

the ecologist

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AVEDA

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Editor Zac Goldsmith
Managing Editor Harry Ram
Deputy Editor Jeremy Smith
Associate Editor Matilda Lee
Sub-editor Ben Skelton
Science Editor Peter Bunyard
Art Director Peter Bishop
Distribution Manager Belinda Bush
Publisher Tyler Moorehead
Marketing Jan Howells
Researchers Gregory Patton, Lydia Mariner, Heather Blake, Nik Von Uexkull, Howard Royle, James Laurence, Ned Westaway, Natasha Butterworth, James Berrill, Kathryn Robertson

Advertising Manager Zayda Kebede
To advertise telephone: (020) 7351 3578

Founding Editor Edward Goldsmith

Editorial Board: Helena Norberg-Hodge, Steven Gorelick, John Page, all of ISEC.

Editorial Office: Unit 18, Chelsea Wharf, 15 Lots Road, London SW10 0QJ, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)20 7351 3578
Fax: +44 (0)20 7351 3617
Email: editorial@theecologist.org
Website: www.theecologist.org

Editorial Panel:

Agriculture Vandana Shiva, Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology

Corporations Russel Mokhiber, Editor Corporate Crime Reporter

Dams Patrick McCully, International Rivers Network

GATS Agnes Bertrand, Institute for the Relocalisation of the Economy

Health Sally Fallon, The Weston A Price Foundation

Localisation Helena Norberg-Hodge, ISEC

Nuclear Peter Bunyard

Rainforests Marcus Colchester, World Rainforest Movement

Rural Robin Page, Countryside Restoration Trust

Third World Martin Khor Kok Peng, Third World Network

US Politics Ralph Nader, Head of Public Citizen

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Thank God for the nanotech 'meddlers'

For enthusiasts, nanotechnology is about as exciting as science gets. For others, it's nothing short of terrifying. Bill Joy, founder and former chief scientist of Sun Microsystems, told *The Ecologist* last year; 'I think it's no exaggeration to say that we are on the cusp of an extreme evil, an evil whose possibility spreads well beyond weapons of mass destruction.'

It's not hard to see why nanotechnology is causing excitement. The ability to manipulate materials at the level of the nanometer (one billionth of a meter) makes it possible to reorganise the very structure of substances at a scale where they no longer behave in the same way that they do in larger forms. It makes it possible to engineer new materials with properties never before experienced in nature.

Virtually everyone, enthusiast and critic alike, accepts that the upside of nanotech (super-medicines, wear-proof car tyres, and so on) is at least matched by a downside. But until recently, even though nearly \$3 billion is being invested each year in a technology that makes GM appear backward, the vast majority of people had never even heard of it.

All that changed last year when a critical report by the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (the ETC Group) was sent by the office of the Prince of Wales to a national newspaper. Thanks to his intervention, nanotechnology became big news. But instead of welcoming a public discussion, the experts and even the Science minister Lord Sainsbury bitterly accused the prince of meddling. He was using his position, they said, to distort the debate.

But what Lord Sainsbury failed to point out, was that there was no debate. And before the prince's involvement there were no signs that any such debate was about to be launched, despite the gold-rush excitement fuelling nanotechnology's phenomenal expansion.

Instead, the nanotech industry seemed keener than ever to avoid the mistakes of the GM industry, whose efforts to win over the sceptical consumer with an expensive public relations campaign triggered a massive backlash. The nanotech industry knows that consumer engagement translates to consumer demands: precaution, control and the right to choose.

So it was a reluctant industry that was dragged into the spotlight following coverage of the ETC Group report, and a still more reluctant industry that was then subjected to a government-initiated year-long investigation by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Two weeks ago the results of that investigation were finally published, and many of the ETC Group's

and the Prince of Wales' concerns have been vindicated. 'Just one year ago Lord Sainsbury said that nanotech was adequately covered by regulations. He was wrong,' says ETC Group Jim Thomas. 'This report shows unambiguously that the existing regulatory system needs radical overhaul. And crucially, it recognises that chemical substances at the nano-scale can behave differently to the same substances in larger forms.'

The report doesn't deal with some of the key issues relating to nanotech. 'There's no discussion of nanotech monopolies or the implications of nanotech for [poor countries],' says Thomas. 'And despite the UK's colossal controversy over biotech, the report doesn't examine the impacts of nanotech on agriculture. Nor does it take seriously the risks inherent in a merger between nanotech and biotech. If you consider GM and nanotech as separate spheres of science, you can then dismiss self-replication as an irrelevant concern. In fact, nanotech and biotech are

already converging to create hybrid materials, machines and living organisms.'

The report acknowledges these issues but fails to address them adequately, which in itself is unsurprising given the government's tendency to be excited by all things new. But it is

As science reaches into new realms, scientific progress is too important an issue to be left to the scientists

not a complete fudge, and what is very clear is that the ETC Group's call for precaution is more than justified.

Which raises the question as to why our science minister, the key decision-maker in this field, was so staunchly resistant to regulatory interference when the debate began. Given what has long been known about substances behaving differently at the nano-scale, he must have known that the regulatory system was inadequate. He must have known, in short, that he was being reckless. And what of other prominent 'experts'? Professor Sir Harry Kroto, one of the first nanotech scientists to attack the Prince of Wales, has stated both that nanotech is 'the most powerful technology that's ever been developed' and that there should be little if any consumer or regulatory involvement.

As science reaches into new realms, what is more clear now than at any time is that scientific progress is too important an issue to be left to the scientists. Following the release of the Royal Society report, consumers can expect, at the very least, minimal protection by the regulatory system. And that is in spite of a compromised science minister, and because of the thankless work of organisations like the ETC Group, that are doing the job we pay the science minister generously to do.

Zac Goldsmith, editor



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'...and now it's time to tape up the White House gate and hang the sign saying "crime scene"... property to be confiscated... vacate premises immediately'.

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10 Imagine...

'...food without pesticides...seeds without patents...a future without Monsanto.'

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IN SHOPS 17 SEPTEMBER

SUPERMARKETS



Supermarket Special

18 PERMANENT GLOBAL SUMMERTIME

As the supermarket doors glide open there they are – cosmetically perfect, irresistibly firm, brilliantly coloured fruit and vegetables. And yet, when you get them home, they taste of nothing. Is it the way you cooked them, or have you just selected badly? No, you've been conned.

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Bagged salads – fresh, convenient, versatile or an overpriced bunch of dead leaves, soaked in pesticides and chlorine, and packed by slave labour?

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The endless supermarket quest for visual perfection is leading to the decimation of the once glorious apple orchards of Britain.

