



ASSOCIATE PARLIAMENTARY FOOD & HEALTH FORUM



Food in Parliament – January 2007

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FHF News Introduction

Welcome to the latest edition of *Food in Parliament* – a monthly email newsletter giving FHF Members a regular update on food and health related issues which have been raised in Parliament.

The next meeting of the Food and Health Forum will take place on 20 February when our guest speakers will be Ms Prue Leith, who has recently taken up her appointment as Chair of the School Food Trust, and Mr Adam Starkey, the Managing Director of Green Gourmet. We also hope to be joined by members of the Chef Adopt a School team of the Academy of Culinary Arts. The subject under discussion will be children's food, including school meals and cooking in schools.

As ever, members are encouraged to contact us with any meeting ideas or comments. Please get in touch with **CLC** on **020 7222 1265**. Full details of the Forum's work together with minutes of all meetings can be found on our website at www.fhf.org.uk.

Safety in General

Allergy training for enforcement officers

The FSA has launched a series of training workshops to help raise awareness of food allergy issues among enforcement officers. The aim is to help them better advise food businesses on allergen management.

The scheme is being rolled out in ten areas of England, with further courses being run in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The courses are aimed at both environmental health officers and trading standards officers and are being held between January and March. On evaluation of these workshops, the FSA will assess the demand for further courses.

[Source: FSA website 25 January 2007]

Animal Products (Import and Export) Regulations 2007

The Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/03) were made on 4 January, laid before Parliament on 5 January and came into force on 5 January. The regulations, together with explanatory notes, are available at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2007/20070003.htm>.

These regulations amend the Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) (England) Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/1471) so as to give effect to the extension until 1st April 2007 of the current EU ban on the import of captive birds from outside the European Union. Equivalent regulations have been published for Wales and Scotland. They are available at:

- Wales - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2006/20063452e.htm>.
- Scotland - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2007/20070001.htm>

[Source: Office of Public Sector Information website 16 January 2007]

BPA chemicals in food

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has adopted an opinion on dietary exposure to the chemical bisphenol A (BPA). BPA is used to manufacture polycarbonate, a rigid plastic used to make infant feeding bottles, plates, mugs and other storage containers. Another common use is in the production of epoxy-phenolic resins which form internal protective linings for cans and metal lids and coatings for water storage tanks and wine vats. BPA can migrate in small amounts into foods and beverages stored in materials containing the substance.

An EFSA panel concluded that the setting of a full rather than a temporary “Tolerable Daily Intake” (TDI) of BPA is now appropriate. The TDI is an estimate of the amount of a substance, expressed on a body weight basis that can be ingested daily over a lifetime without appreciable risk. People’s dietary exposure to BPA, including that of infants and children, is estimated to be well below the new TDI.

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/afc/afc_opinions/bisphenol_a.html

[Source: European Food Safety Authority 29 January 2007]

Cloned animals – FSA offers public reassurance

The FSA is currently in discussion with the European Commission about the legal requirements relating to offspring of cloned animals. The authorisation and labelling of novel foods is decided on a case-by-case basis and no applications have been received to date within the EU for products derived from cloned animals.

Cloned animals fall under the EC Novel Foods Regulation. This means that any product from a cloned animal would be subject to a safety evaluation by all 27 Member States as a novel food before it could be legally marketed.

The FSA’s view is that products from the offspring of cloned animals, like those from cloned animals themselves, should be considered as novel foods. The FSA expressed this view at an EC discussion group meeting that took place in Brussels on 12 January 2007. The FSA’s view was also shared by a significant number of other Member States.

However, the issue will need to be considered fully by the Commission before it is discussed at a meeting of the Standing Committee and a decision made. The Commission intends to put this issue forward for discussion and the FSA is pressing for this to happen as soon as possible, together with referral of this issue to the European Food Safety Authority for advice on consumer safety.

FSA officials are also in liaison with Defra about the import of embryos from cloned animals into the UK and the monitoring of cloned animals and their offspring.

[Source: FSA website 18 January 2007]

Consultation on novel ingredients

The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) is consulting on draft opinions on applications on the ‘substantial equivalence’ of two novel ingredients. Both applications are from companies that want their ingredients approved for sale on the grounds that they are substantially equivalent to products that are already on the market.

Cyanotech Corporation has asked for its astaxanthin-rich extract, obtained from the dried algae biomass of *Haematococcus pluvialis*, to be approved as substantially equivalent to a *H. pluvialis* astaxanthin-rich algal meal, which was sold to European consumers by the Swedish company Astacarotene (now owned by Fuji Chemicals, Japan) before May 1997.

Lipofoods has requested an opinion from the FSA on the equivalence of their phytosterol ingredient derived from soya with the phytosterol ingredient marketed by Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and authorised in 2004. Lipofoods intends to use their phytosterol ingredient in yellow fat spreads, salad dressings and milk-type products.

Phytosterols are used by the food industry for their cholesterol-lowering properties. They are naturally present at low levels in vegetable oils and in food derived from such sources.

The draft opinions suggest that both products should be accepted as substantially equivalent to the corresponding existing food ingredients. More detailed information is available at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/jan/cyanlipo>

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 29 January 2006]

Consultation on the transposition of Council Directive 2002/99 on Meat Hygiene

Defra is consulting on the transposition of the Meat Hygiene Council Directive 2002/99/EC on how meat and meat products shall be controlled during an outbreak of the following diseases: Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Classical Swine Fever (CSF), Swine Vesicular Disease (SVD), African Swine Fever, Rinderpest, Newcastle Disease, Avian Influenza (AI) and Peste des Petit Ruminants (Sheep and Goat Plague).

The Directive provides that fresh meat and meat products from animals from Protection Zones and Surveillance Zones cannot be traded with other EU States or exported from the EU unless it has been heat treated. This is with the exception of poultry meat from birds from Newcastle Disease Protection and Surveillance Zones which needs to be heat treated only if it is destined for export (people can choose to put it in a cooked product for the domestic market), but if it is destined for the domestic market then it can be sold as fresh meat.

Responses are requested by 6 April 2007. The consultation document is available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/meathygdir-transpose/index.htm>

[Source: Defra website 12 January 2007]

Curd Cheese

In response to a question from Gwyneth Dunwoody, the Public Health Minister, Caroline Flint, confirmed there have been no meetings between UK Government representatives and the European Commission to discuss the definition of curd cheese. There have been, and it is expected there will continue to be, discussions about the procedures for testing milk for antibiotic residues, about cheese recovery operations and about the placing on the market of foodstuffs intended for further processing before consumption.

The European Commission has not recently issued any new instructions about practices in the dairy sector, but it did adopt Commission Decision 2006/694/EC, the preamble (recitals) to which set down how the Commission intends the controls on antibiotics in milk should operate within the Community. The decision required all member states to prohibit the placing on the market of curd cheese manufactured by Bowland Dairy Products Ltd. of Barrowford, Lancashire, and the question of compensation is a matter for it to pursue with the Commission.

Mrs. Dunwoody has also asked how many employees in the Food Standards Agency have qualifications relating to the dairy industry. The Minister confirmed that some 40% of the FSA's 750 staff are scientists. They include microbiologists, chemists, toxicologists and others with more generalist scientific qualifications. FSA scientists work on the full range of the Agency's business as and when the need arises, including dairy related issues.

[Source: *Hansard* 11 January 2007, col. 695-6W]

Environment Council – update on GM crops and the use of pesticides

On 26 January Mr Ben Bradshaw, the Minister for Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare, reported to Parliament the conclusions of the Environment Council meeting in Brussels on 18 December.

The Council opposed - by qualified majority - two proposed decisions concerning the provisional prohibition of the use and sale of certain genetically modified strains of maize by one of the EU's member states. The UK voted in favour of the proposed Council decisions based on the opinions of various scientific bodies (including the European Food Safety Authority and the UK's Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment) which have concluded that there is no new relevant scientific evidence in support of the safeguard actions.

The Presidency also updated Member States on the thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides (and the associated proposals for a directive and a regulation). More detailed information about the sustainable use of pesticides strategy is available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ppps/strategy.htm>

[Source: *Hansard* 26 January 2007, 72-73WS]

Environmental Liability Directive and GM organisms – EDM 692

David Drew has tabled an EDM drawing attention to “the special nature of the potential risks arising from the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and limited knowledge of their long-term environmental impacts”. The EDM calls on the Government to “change its proposals for the implementation of the Environmental Liability Directive which is intended to protect biodiversity, land and water from environmental harm that may arise from the use of GMOs to ensure that there are no defences from strict liability for harm arising from the use of GMOs.”

