breakthrough that is hoped will allow for a greater understanding of taste.

Researchers at the Monell Chemical Senses Centre in Philadelphia have managed to grow and maintain mature taste receptor cells outside the body.

The ability to keep alive cells outside of their natural environment will allow increased research into the sense of taste and its relation to health, disease and nutrition.

"We have an important new tool to help discover molecules that can enhance or block different kinds of tastes," said head researcher Nancy Rawson.

"In addition, the success of this technique may provide hope for people who have lost their sense of taste due to radiation therapy or tissue damage, who typically lose weight and become malnourished. This system gives us a way to test for drugs that can promote recovery."

The researchers also hope the new science will allow them to chart how taste changes through the course of our lives.

For more information go to: http://www.monell.org/news_h.htm

GDA guidelines issued by IGD

Date

27/02/2006

Article Text

The food and grocery industry firm IGD has today published guidelines on the publication of GDAs (Guidance Daily Amounts) on food packets.

The best practice document is aimed at food retailers and manufacturers and expands current recommendations to include figures for salt, sodium, total sugar, protein, fibre and carbohydrate.

The guidelines also suggest publishing GDAs for children in addition to men and women.

Joanne Denney-Finch, IGD's chief executive, said: "The report is designed to provide guidance to industry on the best way to represent GDAs back-of-pack."

The GDA information should be displayed in the same box as nutritional advice, IGD asserts.

"The recommendations are based on extensive consumer research, which shows that up to 70 per cent of respondents who have seen GDAs on food products understand what the term means, which is an excellent starting point," Ms Denney-Finch added.

The European Commission is issuing a discussion document this year that will call for greater uniformity in the display of nutritional information on packaging in the EU.

For more information go to:

<http://www.kamcity.com/namnews/asp/newsarticle.asp?newsid=26067>

Microwave aluminium foil passes tests

Date

27/02/2006

Article Text

The use of aluminium foil in microwave ovens is safe, according to the European Aluminium Foil Association (EAFA)

The association claims that cooking food in aluminium foil or containers is a sound practice, despite consumer fears that it could harm food and the ovens.

The EAFA has made the pronouncement following a study by the Fraunhofer Institute for Process Engineering and Packaging IVV, which it funded.

The research found that of the 200 items of food that were heated in aluminium foil containers as part of the study, none caused damage to the microwave or the food.

The study did find that heating times for food placed in aluminium containers were generally longer than for items placed on plastic trays but that heating uniformity was often found to be better with aluminium.

For more information go to: <http://www.packagingessentials.com/news.asp?id=2006-02-24-09.44.07.000000>

EU to simplify specialist food protection

Date

27/02/2006

Article Text

The European Parliament is set to approve new measures designed to make it easier to register and protect regional, local and speciality food names.

At least 720 European speciality foods are already protected under the PDO (Protected Designation of Origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) and TSG (Traditional Speciality Guaranteed) schemes created in 1992, including Italian Parmigiano Reggiano and British Shetland Lamb.

The measures would simplify the procedure for registering new products, ensuring that producers of speciality foods did not face competition from products which take the same name and pass themselves off as genuine products but are produced elsewhere.

Current procedures mean that applications for protection must first meet strict criteria and then be sent to the relevant national authority for an initial study. The application is then forwarded to the European Commission for a further study, after which it undergoes a consultation procedure before it can be formally approved.

Neil Parish, UK Conservative agricultural spokesman in the European Parliament, said: "It currently takes far too long to get specialist products registered and protected.

"The European Commission has realised that robust labelling is good for agriculture and producers and I want to see this new procedure implemented without delay."

The new measures include the creation of a "single document" for applications, which would contain all the necessary information for registration and inspection purposes.

The proposals, originally put forward by the European Commission, were approved by the European Parliament's agriculture committee on Wednesday. The full European Parliament is set to approve the measures in two weeks time.

For more information go to:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/foodqual/quali1_en.htm

Low calorie apple developed

Date

28/02/2006

Article Text

US scientists have produced fruits that contain half the calories of normal varieties, according to Chemistry & Industry magazine.

Researchers at the University of California have created apples using high levels of the natural sweetener sorbitol.

Sorbitol has almost half the calories of sucrose and fructose at 2.6 calories per gram.

"We are just getting under the hood of the biosynthesis of sorbitol," said researcher Abhaya Dandekar, adding that "it's extremely complex".

The researchers claim that the result can also be achieved naturally as well as through genetic modification and the technology can be applied to many fruits including peaches, pears and plums.

Fruit and vegetables are already low in calories but the findings have been met with interest by the Weight Watchers UK group.

For more information go to:

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=37838>

Government risks missing obesity targets

Date

28/02/2006

Article Text

The government could be set to fall below its targets for tackling obesity in primary school children, according to a new study.

A joint report from the Audit Commission, the Healthcare Commission and the National Audit Office claims that clearer leadership is needed if targets to put an end to the rise in obesity in five to ten year olds are to be met.