30 MY 'BIG WELCOME'

'10 days after I posted my application form I had become an ASDA "colleague". There are no members of staff at ASDA Wal-Mart, only colleagues. And as I was soon to discover, there was more to being a colleague than wearing a badge that said 'Joanna...Happy to Help'.

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No European country is as reliant on supermarkets for its food shopping as Britain, where we spend £7,000 a minute on ready meals, three times more than any other country in Europe. Coincidence or by design?

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46 FISH

Shopper: 'What's the best way to cook this smoked haddock?' Supermarket fish counter assistant: 'I don't usually cook fish. My mum does and she microwaves it.' Who needs traditional fishmongers?

48 EVERY LITTLE HELPS

Are you a 'premium loyal', a 'loyal low spender', a 'can't stay away'... or don't you care? Tesco does and uses the data collected from your loyalty card to dictate what you buy, when you buy, and how much you buy.

56 BEWARE THE BUYER

Tesco buying managers have a reputation for securing the hardest bargains... One of them was given a new wine to taste... and asked for his reaction. He sniffed the contents of his glass, tasted it and replied: 'Not enough margin'. Meet the supermarket buyer.

58 LIFE ON THE CHECKOUT

No daylight... acute back pain... having to ask every customer 'Have you got a reward card?'... all in a four and a quarter hour shift with one 15 minute break. How long would you last on a Tesco checkout?

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Do you want to live in diverse, vibrant communities or shop in supermarkets? You can't do both.

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Letters

MORE ABOUT MOBILES

I read Arthur Firstenberg's article [about mobile phone technology] ('The killing fields', June 2004) with interest, but can I suggest one addition to his list of 'things that individuals can do'?

Here at King's College London we are currently testing whether some people are particularly sensitive to the signals given out by mobile phones. To do this, we need the help of people who often get headaches when they use a mobile. So far, we have tested about 30 such people, but we still need more volunteers to come forward and get involved.

If any readers experience headaches when they use a mobile phone, perhaps they might like to consider helping us with the study? If so, or they would like further information, they should contact me, in strictest confidence, at mobiles@iop.kcl.ac.uk (tel: 020 7346 3798).

Dr James Rubin
Mobile Phones Research Unit,
King's College London

TIME TO LOWER THE WHITE FLAG

I was interested by the debate about corporate sponsorship of conservation groups (July/August 2004). I find myself in the Marcus Colchester camp. It's alright offering an extended hand to those corporations willing to look hard at their own practices and commit to change, but to give them 'green cover' behind which they can hide their ecological crimes is simply unforgivable. That is the key



accusation that Colchester levels at Fauna and Flora International (FFI).

I am a supporter of FFI, but am concerned about the type of partnership approach the organisation takes with business. It's time for it to reassess its approach and re-establish its fundamental conservation position. The current stance of partnering with the 'least bad' companies is defeatist: the white flags are waving and the battles lost. Can I suggest that Colchester and like-minded people join with FFI and help it develop new principled approaches.

Stephen Copley, by e-mail

DOWNSIZE TODAY

Mark Townsend's article 'Backout Britain', June 2004) misses the point. We need massive cut-backs in energy consumption. *The Ecologist* must have a clear editorial position of advocating massive, immediate energy-use reduction coupled with gradual human-population reduction. If these are not planned and implemented soon, they will arrive with such a vengeance that socio-

economic collapse will be complete. Perhaps it is already too late to ensure certain kinds of desirable continuity.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy, although desirable and necessary, are a weak substitute for the truly massive energy reduction that is needed. So, while Zac Goldsmith's editorial ('Candles or the wind?', June, 2004) was eloquent and hard-hitting, the public ought to be told more of the truth – even though it is shocking. One reason for passivity and apathy might be that safe-sounding alternatives to business-as-usual do not ring true.

And *The Ecologist's*

depiction of a sustainable house as a model for conservation ('Save power now', June 2004) was way off the mark. People need a new vision of how to live closer to nature and more cooperatively with one another. This will involve a much less expensive and much more social and convivial way of life. Instead of consumer 'isolates' as Edward Goldsmith has correctly described modern industrialised folk, we will have to rely on each other much more locally.

This will mean radically overhauling consumer lifestyles. Instead of single-family dwellings, most of us will have to share housing. Instead of each home having electric appliances, several homes will have to share them. To make today's commuter towns into real communities, local food production must be pursued urgently: tear up car parks, driveways, roads and lawns, and turn them into food gardens. With urban and suburban farming, major cities now guzzling petroleum could emulate the example taken by Havana after it lost most of its



petroleum supply, and thus become much more sustainable.

There will be no overall techno-fix that could work for a large population in perpetuity at this late stage. Individuals, the nation, and the world cannot continue any semblance of today's pattern of incredible production and energy consumption.

A global-warming crisis council, if organised vigorously from the grassroots, might serve as an outlet for immediate action and research coordination on the local, regional and national levels to protect the besieged climate. Why should we wait until leaders of nations and corporations fall completely on their faces, and the lights go out permanently?

Jan Lundberg
Arcata, California

OPTING OUT OF MARKETING

It was amusing to read the text of Jeremy Smith's interview with a market research cold-caller ('Communication breakdoen', July/August 2004). I've registered not to receive cold-calls. I have also cut out junk mail, which of course has an environmental benefit. The website address to register for these options is www.mpsonline.org.uk/mpsr.

Mark Kinzley, by email

EU VIVISECTION STRATEGY

I would like to express my deep concerns about the EU's chemical risk assessment strategy: Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (Reach).

Reach will involve cruel experiments on 92 million animals, including cats, dogs

and monkeys (further information is available from the pressure group Doctors and Lawyers for Responsible Medicine at www.dlrm.org).

Because of the anatomical and physiological differences between species, animal tests are scientifically flawed as a method of research for human health.

For example, penicillin kills guinea pigs but is a very useful antibiotic for humans.

The profit-motivated chemical industry rejects

non-animal tests, because animal experimentation, handled cleverly, permits almost any chemical, even the most dangerous, to be

animal experimentation, handled cleverly, permits almost any chemical, even the most dangerous, to be declared safe

declared safe. Surely it is unfair that people, the environment and innocent animals pay the price for the chemical industry's greed. I would be

grateful if *The Ecologist* would look at the illogical stance taken by the European Commission.

Jo Robertson, by email

**Send letters for publication to:
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Bushmen visit nothing but PR stunt

A recent trip by a group of British MPs to 'discover' the truth about the plight of the Botswanan bushmen was organised by PR company Hill & Knowlton, which has also been contracted by the Botswanan government and diamond company De Beers to counter the Bushmen's campaign for their land rights, the indigenous rights campaign Survival International has learnt.