The EDM has attracted the support of 46 MPs to date.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=32380&SESSION=885>

[Source: Parliamentary website 29 January 2007]

EU audit of UK cheese-making

The European Commission's audit of the UK's implementation and enforcement of food safety rules in the dairy sector took place between 21 and 29 November 2006. The audit commenced with an initial pre-meeting between the two Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) inspectors involved and officials from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Defra. The inspectors were then accompanied by FSA officials on visits to seven dairy business premises in England and Wales to evaluate at first hand official controls relating to the safety of milk and milk based products. The audit mission concluded with a closing meeting involving officials from the FVO, Defra and the FSA.

The FVO report of the mission is not yet available. It will be published on the Commission website in due course. The overall cost of the audit has not been assessed.

[Source: *Hansard* 11 January 2007, col. 694W]

Food Hygiene (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007

The Food Hygiene (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007, no. 56) were made on 9 January, laid before Parliament on 17 January and come into force on 14 February 2007.

These regulations amend the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006/14) by updating the definitions of certain European Community instruments that are referred to in those regulations, by substituting definitions of certain Community instruments and substituting a revised Schedule 1 (definitions of Community legislation) for the existing Schedule 1 (*regulation 2(3)*). The regulations, together with explanatory notes, are available at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2007/20070056.htm>

Equivalent regulations for N. Ireland and Scotland have been published and are available at:

- Northern Ireland - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/sr/sr2007/20070016.htm>
- Scotland - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2007/20070011.htm>

[Source: Office of Public Sector Information website 18 January 2007]

FSA food alerts

Watercress products withdrawn from sale

Soleco UK Ltd withdrew watercress products, including watercress and spinach, and watercress and rocket mixed salad, from sale at branches of Budgens, Co-op, and a number of convenience stores where the Florette brand is sold, in mid January because of possible salmonella contamination. No other batches or products are known to be affected. More detailed information about this food alert is available on the FSA website at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/jan/watercress>

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 11 January 2007]

Heavy metals survey published by the FSA

A survey of the concentrations of eight metals and other elements in a variety of cultivated and wild foods has been published by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The survey was undertaken to provide data for a future review by the European Commission of permitted levels of these metals in our diet.

Concentrations of aluminium, arsenic, cadmium, copper, iron, lead, manganese and zinc were measured in 310 food samples bought throughout the UK from a range of shops. The levels found in the survey were compared against legal limits where they exist. None of the results of this survey pose a significant risk to people's health. The survey results are available at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/jan/heavymetals>

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 9 January 2007]

Illegal meat imports – EDM 543

Peter Ainsworth, the Conservative Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM) on illegal meat exports which has attracted the support of 56 MPs to date.

The EDM notes with concern that an estimated average of 12,000 tonnes of meat products enter the country illegally each year from countries outside the EU; recognises that illegal meat imports present serious risks to both animal and human health, and threaten the survival of many species in the wild; recalls the £10 billion cost of the most recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease; deplores the Government's inaction on tackling illegal meat imports; is appalled that the number of sniffer dogs to detect products of animal origin at UK ports and airports has fallen in the last year; and calls on the Government to improve border security and pay due attention to the prevention of the incidence of illegal meat imports.

[Source: Parliamentary website 8 January 2007]

New food surveillance system for Northern Ireland

The Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland (FSANI) and *safefood* have launched a new food surveillance system (FSS) that will act as a central databank for health professionals and enable the rapid transfer and exchange of information about food samples being sent to laboratories.

Each year in Northern Ireland, approximately 15,000 food samples are collected by District Council Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and sent to the Public Health Laboratory and the Public Analyst's Laboratory. The system will improve access to and analysis of information, thereby enhancing consumer protection because emerging trends in food safety can be identified more quickly. The system is based on a successful project originally developed in Scotland and piloted in six Public Analyst laboratories in England.

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 26 January 2007]

BSE controls

Misidentified cow entered food chain

The FSA has been notified that a cow believed to have been born before 1 August 1996 has entered the human food chain. The cow in question is believed to have been misidentified as one born in May 1997 at a farm in Powys. This is supported by DNA test results received on 16 January 2007.

Meat from cattle born or reared in the UK before 1 August 1996 should not be placed on the market – that is sold, supplied (whether or not in return for payment) or stored for supply.

This cow tested negative for BSE and specified risk material was removed, that is, those parts of the carcass that would contain more than 99% of any infectivity that would be present if the animal had BSE. These factors mean that any public health risk arising from this possible failure in BSE controls would be low.

The animal was sent from the farm to Ensor's Abattoir Ltd, an abattoir in Gloucestershire that is approved to slaughter Over Thirty Month (OTM) cattle for human consumption. Although the cow was slaughtered on 19 October 2006, the possible identification error was not discovered until 12 December. Investigations into this incident are ongoing.

Meat from the cow was delivered to Jim Oliver Ltd's butcher's shop in Chepstow Road, Newport, south Wales, on 6 November. None of the meat remains at the shop and customers have been asked, via point-of-sale notices, to return any beef they bought from the premises between 6 November 2006 and 14 November 2006.

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 29 January 2007]

Specified Risk Material (SRM) breaches reported in December

No SRM breaches have been reported in imported carcasses in December 2006.

However, on 19 December the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), which enforces the SRM controls in Northern Ireland on behalf of the FSA, reported the discovery of approximately 2 cm of spinal cord in each of two forequarters of beef. The forequarters were from two over thirty months bovines that had been slaughtered on 14 December 2006 and had tested negative for BSE.

The breach was discovered at a licensed cutting plant in Northern Ireland in a consignment of animals slaughtered in Britain. The receiving plant was not responsible for the breach; the spinal cord should have been removed at the slaughterhouse in England, F Drury and Son, prior to despatch to the cutting plant.

The remainder of the consignment was checked and found to be free from SRM. The affected quarters were detained and subsequently destroyed. Since the breach occurred at a plant in England, the MHS has launched a full investigation into the incident.

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 22 January 2007]

Untested OTM heifer enters the food chain

The FSA has been notified that an Over Thirty Month (OTM) heifer has entered the food chain without being tested for BSE. The heifer had its specified risk material - those parts of the animal that would contain more than 99% of any infectivity that would be present if the animal had BSE - removed so any risk to human health from this heifer is extremely low.

The majority of the meat from the animal, which was slaughtered on 30 November at ABP Shrewsbury, was sold fresh to catering suppliers, with the remainder going for sale in retail packs. All of this meat will have passed its use by date, even if frozen by the consumer. A full investigation into the circumstances of this incident is under way.

Since the OTM BSE testing regime came into force in November 2005, about 400,000 OTM cattle have been slaughtered in the UK for human consumption. This is the third occasion known to the FSA when an OTM bovine has entered the food chain untested.

[Source: FSA website 24 January 2007]

Wreck of MSC Napoli - food safety advice

The grounding of the MSC Napoli in Lyme Bay off the east Devon coast has resulted in the loss of approximately 200 cargo containers and a relatively small amount of oil. The ship was carrying some hazardous chemicals among its cargo, but this material is still on board. The remaining oil on the ship is being removed and the cargo is being made safe for eventual removal.

Regular sampling of the water and other materials is being carried out by the Environment Agency and other bodies. At the moment there is no evidence that the shipwreck has

caused any pollution significant enough to pose a threat to the quality or safety of fish and shellfish caught in Lyme Bay or collected from the coast of the bay.

The FSA will advise people if the situation changes.

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 26 January 2007]

Labelling/Additives

Egg labelling

In a Parliamentary question MEP Michl Ebner (PPE/ED, Italy) has asked the Commission what they intend to do to propose the inclusion of imported eggs in the EU mandatory labelling scheme. EU Regulation No 1907/90 sets out rules to enable consumers to recognise the method of production of the eggs they buy, although it does not apply to eggs imported from third countries.

Mariann Fischer Boel, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, agreed that in principle eggs imported from third countries should be labelled in a manner equivalent to the rules applicable in the EU and promised that the Commission's legal experts would evaluate the compatibility of these rules with World Trade Organisation commitments and Technical Barrier to Trade agreements. She also said that the Commission was working on a new draft regulation taking into consideration the issue of labelling imported eggs with the farming method. However, this draft is of a preliminary nature and at the moment no Commission position has been set out on the issues raised by Michl Ebner. See: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/omk/sipade3?TYPE-DOC=WQ&REF=P-2006-5074&REF-SEC=0&L=EN>

[Source: EU Parliamentary website 17 January 2007]

Food and Drink Federation launches GDA scheme

On 8 January the Food and Drink Federation, representing many of the largest food manufacturers in the UK launched a Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) food labelling scheme, which will rival the Government approved FSA traffic light scheme, which is backed by most retailers. The GDA scheme supporters include: Nestle, Unilever, Kellogg's and Tesco.