The government is aiming to see an end to the rise in obesity in under 11s by 2010.

Obesity in the age group rose from 9.6 per cent in 1995 to 13.7 per cent in 2003.

Improved direction is needed from the government, the report asserts, with greater clarity of responsibilities of government offices in the regions.

At a more local level, the study stresses that more needs to be done to strengthen programmes such as children's trusts and partnerships and to make sure there is no duplication of roles.

Audit Commission chief executive, Steve Bundred, said: "To succeed, children must be engaged in the home, at school and when being treated by the NHS. It is no surprise that it is very complicated to address because the various government agencies involved are trying to bring about changes to the lifestyles of children and families."

It is thought the problem costs the UK around £1 billion a year and could rise to £3.6 billion by 2010 if the current trends continue.

For more information go to: [http://www.politics.co.uk/public-services/health/lack-leadership-hindering-obesity-fight-\\$17056185.htm](http://www.politics.co.uk/public-services/health/lack-leadership-hindering-obesity-fight-$17056185.htm)

Scottish Executive to investigate local GM crops

Date

28/02/2006

Article Text

The Scottish Executive is to look in to the possibility of growing genetically modified (GM) crops in the country.

The executive says it is willing to consider plans on an individual basis, with the possibility of growing GM crops alongside non-GM ones also being mooted.

An executive spokesman said it would "consult on a range of possible measures for the co-existence of GM and other forms of agriculture to inform our position on what measures might be introduced in Scotland".

The announcement is expected to bring a backlash from environmental protestors, who brought an end to previous trials in Fife, Aberdeenshire and Inverness-shire in 2003.

A Scottish Green Party spokesperson told the BBC: "Any move to allow co-existence, to grow GM alongside non-GM crops, is a Trojan horse that will inevitably result in progressive contamination of all food, that's the reality."

Current EU rules stipulate that countries cannot declare themselves GM free.

No GM crops are currently commercially grown anywhere in the UK although a number of applications are set to be considered during the course of the year.

For more information go to: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/4753780.stm>

PreGel announces new low-calorie ice cream

Date

28/02/2006

Article Text

Ice cream manufacturer PreGel has announced the imminent launch of a low-calorie ice cream.

The firm, which produces gelato style ice creams, will use Tate & Lyle's Ice Cream Rebalance 022 Solution Set in its new range, set for release this spring.

A no-added sugar, low fat variant will be available in the US, South America, Australia and the UK with a low fat, calorie reduced version available elsewhere in Europe.

The Tate & Lyle product will provide the sweetness of sugar without the corresponding calories and has been specially formulated for use in the gelato offerings.

"Working with Tate & Lyle has enabled us to achieve our goal of developing a range of great tasting reduced fat, reduced sugar and no added sugar gelato recipes suitable for the whole family," said Dario Rabboni, manager at PreGel.

The new formulas will be available in chocolate, raspberry, cappuccino and cream flavours.

For more information go to:

http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?idNewsMaker=10325&fSite=AO545&category=25&page=1

Somerfield sells Kwik Save brand

Date

28/02/2006

Article Text

Kwik Save, the struggling supermarket chain owned by Somerfield, has been partly bought by a private group of investors.

Richard Kirk, chief executive of clothing store Peacocks, heads the group called Back To The Future, which comprises of a number of business and retail professionals.

The deal is believed to see 171 of Kwik Save's 350 stores transferred into the group's control.

Paul Niklas, managing director of Kwik Save, said: "Today marks a recommitment to the Kwik Save brand and its already strong local presence.

"We will, over time, be refreshing the store image whilst maintaining the existing offer of quality branded products at competitive prices."

No price has been disclosed for the deal but a figure of around £200 million is thought to be close.

Just over 100 of the remaining stores will be converted in to Somerfields, with a further 77 shops sold on to other retailers such as budget brands, Netto and Aldi.

For more information go to:

<http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=164938>

First spring water with added Beneo arrives in UK

Date

28/02/2006

Article Text

The first spring water drink with the added health benefits of the multi-functional ingredient Beneo is set to hit the UK market.

The drinks are being sold under the brand name of Works With Water and the range of beverages will include Little Squirts for children and a drink targeting the female market called Delicate Balance.

All the drinks in the range have been supplemented with inulin and oligofructose, branded as Beneo by the Orafiti group.

According to Christine Nicolay at Orafiti, Beneo contains soluble dietary fibres that mean manufacturers selling Beneo enhanced products can promote them as "a source of fibre" or "with added fibre".

She added that Beneo could help stimulate the growth of healthy bacteria in the gut and improve the absorption of nutrients, vitamins and minerals.

"Such benefits help lead to an improved digestive and an overall feel-good factor," she added.

The Works with Water beverage company is hoping that its use of Beneo and its symbol on its packaging will ensure "that the consumer has confidence in our products and can easily identify the positive health benefits".

For more information go to:

http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?fSite=AR283&nw=hd&size=ld&sno=1&main_page=1&id=401