Most of the MPs spent just a few hours talking to Bushmen at one of the sites they have been forcibly relocated to from their ancestral lands in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Most of the Bushmen the MPs spoke to had been chosen by the Botswanan government. When other Bushmen tried to explain how they wanted to return to their lands, they were prevented from speaking. The MPs did not attempt to visit the hundreds of Bushmen who have already returned to the reserve.



Not all the MPs, however, were taken in. Hackney North MP Diane Abbott told *The Sunday Telegraph* that the relocation centres were 'more like refugee camps than communities'. She said: 'I am quite convinced that [the Bushmen] were moved against their will.'

The trip was the latest in a series of visits to be led by Nigel

Jones MP, who chairs a new all-party group, also set up by Hill & Knowlton, on Botswana. The trips are paid for by Botswana's diamond revenues, controlled by De Beers, and include luxury safaris. Following the visit, Jones told the BBC that the MPs only saw 'one or two people who were not happy' about being relocated. When the BBC's journalist suggested the Bushmen were reporting 'huge social dislocation', Jones replied, 'well, we didn't see any of that', adding that 'the government has been pretty generous'.

www.survival-international.org

Global warnings

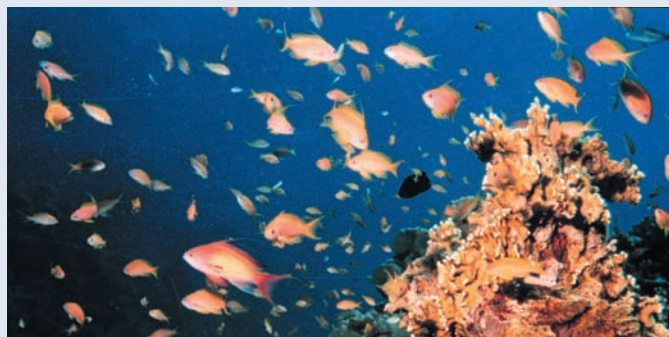
Climate change is not a future scenario. The day is not after tomorrow, but today

BURNING RAINFORESTS

Deforestation of the Amazon rainforest has made Brazil one of the world's top 10 sources of atmospheric carbon dioxide pollution. The burning trees are producing some 220 million tons of CO₂ each year, boosting Brazil's annual total for such emissions to around 330 million tons. In accordance with the Kyoto protocol, which Brazil has ratified, the country is under no obligation to cut these emissions, as very little of its CO₂ comes from burning fossil fuels. Note however, that while Brazil is now one of the world's top 10 CO₂ polluters, it still only produces 3 per cent of global CO₂ emissions, a figure roughly analogous to the size of its economy. The US, which hasn't ratified Kyoto, produces about 25 per cent of the world's CO₂.

DESTROYING CORAL REEFS

The world's oceans have absorbed almost half of all the carbon dioxide emissions created by humankind since the beginning of the industrial era – some 118 billion metric tons. According to studies published in the journal *Science*, while this has slowed global warming it has also made the seawater more acidic, impeding the ability of marine organisms like coral to form outer shells. Such organisms play a fundamental role in ocean ecosystems, and by the end of the century their deterioration could have untold effects on the entire chain of marine life. Dissolution of calcium carbonate in the shells of marine life also changes water chemistry, and could affect the oceans' CO₂-bearing capacity in coming year.



DEBUNKING NUCLEAR

Many scientists, businessmen and politicians continue to assert that the only way climate change can be counteracted is through nuclear power. Yet in late June the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN body set up explicitly to promote nuclear power, concluded that 'even under the most favourable circumstances' nuclear power wouldn't slow global warming. Indeed, an IAEA report predicted that global warming would decrease more if 'no new [nuclear plants were] built beyond those already planned'. This is because 'the world would have to be so prosperous to afford' a significant increase in nuclear plants that greenhouse gas emissions 'from fossil fuels would have grown even faster'.

Latest WTO deal bad for natural world

Environmental campaigners have criticised the latest World Trade Organisation agreement for endangering the environment. The deal establishes an agenda for further negotiations that could threaten people and the environment worldwide, with the agreement on Non-Agricultural Market Access proposing to include effectively all natural resources for either partial or complete liberalisation. 'Governments are trading away our environment at the WTO,' said Alexandra Wandel of Friends of the Earth. 'The WTO has already been used in the past as a weapon against environmental protection and public health. With this deal, even more environmentally and socially sensitive sectors will be liberalised. Corporate lobby groups will be the big winners, the environment and the poor the big losers.'

Takeaway giant in deal with heart charity

Subway, the largest fast food chain in the US, has donated \$4 million to the American Heart Association in exchange for the right to put the AHA's logo on materials throughout its stores. Sandwich chain Subway, which has 15,784 restaurants in the US compared to McDonald's 11,533, sells such 'healthy' sandwiches such as the Steak and Cheese, the Subway Melt (turkey breast, ham, crispy bacon and melted cheese) and the Italian BMT (pepperoni, Genoa salami and ham). 'The fast food companies are running in panic over the obesity epidemic,' said Gary Ruskin of consumer group Commercial Alert. 'They are striving to do anything to make it seem that they are not responsible for it or part of it. This is just one more way that companies like Subway try to hide their tracks and boost their public relations image.'

Swimming in Plutonium

Plutonium particles from 50 year old US weapons tests have been found in soil samples around a Japanese bay. Researchers from Japan's National Institute of Radiological Science detected the plutonium particles in Sagami Bay, about 30 miles southwest of Tokyo. The particles matched the fallout from test blasts conducted by the US from 1946 until 1958 at Bikini Atoll, almost midway between Hawaii and Tokyo. 'We believe the plutonium was washed toward Japanese waters by the ocean current,' said research team leader Masatoshi Yamada. 23 Japanese tuna fishermen were showered by fallout in the area in March 1954. 12 of them later died from radiation poisoning or related ailments.

Dirty river of Babylon

The Tigris river in Iraq is horrendously polluted and may be poisoning the local population, but the lawlessness in the country is hampering environmental researchers' efforts to accurately test the river's waters. Raw sewage, power-plant runoff, and medical waste are flowing freely into the river, which is still used by many Iraqis for religious rituals, bathing and drinking water. A combination of Iraqi police, US soldiers, and insurgents is making it difficult for researchers from the Iraqi Ministry of the Environment to gather samples to assess the river's water quality.



Victory for the whales, for now

Anti-whaling nations led by Australia and New Zealand saw off an attempt to make commercial whaling legal again at the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in Italy in July. Pro-whaling countries, most notably Japan, Norway, and Iceland, were pushing for a proposal that would open the way to commercial whaling in coastal waters. Some moderates, including the US, voiced support for the proposal, arguing that if whaling is going to happen (and it already is happening), it's better that it is conducted under strict international guidelines than to have nations acting independently of the jurisdiction of the IWC.