Critics of the industry GDA scheme have claimed that almost half of adults and most children will be unable to interpret the labels correctly. The FSA has said it would like to see the GDA scheme accompanied by traffic light colours. Which? supports the FSA scheme because its research found that 97% of people compared nutrients well when using it. The FSA found that 62% of people misunderstood the GDA label scheme, compared with only 21% who misunderstood traffic light labels.

[Source: *The Independent* 4 January 2007]

FSA consultation

Implementation in England of European directive on additives

The FSA is consulting on draft regulations implementing in England European Parliament and Council Directive 2006/52/EC amending Directives 95/2/EC on food additives other than colours and sweeteners and 94/35/EC on sweeteners for use in foodstuffs. The Directive is available at: <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/JOhtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:204:SOM:EN:HTML>.

The key proposals are:

- a reduction in the levels for nitrites and nitrates in meat and other food products, with exceptions for a number of traditional products;
- the withdrawal of two preservatives;
- the withdrawal of the authorisation for gelling agents for use in jelly mini-cups;
- the authorisation of seven new food additives; and
- a number of additional uses of already permitted food additives

The Miscellaneous Food Additives Regulations 1995 have been amended five times to implement amendments to Directive 95/2/EC. The Sweeteners in Food Regulations have been amended twice to implement amendments to Directive 94/35/EC. The draft Miscellaneous Food Additives and the Sweeteners in Food (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2007 will implement the provisions of Directive 2006/52/EC in England.

Member States are required to implement the provisions of Directive 2006/52/EC into national legislation before 15 February 2008 and to prohibit products that do not comply with the Directive by 15 August 2008. It is planned that the new regulations will come into force in England during June 2007. Transitional provisions have been included, permitting additives or uses of additives not conforming to Directive 2006/52/EC, but in line with Directive 95/2/EC and put on the market or labelled before 15 August 2008, to continue to be marketed until stocks are exhausted.

Responses are requested by 9 April. The FSA consultation document is available online at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/consultations/consulteng/2007/additivesengland0701>

A consultation on the implementation of the Directive in Scotland is also taking place; that consultation document is available at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/consultations/consultscot/2007/additivesscotland0701>

[Source: FSA website 16 January 2007]

Front of pack labelling

FSA advertising

The second of the FSA's three television adverts to raise awareness of traffic light colour coded front-of-pack labels went live on 29 January. The 10-second ads will be seen on ITV, satellite channels, and a Welsh version will be broadcast on S4C.

The three adverts – each with a different voiceover and twist to reflect how easy it is to use the traffic light labelling system – will run until 13 February. The first advert went live on 17 January.

[Source: FSA website 29 January 2007]

FSA announces Project Management Panel & Advisory Group

The FSA has announced the membership of the independent Project Management Panel that will manage the research into front of pack nutrition signpost labelling.

The Panel will be chaired by Sue Duncan, Head of the Government Social Science Research Unit. The other members are: Ashley Adamson, Senior Lecturer in Public Health Nutrition, Newcastle University; Eric Salama, CEO of Kantar, the Research and Consultancy Group, and Alizon Draper, Senior Lecturer in International Public Health Nutrition, Westminster University.

The panel will be responsible for agreeing the specification for the work to be put to open tender, overseeing the appraisal of research proposals and recommending the preferred bidder for the work. The panel will also monitor the research. This work is expected to be carried out in 2007.

To assist them in this work the Panel will be able to draw directly upon the advice of an Advisory Group made up of representatives from signposting scheme owners and consumer and health organisations.

More detailed information about this work, including a full list of the members of the Advisory Group, is available at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/nssgipletter070112.pdf>

[Source: FSA website 12 January 2007]

Responses to FSA consultation

The Health Minister, Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, has confirmed that the FSA received 121 responses to public consultations on front-of-pack nutritional signposting. In addition, more than 332 small and medium-sized enterprises with fewer than 50 employees were contacted to find out how the Agency's proposals would affect their businesses. A small number of responses were received; these did not highlight any concerns about arbitrary criticism of products. No representations have been received from makers of speciality food products.

[Source: Lords *Hansard* 29 January 2007, col. WA8]

GM labelling

The European Parliament and EU Council have amended Regulation 1829/2003 on genetically modified food and feed. The changes give the European Commission the power to define whether a particular food or feed falls within the scope of the Regulation, and also powers to lower the thresholds for the labelling of adventitious and technically unavoidable presence of genetically modified material in foods. The regulation is available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st05/st05207.en07.pdf>

[Source: European Council website 10 January 2007]

Infant formulae

The European Commission has adopted a new Directive on infant formulae. The Directive lays down compositional and labelling requirements for infant formulae and follow-on formulae intended for use by healthy infants.

The Directive also provides for Member States to give effect to principles and aims of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes dealing with marketing, information and responsibilities of health authorities. The Directive is available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_401/l_40120061230en00010033.pdf

[Source: Official Journal of the European Union 30 December 2006]

OFT takes action against 'miracle slimming chocolate'

The OFT has obtained assurances from a Hong Kong based company that it will no longer market their "slimming chocolate" in the UK.

Global DM Licensing sent mailings to UK consumers claiming that by eating 'Slim-Choc' you could lose at least 20 pounds in 20 days, without dieting or exercising, and promised that 'the more you eat the more you lose!' Slim-Choc was marketed as 'the brand new revolutionary cure for the obese and overweight', and 'the first and only chocolate that burns off fat and cellulite'. It was also claimed that the product had been developed over decades of research and clinically controlled hospital trials, and was based on the medical theory of 'Negative Calories' - where certain foods are so healthy that the body uses up more calories and energy digesting them than they contain. Mailings also included consumer testimonials detailing how some women had lost up to 72 pounds in just over three months, and recommended a purchase of a 40 day supply of Slim-Choc costing £37.

After being made aware of the mailing, the OFT contacted Global DM Licensing to express concerns over the potentially misleading claims being made, and requested evidence in support of the claims. The company responded by stating that, whilst it believed that the claims could be substantiated, it accepted the OFT's concerns and had decided to stop any further Slim-Choc advertising campaigns in the UK.

[Source: DTI website 12 January 2007]

Animal Health

Feed law code of practice published

The Feed Law Enforcement Code of Practice (Great Britain) has been published and is available on the FSA website at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/foodlaw/feedlawcop/>

The code of practice sets out instructions and criteria which the feed authorities (Local Authorities) should note when enforcing animal feed law. Feed authorities must follow and implement the provisions of the code that apply to them. The FSA will keep the code of practice under review and amend it as necessary.

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 2 January 2007]

Feed and food controls – FSA update on developments

An update on the progress since March 2006 on the measures being taken to apply EU Regulation 882/2004 on official controls in the UK has been published by the FSA.

This latest update provides information on the UK's first national control plan (NCP) and on progress towards implementing the provisions on financing of official controls in Regulation 882/2004. It also provides information on on-going work at EU level. This includes the development of various Commission guidelines, the establishment of implementing rules for import controls for 'high-risk' feed and food products of non-animal origin (non-POAO), and on the Commission's 'Better Training for Safer Food' initiative. The update is available at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/jan/offcupdate>

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 23 January 2007]

Flu vaccinations for poultry workers, but risk of bird flu in the UK remains low

The Department of Health is offering flu vaccination this winter to those who work in close contact with poultry. The Department has emphasised that this is being done as a precautionary public health measure and does not mean that workers are at any higher risk of getting flu this winter than usual, nor does it mean that there is an increased risk of an outbreak of bird flu in the UK. The Department says that the risk of an outbreak of bird flu in the UK remains low.

[Source: Department of Health website 8 January 2007]

Healthy Eating

Alcohol

Alcohol Labelling Bill [HL]

Lord Mitchell has presented a Bill to make provision for the labelling of alcoholic beverage. The Bill was read a first time and ordered to be printed. It is available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200607/ldbills/032/07032.i.html>

[Source: Lords *Hansard* 29 January 2007, col. 11]

Alcohol statistics show scale of the challenge in Scotland

A [compendium](#) of previously released statistics has been published by the Scottish Executive, together with new data on hospital alcohol-related discharges and alcohol-related deaths. The latest statistics demonstrate the huge health and social cost of alcohol misuse in Scotland.

- Between 2001/02 and 2005/06, the number of people discharged from hospital with alcohol-related injuries or illnesses rose from 35,445 to 39,061, an increase of 10%,
- There were 2,372 deaths in Scotland in 2005 where alcohol was either the cause or a contributing factor, an increase of 15% since 2001.

The Scottish Executive is continuing to run national campaigns to change harmful drinking cultures and it has allocated an additional £10 million this year for alcohol services to ensure that more people get access to appropriate help. It is also piloting a test-purchasing scheme to clamp down on those establishments which sell alcohol to under-age children. The Scottish Executive will publish an updated Plan for Action on alcohol problems shortly which will set out a wide range of further action.