Ad infinitum...

The battle to turn everything into a marketing opportunity continues...



T-SHIRTS

A marketing company is using shirts containing speakers and 11-inch TV screens, which can show video ads, flash animation or slides. The company says: 'When a beautiful girl walks up to you, and she's wearing the TV commercial on her chest, you just can't get away from it.'

*Seen any outrageous uses of public space for marketing?
Email jeremy@theecologist.org*

FLASHING

A New York health club is advertising itself by getting six men and women to stand outside Grand Central Station for six hours and flash their underwear at strangers. The hope is that passers-by will spot the club's logo on the flashers' underclothing.

WATER

Bottled Loch Ness water is being sold on the internet for £6 a pint. Half-litre bottles of water supposedly from Princess Diana's memorial fountain are also on sale online.

Polluting the polar bears to death

Polar bears could become extinct within decades, warn experts at the Norwegian Polar Institute. Several man-made problems are blamed for the threat, including toxic chemicals released from industrial countries that tend to settle in the sea, get eaten by algae, and travel up the food chain to seals – polar bears' staple diet. The chemicals are stored in the bears' fat as they hibernate, and are then passed on to their cubs through breast milk. To make matters worse, global warming is causing the ice on which the bears live to melt, forcing them onto land.



Dumb animals?

It's not just factory farming and vivisection that prove humanity has no idea how to relate to other living beings...

PET HOTELS

Celebrity dog lovers are rushing their pets to the Mexican resort of Las Ventanas al Paraiso. For \$3,000 a night dogs can have a stress-reducing full-body massage, the resort's signature dish Rin Tin Tin (shredded braised beef and steamed rice) served on a private patio, and the chance to gaze through a personal dog telescope at the sea or nap in a private dog cabana. At the St Regis resort in Los Angeles, meanwhile, dogs can relax on custom-made mahogany dog beds (soft pillows come provided), drink from bowls of Evian water, and even lounge by the pool with a special dog-pool attendant.



AVIAN NAPPIES

In May *The Washington Times* reported on the growing demand for nappies for pet birds. The nappies sell at \$20 to \$26. Lycra suits with straps are fitted around the birds' wings, and attached to Velcro flaps on their backs. The nappies' pads can last for up to six hours, allowing birds to roam their owners' houses without soiling the furniture. The less expensive alternative, of course, is not keeping caged birds at all, which allows them to fly anywhere they want.

CANINE LIPOSUCTION

Pumpkin, a 12-pound Chihuahua bitch resident in South Florida, was said to be up and moving well after her recent liposuction surgery, reported *The Palm Beach Post*. However, the 12 ounces of fat she lost still left her as one of South Florida's many overweight pets, which are said to make up two thirds of the local pet population.

MEANWHILE...



WOOLY THINKING

Hungry sheep on the Yorkshire moors have taught themselves to roll eight feet across hoof-proof metal cattle grids – and raid villagers' gardens. One local resident said: 'They lie down on their side, or sometimes their back, and just roll over and over the grids until they are clear.'

SIXTH SENSE

Canadian researchers writing in the journal *Neurology* reported in June that 18 of 122 dogs belonging to epileptic children were able to sense, minutes ahead of time, when the children were about to have a seizure. About 30 other dogs showed unique reactions to a seizure event – including, in some cases, trying to protect children from danger.

Worth every cent

Following news that it was in bankruptcy protection and planning to lay off 12,000 workers this year, US telecoms firm MCI revealed to its shareholders that it had dismissed its president Richard R Roscitt. Though Roscitt had worked for the company for only seven months, the terms of his contract meant MCI had to pay him \$8.1m in severance pay, plus assorted benefits.

Government bans own scientists from report

Two members of the UK government's own committee on radiation risks have been barred from voicing fears about the dangers from radiation from nuclear plants. Dr Chris Busby and Richard Bramhall say the risk of cancer from low-level radiation is greater than realised. The environment ministry, have sent letters to all 12 members of the committee warning them that they could be sued for defamation if they include Bramhall and Busby's 'minority report'.

Is your T-shirt illegal?

Trespassing charges have been dropped against Nicole and Jeff Rank, who wore anti-Bush T-shirts to a rally for the US president in Charleston, West Virginia, in July. The couple were told by the police to take off their shirts (they bore the slogan 'love America, hate Bush'), cover them up or leave. They refused, were arrested and led away in handcuffs on trespassing charges. Nicole Rank was subsequently fired from her job.

Are cloned animals better than no animals?

A consortium of UK research centres and scientists has launched a project to preserve the DNA of thousands of endangered species. The Frozen Ark Project will start by targeting creatures expected to disappear within five years – like the north African scimitar-horned oryx and Mexico's Socorro dove, and then move on to animals further down the World Conservation Union's red list of threatened species. Frozen Ark member Bryan Clarke, a population geneticist at Nottingham University, said the project is not meant as a conservation effort, but as 'a back-up plan for when all best conservation efforts have failed'.

That the project does nothing to confront the reasons for animal extinctions was made clear by a comment, made by Professor Alan Cooper, director of the Henry Wellcome Ancient Biomolecules Centre at Oxford University. Professor Cooper said: 'It would be impossible to clone the dodo, anyway. But even if you could, what would you do with it? There's no environment left for the dodo.'



Outsourcing God

Catholic clergy are so overworked in the US, Canada and Europe, reports *The New York Times*, that they are outsourcing ritual prayer requests from their parishioners to Catholic clergy in India. Indian priests say they are being paid \$5 to \$10 per prayer.



Is chemical plant making Canadian tribe give birth to girls?

For the last five years Canada's Aamjiwnaang people, who live in the middle of an area containing 20 per cent of Canada's chemical refineries, have given birth to nearly two girls for every boy. On top of the girl/boy imbalance, Aamjiwnaang women are suffering higher numbers of miscarriages and local schools are reporting more learning disabilities amongst their pupils. Samples taken from water flowing through the reserve were found to contain PCBs and hexachlorobenzene. 'There is certainly growing evidence that environmental chemicals, even at fairly low levels, can alter sex ratios,' commented Shanna Swan, a professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, who has researched links between pesticide exposure and poor sperm counts.

Australian town bans plastic bags

Huskisson, a tiny New South Wales town surrounded by national parks, has outlawed plastic bags in a bid to protect its natural environment. 'It was really about protecting our own backyard for not only ourselves, but for the million-odd visitors that come here each year. People just thought it absolutely made sense,' said Matt Cross, co-ordinator of the project. Australia's 20 million people use 7 billion plastic bags each year.

Is community spirit illegal?

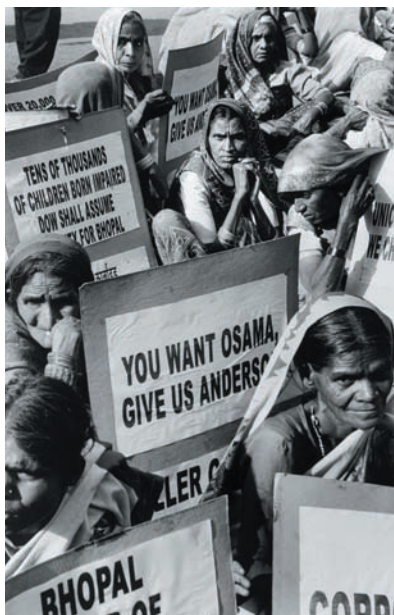
London's Camden council recently spent half a million pounds on brochures, adverts, show flats and a DVD to promote its plan to sell off the borough's council homes. When local resident Alan Walter put up a poster advertising a meeting for people opposed to the sell-off plan, however, he found himself summoned to court. His alleged offence was 'placing posters on a bus shelter by means of sticky brown tape'. If the council wins the case it could cost Walter, who is a member of the national campaign group Defend Council Housing, £1,460 in fines and court costs.

Camden recently used similar tactics to prevent the record label Sony Music from littering the borough with advertising material. Walter said: 'It is one thing for the council to go after multinational companies using flyposting gangs to wallpaper the borough to make money. It's totally different when local people tape up posters as one of the few means we have to participate in the democratic process. We have a fundamental right to organise and campaign where we live. We can't let them criminalise us for doing so.'

Bhopal victims to be compensated at last

In July the Supreme Court of India ordered the country's federal government to release the remaining compensation owed the victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas leak. The world's worst industrial disaster left some 20,000 people dead and 120,000 chronically ill after an accident at a local plant owned by the US firm Union Carbide. Groundwater in the area remains poisoned to this day. Union Carbide, which five years ago was

taken over by Dow Chemical, paid the Indian government \$470m worth of compensation for the disaster back in 1989. Only a fraction of that money has ever been paid out to community residents, with the rest tied up in court by disputes over the status of victims. Now, the Indian Supreme Court has ordered Bhopal's welfare commission to supervise payments to residents and report back in two months. Victims are still seeking further compensation from Dow Chemical, saying the original payment was totally inadequate.



China's 1.3 billion citizens each use enough electricity to power a 100-watt light bulb for a year. With industrial output soaring in the country amid 9 per cent-plus economic growth, what will happen when they start using resources at the same rate as people in the UK?



- Demand for electricity in China rose 16 per cent in the first six months of this year compared with the same period last year...
- ...The country is facing its worst summer power shortage since the early 1980s, with a predicted shortfall of 30 million kilowatts...
- ...Major cities like Shanghai have darkened decorative lighting and ordered factories to cut back or switch hours of production...
- ...Shopping malls, hotels and office buildings have been told to reduce air conditioning during the hottest hours of the day...
- ...China plans to more than double its electricity output by 2020, building up to 32 large 1,000-megawatt nuclear power reactors along the way.

Boycott Vulnerability Ratio (BVR):

The value of all Exxon's many millions of shares (ie, its stock price) is about equal in dollar amount to how much business it does every year: the company is trading at one times sales. By withholding \$1 of sales from Exxon, you are eating into Exxon's stock value by \$1. That same \$1 worth of boycott of Coke would eat into its stock price by \$5, because the aggregate value of Coke's shares is about equal in dollar terms to five times how much business it does every year: the company is trading at five times sales; Microsoft is trading at 10 times sales. For practical purposes, boycotts ought to target high-BVR stocks like Coke and Microsoft. If I subtract a dollar of sales from Coke that boycott cuts into the value of the company's stock five times harder than if I subtract a dollar of sales from Exxon. The beauty, if I can call it that, of the BVR is that it exploits asymmetries in the market in ways that could favour activists.



Former Wall Street banker Max Keiser is the chairman and founder of KarmabanQue

(www.karmabanque.com;
max@karmabanque.com)

Investors should be cautious about any and all stock recommendations and should consider the source of any advice on stock selection. Various factors, including personal or corporate ownership, may influence or factor into an expert's stock analysis or opinion.

All investors are advised to conduct their own independent research into individual stocks before making a purchase decision. In addition, investors are advised that past stock performance is no guarantee of future price appreciation.

Can hedge funds and ecologists capitalise on corporate social responsibility (CSR) risk by 'selling-short' 'bad' companies for profit? At anti-corporate website KarmabanQue (KbQ) we think the answer is 'yes'. We believe a new green-hedge fund alliance could re-balance the globe's economy in the environment's favour.

The KbQ Index 2004 tracks the share price of high-performing but socially irresponsible corporations had their shares been sold-short on 1 January 2004. A short sale is a bet that a trader makes that a company's share price will fall. When you sell short, you borrow stock and immediately sell it. The proceeds stay in your brokerage account until you 'cover' the trade by buying shares to replace the ones you borrowed. If the stock declines before you cover, you profit. The reason why this hurts corporations is because it deflates their share price. The 10 stocks listed here are those with the highest KbQ rating on 1 January 2004.

The KarmabanQue Index

Stock	CSR risk category	KbQ BVR	KbQ rating
1 Microsoft	digital rights	10.30	71
2 ExxonMobil	environmental	1.52	57
3 McDonald's	environmental; labour rights	2.23	56
4 Coca-Cola	human rights	4.90	49
5 Starbucks	environmental; labour rights	5.73	39
6 Ryanair	disabled rights	7.82	39
7 Pfizer	animal rights	6.95	35
8 Citigroup	human rights	3.79	24
9 Clear Channel	free speech	2.65	22
10 Krispy Kreme	health	2.75	19

CSR = corporate social responsibility
KbQ BVR = boycott vulnerability ratio, ie the likely extent to which these companies could be damaged by consumer boycotts.

KbQ rating = index of both the ill-will of the KbQ community towards a company and its financial vulnerability

Had you sold short these 10 stocks on 1 January 2004 your portfolio would be up 11.1 per cent. This compares with the following for rival indexes:

Domini Social Equity Fund

down 8.4 per cent

Dow Jones Index

down 2.6 per cent

Nasdaq

down 7.7 per cent

Ftse 100

down 1.37 per cent

Last issue we asked what would happen if corporate social responsibility (CSR) risk hit Coca-Cola's stock price as hard as it had hit that of McDonald's and Krispy Kreme. It didn't take long to get the answer. Coke's stock got hammered.