[Source: Scottish Executive website 30 January 2007]

Government support for the prevention of alcohol abuse

The Department of Health has implemented a number of projects aimed at preventing alcohol misuse and tackling alcohol related harm over the last 10 years.

In November 2006, the Department, jointly with the Home Office, launched the 'Know Your Limits' campaign. The Department will contribute £1.7 million in 2006-07. The campaign seeks to discourage binge drinking by young adults (see "responsible drinking" below).

In October 2006, the Department announced the Identification and Brief advice trailblazers, which are a series of demonstration projects on preventive interventions in health and

criminal justice settings for people who are drinking at hazardous and harmful levels. The Department is investing £3.2 million in this project over 2006-08. The Department has also issued Section 64 funding to various projects over the last 10 years run by organisations who tackle alcohol related harm, at least some of this funding being spent on projects aimed at prevention. The total cost was £4.8 million, £4.4 million of this money went to core funding of Alcohol Concern. In addition, £385,880 was spent in support of various Alcohol Concern projects between 2000 and 2003.

Merits of an advertising ban?

Ofcom conducted and assessed research about the impact of alcohol advertising and concluded there was insufficient evidence to support a ban. However, Ofcom's code amendments, which came into effect on 1 January 2005, significantly strengthened the rules on broadcast alcohol advertising in many areas particularly to protect the under-18s.

In parallel with the changes to the TV Advertising Standards Code, the non-broadcast code was tightened to ensure that the content of all advertisements was socially responsible and that they did not contain a particular appeal to youth culture or links to sexual success and did not encourage antisocial behaviour. These new rules were introduced in October 2005 and have been monitored and enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

The ASA and the Committees of Advertising Practice will be conducting further research this year to assess the effectiveness of the new code rules and will assess whether any further changes are required.

[Source: *Hansard* 26 January 2007, col. 2056W]

NHS spending on alcohol treatment

Primary care trusts (PCTs) are currently spending £217 million on alcohol treatment. A further £15 million has been allocated to PCTs in 2007-08 to improve alcohol interventions further.

The Alcohol Needs Assessment Research Project (ANARP) published in November 2005 provided the first ever comprehensive picture of alcohol related needs and availability of treatment in England. ANARP found that in England 1.1 million people are alcohol dependent and estimated that 63,000 access alcohol treatment each year.

[Source: *Hansard* 11 January 2007, col. 692-3W]

Responsible drinking

The Government's "Know Your Limits" campaign focuses on young people who are binge drinkers because research shows that 18 to 24-year-olds are most likely to drink irresponsibly and cause harm to themselves and others. It aims to ensure that sufficient information exists to help everyone to become more aware of the risks to individual health and personal safety that alcohol misuse can bring and to make informed choices on the

basis of that information. The campaign is designed also to reach a secondary audience of hazardous, harmful, dependent, and pregnant drinkers.

There has been a fall in the proportion of men drinking more than the daily benchmarks on at least one day in the previous week, from 39% in 2004 to 35% in 2005.

[Source: *Hansard* 8 January 2007, col. 64W]

Cheese consumption

Lord Rooker, the Minister of State for Rural Affairs, has published a table showing the average household purchases of cheese per person per day, week and year. These estimates are based on records of consumer purchases from the expenditure and food survey from 2002/3 to 2004/5.

The table, indicating a small fall in consumption between 2003/4 and 2004/5 is available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200607/ldhansrd/text/70116w0001.htm#07011662000006>

Estimates of weekly purchases in 2005-06 will be published shortly at <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/efs/default.asp>

[Source: Lords *Hansard* 16 January 2007, col. WA135]

Cheese industry

In response to a question from David Drew, the Public Health Minister, Caroline Flint, has confirmed that there has been no assessment of the possible impact that proposed television restrictions on food and drink advertising to children will have on the cheese industry. Ms Flint also reiterated the Government's view that the nutrient profiling model, developed by the FSA for use by Ofcom, "provides a scientific and objective base for underpinning regulatory intervention in relation to television advertising to children."

[Source: *Hansard* 15 January 2007, col. 912W]

Drinks in schools

The new Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches) (England) Regulations 2006, introduced in September 2006, limit the range of drinks available in schools to plain water (still or sparkling); skimmed or semi-skimmed milk; fruit juices; yogurt drinks with less than 5% added sugar; or combinations of these drinks; and require drinking water to be provided free of charge to registered pupils on school premises. Subsequent regulations to be introduced in September 2007 will extend these requirements to ensure that drinks throughout the school are consistent with those served at lunch; and that drinking water is provided free of charge at all times of the school day.

On 17 January the Education Minister, Mr Dhanda, said that soya drinks enriched with calcium, vegetable juices, low calorie hot chocolate, tea and coffee are also allowed.

Artificial sweeteners are allowed in yoghurt or milk drinks, and in the yoghurt or milk portion of combined drinks. The Government has no plans to ban additives, which include sweeteners, in food under the new legislation. However, if schools want to take action on additives in food, they are free to do so.

The Government has not made, and has no plans to make, any estimate of the effect on school children's weight of replacing one caloric drink a day with a sugar-free alternative.

[Sources: *Hansard* 8 January 2007, col. 228-9W and 17 January 2007, col. 1163W]

Dundee healthy living initiative

The Dundee healthy living initiative teaches people basic cooking skills on a budget and enables them to experiment and try healthy food at no cost to themselves.

Lewis Macdonald, the Scottish Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, has agreed to meet Ms Kate Maclean, who has drawn attention to the Dundee healthy living initiative's lack of long term funding, to discuss the future of the project. NHS Health Scotland is also taking an interest in the work it is doing and in the sustainability of projects that seek to promote healthy living in disadvantaged communities.

[Source: Scottish Parliament Official Report 18 January 2007, col. 31258]

Eating Disorders – treatment in Scotland

Scottish Health Minister, Lewis Macdonald, has advised MSPs that current undergraduate mental health nursing programmes address the subject of eating disorders and their prevalence in both men and women, as well as its aetiology and treatment.

NHS Education for Scotland have work in process to address training needs for NHS staff dealing with eating disorders in children and young people. This focus is aimed at addressing the issue early, so that young people who are vulnerable or at risk are identified and have access to appropriate treatment as early as possible. It is anticipated that some of this work will provide resources and guidance that will be applicable to adults with eating disorders.

NHS Quality Improvement Scotland published recommendations for the management and treatment of eating disorders last year and the Minister assured MSPs that the Executive "continues our work with NHS boards and other care partners to improve the provision and quality of inpatient and specialist eating disorder services in Scotland."

[Source: Scottish Parliament Official Report 26 January 2007, S2W-30718 – S2W-30720]

Family Expenditure Survey (FES) indicates healthier trends in food purchases

People in the UK are buying more fruit and vegetables according to the Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS) results published on 18 January.

The first release of estimates based on food and drink purchases recorded in the EFS for the twelve month period from 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006, reveals the largest increase in purchases of fruit and vegetables in the last twenty years. However, the EFS also found that Britons are spending more each week on takeaways than fresh vegetables.

Household expenditure rose for fish (by 5.3%) cheese (by 5.1%), eggs (by 5%) and milk (by 4.9%), with a continuing switch from whole milk to semi skimmed milk. There was also an increase in intake of fibre. The results also show that people are buying less confectionary and soft drinks and indicate a decline in purchases of alcoholic drinks both for the household and in pubs and restaurants. Comparing 2005-06 with the previous year:

- Quantities of fruit and vegetables, excluding potatoes, purchased for the household were 7.7% higher in 2005-06, continuing an increasing trend.
- Fat intake, measured by its percentage contribution to food energy intake, dropped very slightly to 38.1%. The energy contribution from saturated fatty acids dropped to 14.6%.

Comprehensive Excel datasets available on the Family Food page of the Defra website at: <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/efs/default.asp>

“Family Spending in 2005-06”, the Office for National Statistics report covering all household expenditure as collected in the Expenditure and Food Survey, is available at: www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=361&Pos=1&ColRank=1&Rank=272

The ONS press release is available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/efs0107.pdf>

A report, “Family Food in 2005-06”, produced by Defra on the food and drink component of the Expenditure and Food Survey will be published on 24 May 2007. It will include analyses by region and by demographic characteristics.

[Source: Defra website 18 January 2007]

“Fast food” outlets in NHS hospitals

Chris Huhne MP has drawn attention to the presence of “fast food” outlets in NHS hospitals. The Health Minister, Andy Burnham, has confirmed that NHS Trusts are locally responsible for decisions relating to the provision of all food to patients, staff and visitors. NHS trusts are encouraged to generate income by making best use of their assets and this can include the provision of fast food outlets.