On the flip side, Exxon's stock has booked close to a 13 per cent gain. Greenpeace has been battling Exxon for many months with its StopEsso campaign, but the company keeps registering record profits.

KbQ has learned that Greenpeace is in the process of revamping its entire approach to corporate campaigning. A detailed memo obtained by KbQ insiders at the campaign group acknowledges that its Exxon campaign is a washout, but that Greenpeace has no idea how to exit the campaign without losing face. The problem, as KbQ sees it, is that ExxonMobil

is not a prime target for a boycott. It's got one of the lowest BVRs of any stock KbQ tracks. Greenpeace would experience far more success if it were to turn its attentions to Coca-Cola or digital-rights abuser Microsoft. (see 'Boycott Vulnerability Ratio' box)

Meanwhile, Starbucks has seen its share price rocket by more than 40 per cent this year. When and where will the global activist community weigh in on this one? The stock's near parabolic upward trajectory implies that the ravages of anti-Americanism will never touch its balance sheet. Is this a reasonable hypothesis? For all the goodwill that Starbucks chairman Howard Schultz has generated over the years, the company still can't escape its US roots. Plus, sales in Germany and Japan are slowing. It is KbQ's opinion that Starbucks' share price is living on borrowed goodwill. Sell.

Terror prophets

Anger seems to be one commodity with no upside limit these days. The price of being upset is making new highs every day. The big question is: are high-profile outrage-causing events like the Enron and Worldcom accountancy scandals and 9/11 connected in some way? Connected in the same ways that all business these days is connected?

Just for a moment consider this possibility: that the destabilising of US stock and real-estate markets resulting from the Federal Reserve's overly relaxed approach to setting interest rates may be at the root of both the Enron-style scandals and the attacks on the World Trade Center. By not raising interest rates sooner, and more aggressively, Fed chairman Alan Greenspan (who many argue serves the interests of the crony class ahead of the interests of the grubby masses) kept the cost of finance artificially low. This encouraged a culture of widespread financial

chicanery on Wall Street, which was simply too tempting for the world's extremists – be they balance-sheet bad guys wanting to join in, or box-cutter-wielding terrorists looking for a target.

In other words, easy money has wider ramifications than just the obvious problems of inflation; there are real dangers attendant on not clamping down on speculation with higher interest rates, and those dangers are manifesting themselves in scary ways never dreamt of by the architects of the central banking system.

At the risk of sounding macabre, is it possible to make an educated guess as to where this easy-money risk might manifest itself again. In other words, if there are going to be more Enrons and Twin Towers, as US authorities and regulators suggest, can we predict, just by assessing money flows, where these might be?

The answers can be found by digging deeper into

Greenspan's easy-money policies, keeping in mind the fact that it's cheap money that makes stocks and real-estate properties weak and vulnerable: the intrinsic value of such assets has been strip-mined by bankers and CEOs using derivatives and what US investment guru Warren Buffet describes as other 'weapons of mass financial destruction'.

My guess is that the two stocks that look the likeliest to implode at the hands of derivative-wielding Wall Street financial types (and other religious fundamentalists) preying on a US economy made weak by cheap money are Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. These two quasi-government mortgage dealers are not required to disclose fully all the details of their multi-trillion dollar lending practices. And, as with the Savings and Loan, Long-Term Capital Management and Enron crises, earnings for the two companies appear to be generated by trading worthless slips of paper back and forth between subsidiaries and booking these transactions as 'profits'.

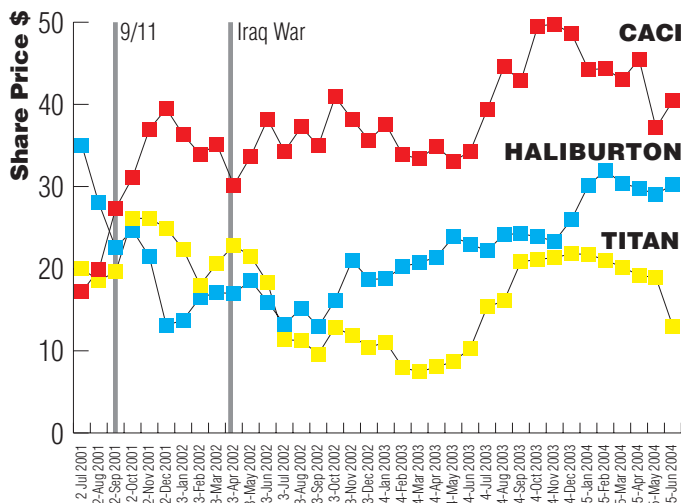
According to Washington-based financial accounting advocacy group FM Policy Focus, a default by Fannie and Freddie – who together underwrite 20 per cent of US mortgages – would cost each American taxpayer more than \$16,000 to bail them out. Ouch!

In the US real-estate sector, the properties that look kind of vulnerable are in Las Vegas – at the heart of the country's over-consumption 'culture'. Deregulation, mergers and acquisitions, and other 'value-added' Wall Street 'restructurings' have hollowed out any intrinsic value, and prepared the ground for another GDP-boosting catastrophe.

Am I being too cynical? It just seems to me that US banks have become more like casinos, and US casinos have become more like banks. Both camps are engaged in loan sharking and money laundering in one form or another. And both are on the radar screens of fundamentalist arbitrageurs from Wall Street to Tora Bora. If only denial traded on the New York Stock Exchange: we'd all be rich.

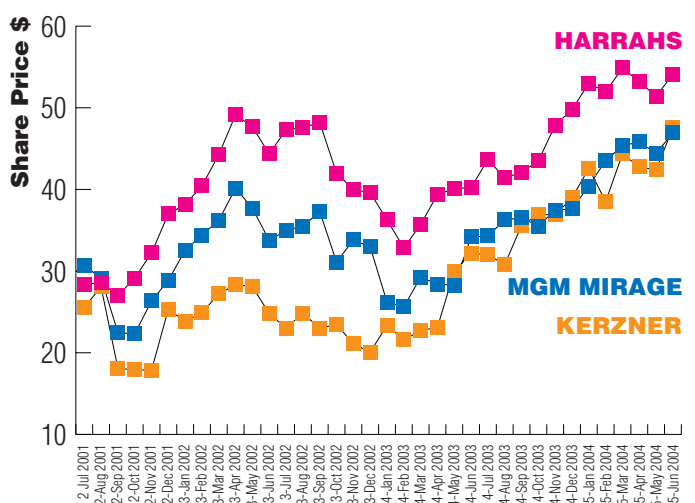
War mongers

As you can see from this chart, profits were cashed in after 9/11, resulting in stock sell-offs. Prices then recovered at the start of the profit-making Iraq war.