[Source: *Hansard* 15 January 2007, col. 924W]

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

Raising awareness of foetal alcohol syndrome is part of the multi million pound “Know Your Limits” alcohol campaign which was launched in October 2006. The Department of Health has have produced a leaflet, “How much is too much when you’re having a baby?”, which is being widely distributed across the NHS, and to other frontline agencies on request. It is also available for downloading via the campaign website at www.knowyourlimits.gov.uk. The Department has engaged a public relations agency to take forward a media campaign to increase awareness of issues pertaining to pregnancy and alcohol.

The Government’s vision for maternity services is set out in the maternity standard of the national service framework for children, young people and maternity services. The standard highlights the need for local health promotion arrangements to include the provision of information for parents on the importance of minimising intake of alcohol. It also asks all NHS maternity care providers to ensure that all women who have a significant alcohol use problem receive their care from a multi-agency team, which will include a specialist midwife and/or obstetrician in this area.

[Source: *Hansard* 19 January 2007col. 1414W]

Folic Acid

The Government is expecting a formal recommendation from the FSA this summer on the fortification of flour with vitamin folic acid. The FSA Board will be taking into account the results of the current public consultation on options to improve the folate status in young women, consumer research and the final report of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition in developing its recommendations.

The UK National Infant Feeding Survey takes place every five years and asks mothers about the benefits of taking folic acid during pregnancy. In 1995 three-quarters (75%) were aware of the benefits of taking folic acid and this increased to over nine out of 10 (92%) by 2000. Most women who knew of the increased benefits of taking folic acid had taken some action to increase their intake of folic acid. Three in 10 (31%) had changed their diets and almost three-quarters (73%) had taken supplements with some women doing both. The 2000 survey was not able to differentiate whether the action was prior to conception or after they were aware that they were pregnant. The report did not provide any further breakdown based either on age or demographic groups.

The results of the 2005 national infant feeding survey are expected in spring 2007.

The health survey of England provides more up to date information on the use of folic acid supplements prior to and during pregnancy for mothers who had planned their pregnancy. Nearly four out of five mothers (79%) reported increasing their folate intake during pregnancy. The proportion of mothers taking action increased with age from 32% for those aged 16 to 24 up to 60% for those 35 years and older. Slightly more than four in 10 (43%) mothers in the most socio-economically deprived areas were likely to increase their folate

intake compared with seven in 10 (70%) mothers in the least socio-economically deprived areas.

[Source: *Hansard* 22 January 2007, col. 1586-7W]

Health benefits of milk in tea – EDM 619

Daniel Kawczynski has tabled an Early Day Motion expressing hostility towards a recent German study calling into question the application of milk to tea as reducing any health benefits to be had from tea. The EDM “recognises other reports that counter such claims; and also wishes to raise awareness of the health benefits of adding milk to tea of raising vitamin B intake by up to 30%, folic acid by 5% and calcium intake by 21% more than if the tea were drunk alone.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=32294&SESSION=885>

The EDM has attracted the support of 18 MPs to date.

[Source: Parliamentary website 15 January 2007]

Healthy eating in schools

As part of its campaign to get children eating their five daily portions of fruit and vegetables, the European Commission has unveiled plans for farmers to be paid in full to give surplus produce to schools. The move is part of a shake-up of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The European Commission says that it has more than £4 million to spend on healthy-eating advertising aimed at children, and a further £5.5 million towards the cost of free distribution of fruit and vegetables to schools, hospitals and charities. To fund this, the Commission is suggesting cutting EU funds currently provided to farmers for withdrawing perishable products from the market if they are not selling well. More detailed information is available at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/07/31&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

[Source: European Union press room website 24 January 2007]

Healthy Living social marketing strategy

The purpose of the healthy living social marketing strategy is to identify the behaviours that need to be influenced as part of the Government’s strategy to tackle obesity. The Government is currently refining its approach, but Caroline Flint, the Public Health Minister, has revealed that the first wave of social marketing campaigns will begin by March 2007.

[Source: *Hansard* 22 January 2007, col. 1589W]

Healthy Start scheme in Northern Ireland – regulations published

On 11 January the “Healthy Start Scheme and Day Care Food Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006” (Statutory Rule 2006 No. 478) were published online at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/sr/sr2006/20060478.htm>.

These regulations were made on 23 November 2006 and came into operation on 27 November 2006. They establish a scheme in Northern Ireland to provide benefits for pregnant women, mothers and children (“the Healthy Start scheme”) and a scheme to provide milk and infant formula for children under age 5 in certain types of day care (“the Day Care Food scheme”).

[Source: Office of Public Sector Information website 11 January 2007]

Living well advice for the over 60s

A 2007 ‘Eat Well, Live Well’ calendar produced by the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland (FSANI), with support from Help the Aged and the Department for Social Development (DSD), was launched on 22 January.

The calendar gives advice on healthy eating for the over 60s as well as advice on other relevant issues such as keeping warm in winter and pension credits. A total of 50,000 calendars have been produced and are available from Housing Executive offices, Post Offices, GP surgeries and churches across Northern Ireland. The calendar is available at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/nicalendar2007.pdf>

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 23 January 2007]

National Association of Care Catering’s new menu planning guide

The National Association of Care Catering launched a new menu planning guide on 11 January to provide caterers with greater information and support in the light of the increasing scrutiny of the nutritional quality of meals served in the care home sector.

An additional aid is also available through the catering software specialist, Fretwell-Downing Hospitality, which has developed a web-based service for nutritionally analysing meals, which avoids having to invest in expensive software programming. The service, which carries a comprehensive database based on the McCance and Widdowson composition of food values, is subscription-based and allows users to log on via a password-protected website to input their own recipes and menus for analysis.

The guide is available at: <http://www.thenacc.co.uk/> (£35 to members/£40 non-members)

[Source: National Association of Care Catering website 11 January 2007]

National School Fruit Scheme

An evaluation measuring the longer-term impact of the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS) scheme on children's diets has been commissioned, with the results expected in spring 2007.

The SFVS was originally piloted in more than 500 schools throughout England in 2000 and 2001, to examine the practicalities of the scheme before rolling it out nationally. The scheme was expanded region by region with £42 million from the Big Lottery Fund and rolled out across all the English regions by November 2004. The scheme is now fully funded by the Department.

All four to six-year-old children in local education authority (LEA) maintained infant, primary and special schools throughout England are now eligible to receive a free piece of fruit or vegetable every school day. Close to two million children in over 16,500 schools across England (99.3% of eligible schools) are currently receiving a fresh piece of fruit or vegetable each school day.

The Big Lottery Fund commissioned an evaluation of the scheme and published the results in September 2005. The full report and findings are available on the BLF website at www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/index/publications-uk

[Source: *Hansard* 22 January 2007, col. 1594-5W]

Nutrigenomic testing

In response to a question from Dr Ian Gibson, the Public Health Minister, Caroline Flint, has confirmed that no assessment has been made of trends in nutrigenomic testing.

However, the Food Standards Agency is investigating the possibility of including DNA analysis as part of the recently commissioned National Diet and Nutrition Survey programme. As well as considering the overall balance of the survey programme, the inclusion of such work would also be subject to securing ethical approval.

[Source: *Hansard* 11 January 2007, 701W]

Nutritional advice for older people in residential care

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has published generic guidance, "FSA Nutrient and Food Based Guidelines for UK Institutions", and specific guidance for food served to older people in residential care. Neither form of guidance recommends the use of a specific nutritional assessment package.

The FSA advice to those providing food to older people in residential care notes that it is important that nutritional analysis uses appropriate software with up-to-date information. A freelance dietician commissioned to develop example menus for care homes to illustrate how the guidance can be met in practice utilised the Saffron Nutrition software package. A

range of software packages are available for dieticians to use and will provide an accurate analysis when used correctly.

[Source: *Hansard* 19 January 2007, col. 1421W]

Organic food – health claims

On 16 January Lord Dykes asked the Government what steps they will take to explain the official position on organic food following recent comments on the subject made by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs?

In response, Lord Rooker, made no comment as to whether organic food is “healthier” than conventional food. Instead he said: “This Government are strongly supportive of organic food and will remain so, not least for its biodiversity benefits. We place significant value on the contribution made by organic production toward our sustainability objectives. We have provided considerable support to the organic sector in financial aid to organic farmers and through the organic action plan.”

[Source: Lords *Hansard* 16 January 2007, col. WA140]

Lord Taverne was critical of the claims made for organic farming in a short debate in the Lords on 25 January, which he had initiated. He drew attention to blind tests which have shown people cannot taste any difference between equally fresh organic and conventionally grown fruit and to FSA tests which have shown that organically grown food is not significantly different in terms of safety and nutrition from food produced conventionally. He also questioned the claim that organic farming is better for the environment arguing that it can damage the environment and make global warming worse.

Lord Taverne suggested the organic “creed” is founded on the principle that synthetic chemicals are bad and dangerous, while natural chemicals are safe and good, which he described as “a scientific howler”. He drew attention to highly beneficial synthetic chemicals and a number of natural chemicals which are highly poisonous. He also reminded Peers that regulations set the safety levels for pesticide residues so high that they are “between 100 and 1,000 times above concentrations at which any harmful effect might result.” He then argued that focussing on organic food may have a bad effect on the health of our population if the higher prices of organic fruit and vegetables led to people on low incomes who buy them buying less of them than if there were no price differential.

The Hansard record of the debate, in which Lord Grantchester, Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer, Baroness Byford and Lord Rooker also spoke, is available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200607/ldhansrd/text/70125-0015.htm#07012591000002>

[Source: Lords *Hansard* 25 January 2007, col. 1304-18]

Organic food – EDM 735

Daniel Kawczynski has tabled an EDM on organic farming noting with concern comments made by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that organic food is no more healthy for the individual. The EDM welcomes comments that organic food is better for the environment in terms such as reduced use of pesticides and “wishes to highlight a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) study (Energy use in organic farming systems (DEFRA, 2000)) that confirmed that organic farming requires 50% less energy overall than intensive non-organic agriculture, organic arable production being about 35% more energy efficient, with organic dairy farming rising to 74% more efficient; and therefore calls on the Secretary of State and others to promote organic food for its energy saving environmental impact as much as its taste and health benefits.”

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=32429&SESSION=885>

The EDM has attracted the support of 8 MPs at the present time.

[Source: Parliamentary website 29 January 2007]

Record sales for smoothies

Sales of the crushed fruit drinks, “smoothies” rose by 523% in the five years to 2006 according to Mintel. Sales at the biggest smoothie maker, Innocent, rose by 168% last year to £80m, according to *The Grocer*. Britons drank 34m litres of smoothies in 2006. The 15-19 and 25-34 age groups are the biggest consumers.

[Source: *The Independent* 4 January 2007]

Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill – Stage I report published

The Scottish Parliament Communities Committee has published its Stage 1 Report on the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill (SP Paper 718). It is available at: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/communities/reports-07/cor07-02-Vol01-00.htm>

In its report, the Communities Committee endorses the general principles of the Bill, which will make health a central component to schooling and introduce nutritional requirements, but it calls for the proposed legislation to apply to the pre-school and independent sector.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, the Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent later in 2007.

[Source: Scottish Parliament website 16 January 2007]

Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill – Stage 1 debate

The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill has had its Stage 1 debate.

A motion supporting the general principles of the Bill was supported after two amendments to the Bill which sought to highlight the value of free school meals provision were defeated. The amendments were:

- Fiona Hyslop moved amendment S2M-5339.3 to motion S2M-5339 – Insert at end— "but, in so doing, regrets that provision for the piloting of free and nutritious school meals on a universal basis in public sector nurseries and the early years of primary school has not been included in the Bill, nor the flexibility to introduce this at a later date, as a key element in tackling health and nutrition of children and improving the uptake of school meals in the longer term."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to by division (for 34, against 77, abstentions 2).

- Frances Curran moved amendment S2M-5339.4 to motion S2M-5339— Insert at end—"and, in so doing, urges the Scottish Executive to consider the crucial research by Hull City Council, announced on 22 January 2007, which shows how free healthy school meals can assist take up and improve learning and behaviour; acknowledges evidence already given to the Communities Committee which supports free healthy school meals, and considers that amendments should be brought forward at Stage 2 which would introduce free healthy school meals for all state school children, including those in nurseries."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to by division: (for 13, against 77, abstentions 23).

The full record of the debate is available at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-07/sor0124-01.htm>

[Source: Scottish Parliament Official Report 24 January, col. 31327-31375]

School children to receive pedometers

Public Health Minister, Caroline Flint, has launched the National School Pedometer Programme, which will see 250 schools in deprived areas across the country being given 45,000 pedometers, to encourage children to become more active. In addition, all schools will have access to online resources that can be used inside and outside the classroom. This programme follows a successful pilot pedometer scheme "Schools on the Move" that was tested in 50 schools and showed encouraging increases in children's activity levels.

Most children said the pilot increased their interest in physical activity and half said they had become more active as a result. While the pilot proved particularly effective at encouraging less active children to do more exercise, it did appeal to children of all fitness levels.

In the national programme pedometers will be used in schools as a tool to support a wide range of curriculum topics and to increase awareness among pupils of the need to be active. Teachers will be trained in how to use the programme within the curriculum. Children will be able to chart their pedometer progress by logging onto a dedicated website that will help them set step targets.

Ms Flint said: "Evidence shows that obesity is best tackled through activities and interventions targeted at a population level that address the whole school environment and the wider local community."

[Source: Department of Health website 24 January 2007]

School meals – monitoring of results

The School Food Trust will have preliminary findings related to changes in the provision of school food available later this year. Preliminary results on children's food consumption will be available in 2009 (for primary schools) and in 2010 (for secondary schools).

[Source: *Hansard* 11 January, 2007 716W]

Schools meals – training required for preparation

A competent member of staff who could cook, prepare and finish meals from scratch, which meet the new school food standards, would be working at level 2 of the qualifications framework, and would be a competent cook able to work with a high degree of autonomy. A head chef or someone with supervisory responsibilities would be working at level 3 of the framework, and be able to manage staff and resources and have significant operational responsibilities for work in kitchens.

Training is currently provided in a number of ways. Local Authorities and contract caterers provide significant amounts of in-house training. In addition, there are a number of colleges and private training providers who offer courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications such as the certificate in providing healthier school meals, the support workers in schools qualification and national vocational qualifications in professional cookery and food processing and cookery. The Department for Education and Skills will also be investing £2 million in 2007-08 in the establishment of a network of regional training centres for school catering staff to act as centres of excellence. The DfES has asked the School Food Trust to take the lead on developing this proposal. Further work is currently under way, including looking at how this network will fit into existing provision in schools and colleges, and by private providers.

The relevant Sector Skills Council for catering skills is People 1st.

[Source: *Hansard* 18 January 2007, col WA193-194]

Scottish Executive uses children's book to push healthy eating message

A new children's book promoting the importance of healthy eating at a young age was launched in Scotland on 24 January. "When Sammy met Sally" explains to children in a language they can understand the benefits of establishing good eating habits for the rest of their lives. The book is designed to support the Scottish Executive's "Hungry for Success" programme, which aims to increase children's experience of healthy food in the broadest sense. The book will be rolled out to nurseries across Scotland.

[Source: Scottish Executive website 24 January 2007]

Trans Fats

Only limited information on the levels of trans fats present in the types of food products available in fast food outlets is published in McCance and Widdowson's 'The Composition of Foods', but the FSA has no plans to carry out further analyses.

Results from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (2000-01) which looks at dietary intakes shows that intakes of trans fats are within maximum recommended intakes, whereas saturated fat intakes currently exceed public health recommendations, consequently saturated fat intakes represent the greater heart health risk and remain the priority for Government.

The FSA welcomes and encourages the voluntary initiatives some businesses, including the fast food sector and the catering sector more widely, have undertaken to reduce the trans fats levels in their food products. The Government's view, however, is that any product reformulation to reduce the levels of trans fats, generally through the removal of partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, should not result in increases in the saturated fat levels in foods.

[Source: *Hansard* 23 January 2007, col. 1761W]

VAT on fresh fruit juice – EDM 558

Stewart Hosie has tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM) which notes that VAT is charged at the same rate on fresh fruit juices as on soft drinks and other less healthy drinks high in sugar or artificial sweeteners, colouring or other additives and calls on the Government to investigate the possible benefits of reducing VAT on fresh fruit juice to a reduced rate of 5% as allowed by the Sixth VAT Directive to encourage children in particular to choose to drink fresh fruit juice rather than other less healthy drinks. This EDM has attracted the support of **54 MPs to date**.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=32222&SESSION=885>

[Source: Parliamentary website 8 January 2007]

Obesity

Obesity – Government action

The Education Minister, Lord Adonis, has told Peers that action to achieve the Government's target on obesity will be delivered using a three-tiered approach: universal programmes aimed at prevention; early intervention for those at risk of being overweight/obese; and targeted health interventions for those already obese.

The first tier comprises universal programmes aimed at reversing obesity trends and creating a positive environment for healthy eating and physical activity. Policy initiatives within this tier include the Healthy Schools programme, the "5 a Day" campaign, the Healthy Start scheme, the school fruit and vegetable scheme, statutory nutritional standards for food in schools, restrictions on the advertising and food promotion to children of foods high in fat, salt and sugar, increasing the amount of time pupils spend on high quality PE and school sport, and encouraging walking and cycling to school through school travel plans and walking-bus schemes.

The second tier comprises early interventions targeted at groups of children (and their parents) at higher risk of being overweight and obese, including school sports partnerships in areas of higher obesity prevalence to engage overweight/obese children in physical activity and work with the School Food Trust.