Casinos

Cheap money bubbles inflated and popped in banking, telecom and energy stocks recently. Are porn, drug dealing, and money-laundering casinos next?



ROBIN MAYNARD

Muck and magic

The mainstream farming media dismiss biodynamics as a fad affordable only by the wealthy – so why are big arable farmers sowing seeds under full moons?

Eighty years ago, the visionary philosopher Rudolf Steiner addressed a group of Austrian farmers about the declining fertility and vitality of land, which they believed resulted from the increasing industrialisation of, and use of artificial chemicals in, agriculture. The philosophy and practices Steiner outlined to those farmers laid the foundations of the biodynamic farming movement. Last month I attended an open day at Steiner House in London to mark the 80th anniversary of what is now a burgeoning and fashionable movement, a movement that counts Liz Hurley, Kate Moss and Roger Moore among its supporters.

Despite, or perhaps because of, such celebrity endorsement, the mainstream farming media dismiss biodynamic food as mere faddishness affordable only by the wealthy, and its practices as ‘muck and magic’ with little basis in science. Certainly, biodynamic husbandry has some bizarre-seeming practices, such as this recipe for ‘horn manure’: stuff a cow’s horn with manure; bury it for half a year; then dig it up and dilute the concentrated essence many times in water to make a liquid fertiliser to be spread at a rate of one horn’s worth per hectare once a year. What could seem more nonsensical to farmers used to loading on artificial fertilisers at the rate of 200 kilograms per hectare?

But scientific scepticism as to the efficacy of the horn potion misses the point. What the practice reinforces is

the value that biodynamic farmers afford to all animal manures and rotations used on their land more generally, and the respect with which they treat the environment. Compare that to the widespread pollution of our rivers and groundwater by run-off from the excessive use of agrochemicals in intensive arable farming and the spreading of slurry from indoor livestock units that bear no relation to the carrying capacity of the land to absorb those ‘wastes’.

Increasingly, more out of desperation than conviction, conventional farmers are taking up practices formerly restricted to biodynamic and organic farmers. Sowing seed by the cycles of the moon? What lunacy! But drive through the UK’s major arable areas during sowing time around a full moon, and you’ll see the headlights of tractors turning in seed. For practical experience,

Sowing seed by the cycles of the moon? What lunacy! Yet practical experience, not laboratory tests, shows that seeds germinate better during the period of the moon’s strongest gravitational pull

not laboratory tests, shows that seeds germinate better during the period of the moon’s strongest gravitational pull. And to cure mastitis more and more conventional dairy farmers are now putting their trust in a few drops of homeopathic solutions mixed into their

animals’ drinking troughs, rather than a tube-full of antibiotics injected directly into the infected teat.

Apart from practical husbandry and remedies that reduce their dependency on the agrochemical and drug companies, biodynamic and organic farming offer mainstream farmers something beyond price. They have a clear sense of purpose and underpinning philosophy. Crucially, their adherents believe what they do should have positive benefits beyond their individual farms and businesses to society as a whole. Such selflessness is also self-serving. Calling for fair prices from supermarkets and consumers is an understandable priority to farmers struggling to survive, but unless they

can show that, in addition to producing our staple foodstuffs, agriculture has a higher purpose of maintaining the vital resources of soil and water and the wild creatures that are integral to the land and its fertility, then they will struggle to gain the public’s much needed trust and support.

That does not mean that only biodynamic or organic farmers are worthy of such trust and support. But it would be to the long-term benefit of agriculture generally, if more farmers felt and talked about their land and its living systems with the respect and reverence that Rudolf Steiner was able to accord to even the humblest, if most useful of creatures. ‘Wonderful regulators, safety valves for the vitality inside the earth,’ wrote Steiner. These golden creatures – for they are of the greatest value to the earth – are none other than the earthworms’.

Robin Maynard is a founder member of the independent farmers’ campaign group Farm. Visit www.farm.org.uk; www.biodynamic.org.uk

MALCOLM TAIT

If only seabirds could vote

The seabirds of Shetland and Orkney are in ‘deep trouble’, according to the RSPB. Could this be the first real indicator that our lives are about to change quickly and dramatically as a result of climate change?

So shadow chancellor Oliver Letwin has looked at the environmental empire known as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and he is not best pleased. ‘I can save nearly half a billion pounds,’ he announces. ‘Many jobs will go.’

Well, it might all be pretty moot, as Labour probably has at least one more victory to draw from its shamanic pouch of power. Nonetheless, there’s one aspect of his plan that needs a second look. Among the thousand-jobs-to-be-cut-

heres, and advertising-budget-to-be-cut-theres, sits an intriguing statement: remove the Sea Fisheries Inspectorate (SFI) from Defra's core activities.

The SFI has the following brief: enforcement of UK and European legislation on sea fisheries, fish marketing, and the marine environment in England and Wales. The day after Letwin made his announcement, the marine environment suddenly came under the spotlight in an extraordinary way: the seabirds of Shetland and Orkney, reported the RSPB, are in deep trouble.

Although 'deep trouble' can often mean something like a 20 per cent population decline, this was different. Around 170,000 pairs of guillemot breed on Shetland each year, along with 24,000 arctic terns, 6,000 great skuas and many other types of seabird. The 2004 breeding season is over, and the success rate this year is shocking: it's non-existent; complete failure, unprecedented in recorded times. The results from Orkney are coming in, too, and appear to be almost as catastrophic.

The reason, most believe, is climate change. As the seawater warms, so plankton, that building block of marine food chains, is moving further north. The sand eels that eat plankton are either following it, or failing to feed themselves, giving the birds, who are capable of flying further north, but not when they've got hungry chicks to feed, little to use to raise families.

The potential long-term consequences of this disruption of the food chain are huge, and not just for the birds. Bigger fish feed on smaller fish, so other marine animals could well have difficulty if not impossible times ahead, and the fishing industry is also facing dire trouble. The SFI will have its work cut out.

Assuming that the climate change theory is correct, then this is the first real indicator that our lives are about to change quickly and dramatically if we don't act now. Wind farms are part of the potential solution, although they're beset by problems of distaste and location, while more investment and

testing of wave power is rapidly required.

Now, Defra has responsibility for enforcing the regulation and licensing of structures in the sea; structures such as wind or wave farms. And guess which arm of Defra oversees this task? Step forward the SFI.