The third tier comprises public health treatment interventions specifically aimed at helping obese children and families to lose weight and become healthier. The Government will be working with PCTs, Local Authorities, schools and other delivery partners to ensure that recommendations from the new NICE clinical guidance on the treatment of obesity, are developed and incorporated in its approach. In the spring the Government will be launching a social marketing campaign aimed at influencing behaviour change in parents and encouraging them to build healthier lifestyles for their children and families.

Obesity is now included as a performance management indicator within the performance management framework for PCTs, and the Government is encouraging Local Authorities to include measures to reduce childhood obesity in their local area agreements.

[Source: Lords *Hansard* 17 January 2007, col. WA161-2]

Childhood obesity – pressure on the fast food industry

In a Written Parliamentary Question, British MEP Catherine Stihler (PSE) has asked the Commission what pressure is being put on the fast food industry to address the growing problem of child obesity.

The Commission responded by saying that, in 2005, it set up the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders to develop approaches to address the rise in obesity rates. Membership of the Platform includes

representatives from the food and drink industries, and industry members of the CIAA (representing the food and drinks industry) have committed themselves to actions regarding restricting advertising to children, offering non sugar drinks in vending machines in schools, and offering healthier alternatives of their products. In addition, some of the members have committed themselves to voluntary nutrition labelling on all their products.

The full Written Answer is available at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/omk/sipade3?TYPE-DOC=WQ&REF=E-2006-5259&REF-SEC=0&L=EN>

[Source: EU Parliamentary website 17 January 2007]

NICE guidelines on childhood obesity

Lord Jacob has asked the Government what type of surgery is recommended by National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines on childhood obesity. Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, the Minister of State for Health emphasised that NICE recommends bariatric surgery for children and young people only in exceptional circumstances and only if they have achieved physiological maturity. The surgical procedures recommended are: jejunioileal bypass, gastric bypass, biliopancreatic diversion, gastroplasty and gastric banding.

[Source: *Hansard* 18 January 2007, col. WA193]

“Tackling Child Obesity – First Steps” PAC report published

The Committee notes that a joint target was set in 2004 between the Departments of Health, Education and Skills and Culture, Media and Sport to halt the year-on-year increases by 2010. However in its report, published on 25 January, the Committee is critical of a lack of co-ordination across the Departments.

It is estimated that obesity already costs around £1 billion a year and the UK economy a further £2.3 to £2.6 billion in indirect costs. If current trends continue, by 2010 the annual cost to the economy could rise by another £1 billion a year. The report notes, however, that “other than a proposed social marketing campaign, there are no ring-fenced funds nor are there any specific programmes to tackle child obesity.”

The Committee also noted that to date “there has been little comprehensive, published research on the effectiveness of prevention and treatment strategies for child obesity” and that while the Departments’ performance “is to be measured by the annual Health Survey for England. The latest data from that survey is from 2004, and with no interim measures, the three Departments cannot determine what progress has been made against the target to date.”

The Committee concluded that “parents have not been engaged” and although “a national programme to measure and weigh all children in primary schools in England had been

launched, it is unclear if parents would be told if their child was overweight and at risk of serious health problems.”

The PAC was also critical of Government's attempts to work with the food industry concluding that this strategy has not been successful in changing the way the majority of unhealthy foods are marketed.

The Public Health Minister, Caroline Flint, has pointed out that "the evidence on which this report is based was gathered in 2005 and early 2006. In the interim we have achieved an enormous amount." The Minister cited improvements in front of pack food labelling and Ofcom's recommendations on limiting the advertising of food high in fat, sugar and salt, as examples of what has been achieved. The Minister also claimed that the 5ADay initiative is having an impact: "Last week the latest food purchasing figures showed that there had been a 7.7% increase in purchases of fruit and vegetables and a 6.1% decrease in purchases of confectionary." The Minister strongly defended the Government's strategy of working with the food industry and others, saying: "what we are absolutely about is that overweight and obesity cannot be tackled by government alone which is why we are co-ordinating action across government, the food and fitness industries, retailers, through the voluntary and public sectors to target action where it can be most effective."

The PAC report, "Tackling Child Obesity – First Steps" (HCP 157) is available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmpubacc/157/157.pdf>

[Sources: Parliamentary and Department of Health websites 25 January 2007]

Research into obesity and diabetes across social backgrounds

At oral questions on 9 January Alison Seabeck MP (Plymouth, Devonport) drew attention to research being carried out in Plymouth by the Early Bird project, which is looking at obesity and diabetes across social backgrounds and which needs further funding.

Whilst confirming the Government's support for research, the Public Health Minister, Caroline Flint, said "there is a point at which we know what the reality is and we have to get on with dealing with it."

[Source: *Hansard* 9 January 2007 col. 133]

Supplements & Complementary Medicine

Food Supplements Directive – an update

Food Standard Agency (FSA) officials have met with the Better Regulation Executive and Small Business Service to discuss options for assessing the economic impact of the setting of maximum permitted levels of nutrients under the terms of the Food Supplements Directive. A series of questions are being prepared in order to obtain relevant information from industry to complete the assessment.

No letters from individual consumers to FSA officials have been received expressing concerns about the setting of maximum permitted levels of nutrients in food supplements. However over 300 letters have been received from small companies and employees from a health food company.

FSA officials are seeking legal advice on the use of a system of advisory statements under the terms of the Food Supplements Directive.

The FSA developed the policy for a system of advisory statements following the publication of the results of risk assessment of vitamins and minerals by the expert group on vitamins and Minerals (EVM) in 2003. The majority of food supplement products on the UK market in 2003, contained amounts of vitamins and minerals that were well below the safe upper levels set by the EVM. However, a small number of products contained levels of vitamins and minerals which were higher than the safe upper level set by the EVM, in single dose form, which could cause adverse effects in some individuals if taken on a regular basis. In consultation with industry representatives from the Council for Responsible Nutrition, Health Food Manufacturer's Association and the Proprietary Association of Great Britain, a number of advisory statements were agreed in May 2004 to be included on labels, which provide information on the potential adverse effects for these products.

The use of advisory statements approach has been discussed in bilateral meetings between FSA officials, the European Commission and other member states. Further bilateral meetings are planned.

FSA officials met with the European Commission on 8 November 2006 to discuss the UK Government's response to the Commission's discussion document on setting levels of vitamins and minerals in foodstuffs.

The Commission welcomed the UK response and indicated that the work by the EVM on setting safe upper levels for on a scientific basis would be a key factor in developing proposals. A timeline for developing proposals has not yet been agreed by the Commission. Working group discussions between member states may begin in late spring with proposals not expected to be brought forward before the end of 2007.

[Source: *Hansard* 19 January 2007, col. 1415W]

Complaint about the conduct of the COT

The Countess of Mar has drawn attention to a complaint dated 3 July 2006 from Dr Leonie Coxon that her evidence to the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) had been misrepresented by it. In response, the Health Minister, Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, assured Peers that the Deputy Chairman of the had Committee responded, in accordance with the Committee's code of conduct, to the complaint from Dr Leonie Coxon. Lord Hunt also confirmed that the Committee has several members with clinical expertise and one member with expertise in assessment of occupational health.

[Source: Lords *Hansard* 29 January 2007, WA2]

FSA consults on its Disability Equality Scheme

The FSA is seeking comments on its initial Disability Equality Scheme. The Scheme describes how it plans to meet both the general and specific duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA). The FSA intends to publish a revised version of the Disability Equality Scheme in spring 2007, after considering all of the comments received during the consultation period and through other involvement mechanisms. Comments are requested by 30 March 2007.

The Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan are available at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/consultations/ukwideconsults/2006/initialdes>

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 8 January 2007]

FSA - new Deputy Chair appointed

The Secretary of State for Health has appointed Dr Ian Reynolds as the new Deputy Chair at the Food Standards Agency. He replaces Julia Unwin, who left to become Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in December 2006.

Dr Reynolds, who gained his PhD in animal endocrinology and has published in the field of drug residues in meat, has been a Board Member at the FSA since May 2006. He is a former employee of Glaxo and Cyanamid where he worked in business development and regulatory affairs. He was Chief Executive of Nottingham Health Authority from 1992 to 1995 and Chief Executive of the Priory Hospitals Group from 1995 to 1997. Dr Reynolds is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and he is also a qualified vet. Since 1998 he has been a self employed consultant, advising venture capital houses on both business planning for acquisitions and turnarounds in the health and social care markets.

[Source: FSA website 26 January 2007]

FSA publishes latest research requirements

The FSA has published the latest list of the areas in which it needs research or surveys carried out. It is currently looking to commission research or survey projects in a number of areas including: verocytotoxin-producing *E. coli* O157 (vtec); microbiological risk management; organic wastes and fresh produce; chemical contaminants from food production (research); data quality and improved method of analysis; meat hygiene – microbiological safety (non-TSE research); diet and cardiovascular health; nutritional status and function (research); dietary surveys and nutrients in food (research); food choice inequalities; marine microbiology and biotoxins; and radioactivity in food.

The full Research Required Document (RRD 24) is available on the FSA website at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/researchpolicy/researchfunding/rrd/requirements/rrd24/>

The FSA is also inviting contractors, who wish to register interest in a specific requirement, to submit expressions of interest for research, surveillance and monitoring.

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 17 January 2007]

New Health Minister – Lord Hunt of King’s Heath

Downing Street has announced that Lord Hunt of King’s Heath has been appointed as Minister of State for Health, replacing Lord Warner, whose retirement was announced in December.

[Source: Downing Street website 5 January 2007]

School Food Trust

The budget for the School Food Trust in 2006-07 is £7 million. It employed 16 consultants to undertake a range of one-off tasks in 2006 and it currently employs 33 members of staff.

[Source: *Hansard* 17 January 2007, col. 1163W]

“Anti-cancer chicken eggs produced”

Transgenic chickens demonstrate potential for the production of therapeutic proteins

A paper was published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA* on the 16th January which reports on progress in developing transgenic technology in birds with a view to the production of therapeutic proteins in the white of their eggs which can then be extracted and used in the treatment of various conditions.

The team at Roslin Institute led by Dr Helen Sang have been working for more than ten years on this challenge. The current research is being carried out in partnership with [Viragen Inc.](#) and [Oxford BioMedica PLC](#). The team have produced genetically modified chickens over several generations. The whites of the eggs laid by the hens contain miR24, a monoclonal antibody with potential for treating malignant melanoma, or human interferon b-1a, an antiviral drug that closely resembles modern treatments for multiple sclerosis.

More detailed information about the research is available on the Roslin Institute website at: <http://www.ri.bbsrc.ac.uk/newsEvents/16-01-07.php>

[Source: Roslin Institute website 16 January 2007]

Call for more independent funding of nutrition research

More independent funding of nutrition research is being urged by a group of medical specialists, following a study which has found that industry-backed scientific studies of soft drinks strongly reflect the interests of sponsors. The study, published in *Plos Medicine*, a US-based online medical journal, shows that academic articles about soft drinks, juice and milk funded by industry were four to eight times more likely to be favourable to the financial interests of their sponsors than those without industry funding. The study is available at: <http://medicine.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-document&doi=10.1371/journal.pmed.0040005>

[Source: *The Financial Times* 9 January 2007]

City Food Lecture

The City Food lecture took place on 23 January in London's Guildhall, when Lord Melchett, Policy Director of the Soil Association was the guest speaker. The theme of his lecture was “food and values – the organic future”. Lord Melchett's lecture was followed by a discussion led by a panel which included Professor Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy at City University; Prue Leith, Chair of the School Food Trust; Sir Stuart Hampson, Chair of the John Lewis Partnership and immediate past President of the Royal Agricultural Society of England; and Tim Smith, Chief Executive of Arla Foods UK plc, a leading milk and dairy product supplier.

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 24 January 2007]

Competition Commission review of supermarkets

The Competition Commission published the initial findings of a study of the grocery market on 23 January amid concern about the domination of the market by the supermarkets. The UK's four largest supermarkets account for about 75% of the market.

The findings revealed this month are the first stage of a review that will take over a year and which is focussing on how the major supermarkets treat their suppliers, their land banks and planning issues. The next stage of the review will focus on competition between retailers at the local level. The "emerging findings" report is available, with working papers, at: http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/inquiries/ref2006/grocery/emerging_thinking.htm

[Source: Competition Commission website 23 January 2007]

German Presidency Programme

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union has passed over to Germany for the six months to June 2007. A work programme has been drawn up, setting out what they plan to achieve in the sphere of food and health during their term. The work programme is available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st05/st05149.en07.pdf>

Measures relating to food will include, amongst other things, the following:

- an increase in the transparency and coherence of the procedures which govern the approval of genetically altered organisms by the European Food Safety Authority and the European Commission;
- dynamism in negotiations concerning proposals for regulations on food additives, flavourings and enzymes in foods (with instructions for use, labelling regulations etc.) and on a standard approval procedure for these substances; and
- the start of negotiations on the amended Regulation Concerning Novel Foods and Novel Food Ingredients.

The German Presidency will press ahead with activities in respect of the growing problem of obesity in the EU, particularly for children and young adults. Among other initiatives, they will host a conference entitled "Prevention for Health: Nutrition and Physical Activity".

[Source: European Council website 8 January 2007]

International meeting set to discuss fats and oils

The 20th session of the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils – an international meeting that establishes standards on fats and oils – will be taking place in London from 19-23 February 2007. The meeting will discuss standards relating to products such as olive oil, spreadable

fats, specific vegetable oils and storage and transport of edible fats and oils. More detailed information about this meeting, including the agenda for the meeting, is available at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/dec/fats&oils07>

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 2 January 2007]

Microbiological safety research meeting

The FSA has invited a panel of independent experts to review its research programme on microbiological risk assessment. The review will be held at the Copthorne Reading Hotel, Reading on 21-22 March 2007.

This review forms part of a wider evaluation of all its research programmes in the area of microbiological safety. Programme reviews are intended to provide interested parties with the opportunity to discuss the work that has been funded by the FSA and to help identify priorities for the future. The event will include a series of presentations by the project leaders, focussed discussions and opportunities for questions and answers. All interested parties are welcome to attend the event and more detailed information about it is available at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/jan/microresearchmeet>

[Source: Food Standards Agency website 22 January 2007]

National Assembly of Wales debates food policy

A debate was held in the National Assembly for Wales on 16 January on a motion tabled by the Conservative Party. The motion (NDM3395) proposed that the Assembly recognises the importance of supporting Welsh producers, promoting locally sourced food and reducing food miles; and called on the Welsh Assembly Government to: work with public and private sector organisations to increase transparency in the identification of the place of origin on food labelling; promote food patriotism and raise public awareness of Welsh-branded produce and the importance of reducing food miles; and introduce a Welsh year of food and farming, working with schools to develop links with local farms to educate children and improve awareness of how food is produced. The official record of the debate is available at: http://www.wales.gov.uk/cms/2/ChamberSession/380313AC00046B17000028C300000000/a0b68fa25061238d4aeb5d0c4c98fe5.htm#_Toc156799030

[Source: NAW *Record of Proceedings* 16 January 2007]

Premature deaths from coronary heart disease (CHD) fall by nearly 40%

Premature deaths from coronary heart disease (CHD) in England have fallen by 35.9% since 1996, in line with the Department of Health's 2010 reduction target of 40%.

A report, *Shaping the Future*, published on 5 January by Professor Roger Boyle, National Clinical Director for Heart Disease and Stroke, celebrates the progress made in improving services since the publication of the National Services Framework (NSF) in 2000. As well as

focusing on achievements in treatment, the report praises the work being done to help prevent CHD.

Health Trainers are being employed across the country, identifying and reducing risk factors early on and helping people to live healthier lives. Further improvements are expected when the ban on smoking in public places is implemented and the new NHS Life Check is rolled out in 2007. The report, *Shaping the Future*, is available at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4141834&chk=NLzKQI

[Source: Department of Health website 5 January 2007]

Raising awareness of the ban on smoking in public places

Communications activity is underway to ensure businesses understand the implications of the legislation banning smoking in public places. The Department of Health's smokefree communications activities include stakeholder engagement, direct mail to businesses, advertising, a website, freephone public helpline, printed publicity material and ongoing media relations. In addition a website: www.smokefreeengland.co.uk contains up-to-date information and resources about the legislation and regulation. All visitors are encouraged to register for regular email updates.

There will be more activity to raise public awareness of the legislation nearer the date for implementation of the legislation, 1 July 2007.

[Source: *Hansard* 22 January 2007, col. 1606W]

Salt Awareness Week

Salt Awareness Week runs from 29 January until 4 February. The theme of the week, this year, which is organised by Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH), is the progress that has been made in terms of salt reduction and the improvements in salt labelling that have taken place in the last 10 years.

CASH was set up 10 years ago, and was the first organisation to call for a sustained reduction in the amount of salt added to foods in order to lower blood pressure. Over the years CASH has surveyed many food categories and highlighted the foods with the highest salt contents. In its latest survey, it revisited 127 products previously 'named and shamed' to see how their salt contents have changed. It also looked at some examples of high-salt foods for which lower-salt alternatives now exist. CASH reports that two thirds of the foods it re-surveyed (66%) have reduced their salt concentration. More information, including the detailed survey results, is available at: www.actiononsalt.org.uk