Clearly, the marine environment is at the hub of the next stage of environmental concern. Yet all we're hearing so far from the shadow chancellor is that savings can be made by restructuring an over-stretched body like the SFI. It's pathetic. Whether your name is Letwin or Brown, now is the time to be investing heavily in greater research, understanding, and thoughtful usage of our offshore world. Otherwise we're all sunk.

Malcolm Tait's new book The Wildlife Companion is published by Robson Books.

JOHN HEPBURN

Imagine...

...food without pesticides ...seeds without patents ...a future without Monsanto.

Monsanto's global website says: 'Imagine innovative agriculture that creates "incredible" things today.' Actually, I think most of us are more interested in 'credible' things when it comes to agriculture. Like food that people can trust is safe. And crops that meet the needs of the farmers that grow them.

The Monsanto slogan used to be 'food, health, hope'. As if this wasn't absurd enough, it has now been changed to 'Imagine™'. John Lennon must be turning in his grave.

Imagine a world with vast monocultures of patented, genetically-engineered crops producing foods with in-built pesticides. Imagine the world's staple food crops engineered with genes from bacteria and then released into the



food chain without any real understanding of the health impacts.

The Monsanto website boldly states: 'Integrity is the foundation of all that we do. Integrity includes honesty, decency, consistency and courage.' I suppose 'courage' isn't that far-fetched. But 'audacity' would probably be a more accurate word.

Imagine trying to introduce a new product into the market place when most people don't want it, and when it is effectively impossible to keep it separate from other similar products. Imagine being able to insist that the cost of keeping this product separate be passed onto the users of the other, existing products. It's kind of like insisting that your neighbour pay for the new fence when you bring home a pit bull terrier for a pet. Imagine not only trying to pull off such an audacious scheme but actually succeeding.

'Consistency' is also plausible. Although I suspect the appropriate agricultural term is 'monoculture'. As for 'honesty' and 'decency', I'm not sure how the victims of Agent Orange would feel about that. Or the thousands of people who have been affected by PCBs. (Both of which were manufactured by Monsanto.) Or the 70-odd farmers in the US who have been sued by Monsanto for saving seeds and infringing upon the company's intellectual property rights?

I, for one, imagine a world where Monsanto doesn't exist. Where I don't have to spend my days struggling to stop possibly one of the most irresponsible organisations in human history from involving all of us in an uncontrolled experiment without our consent.

Monsanto is on the back foot. Millions of people have been rejecting its foods. Thousands upon thousands of farmers have been rejecting its seeds. In the face of this, it has 'voluntarily' withdrawn genetically-engineered wheat in North America and genetically-engineered canola in Australia. We can only hope that 'voluntary' liquidation is the next step.

John Hepburn is an Australian freelance journalist

GREG PALAST

Enron bought Bush the White House...

...and it's time to tape up the White House gate and hang the sign saying 'crime scene... property to be confiscated... vacate premises immediately'.

When the Feds swoop down and cuff racketeers, they also load the vans with all the perpetrators' ill-gotten gains: stacks of cash, BMWs, whatever. The villains' associates have to cough up the goodies too: lady friends must give up their diamond rocks. Under the US's Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, even before a verdict, anything bought with the proceeds of crime goes into the public treasury.

But there seems to be special treatment afforded those who benefited from the crimes of former Enron chairman Kenneth Lay. If the G-men don't know where the tainted loot is cached, try this address: 1,600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Ask for George or Dick.

Lay and his Enron team are the

number-one political career donors to George W Bush. Lay and his wife, with no money to pay back bilked creditors, still managed to personally put up \$100,000 for Bush's inaugural ball, plus \$793,110 for personal donations to Republicans. And Lay's corporate team dropped \$4.2m into the party that let Enron party.

OK now, Mr President, give it back – the millions stuffed in the pockets of the Republican campaign kitty stolen from Enron retirees.

And what else did Lay buy with the money stolen from California electricity customers? Answer: the US Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Just before Bush moved to Washington, Kenny Boy handed his hand-picked president-to-be the name of the man he wanted as chairman of the commission that was later charged with investigating Enron's thievery. In a heartbeat, Bush appointed Kenny Boy's boy: Pat Wood.

Think about that: the criminal gets to pick the police chief. Well, Mr President, give it back. Dump Wood and end the 'decriminalisation' of electricity price-gouging that you and Cheney and Wood laughably call 'deregulation'. Give back the government that Lay bought with crime cash.

And while we're gathering up the ill-gotten loot, let's stop by Brother Jeb's. The governor of Florida picked up a cool \$2m from a Houston fundraiser at the home of Enron's former president long after the company went bankrupt. Enron, not incidentally, obtained half a billion of Florida state pension money – money that has now disappeared down the Enron rat-hole.

And Mr Vice-President, don't you also have something to give back? In secret meetings in your bunker, prior to and after Bush's inauguration, you let Lay and his cohorts secretly draft the

Bush's sticky-fingered brothers Neil and Marvin were hired by Enron to sell pipelines to the Saudis

US's national energy plan – taking a short break to eye oilfield maps of Iraq. Let us remember that the president's sticky-fingered brothers Neil and Marvin were also on Enron's payroll, hired to sell pipelines to the Saudis. The Saudis

didn't bite, but maybe a captive Iraq would be more pliant.

So, Mr Law-and-Order President, please follow the law and give up the energy plan

that Lay bought with other people's money.

When I worked as a racketeering investigator for government, nothing was spared, including houses bought with purloined loot. Let there be no exception here. It's time to tape up the White House gate and hang the sign saying 'crime scene... property to be confiscated... vacate premises immediately'.

Awarding-winning investigative reporter Greg Palast is the author of The Best Democracy Money Can Buy: an investigative reporter exposes the truth about globalization, corporate cons and high finance fraudsters (Constable and Robinson). Visit www.GregPalast.com



the shocking power of **SUPERMARKETS**

special report



**an in-depth investigation
by two of Britain's leading food journalists**

As the supermarket doors glide open there they are – cosmetically perfect, irresistibly firm, brilliantly coloured fruit and vegetables. And yet, when you get them home, they taste of nothing. Is it the way you cooked them, or have you just selected badly? No, you’ve been conned.

by JOANNA BLYTHMAN

A Briton born 100 years ago, resurrected and propelled around the typical modern supermarket, would be astounded at the staggering choice that’s on offer there.

Entering via the fruit and vegetable aisle, he or she might even conclude that his children’s

taste experience isn’t just confined to selecting varieties with longest shelf life and least flavour,’ he continued and went on to relate a personal taste experiment. ‘Last week I compared a Victoria plum from our garden with one bought from Sainsbury’s. One was full of flavour and a succulent mouthful, the other tasteless pap. You can guess which was which.’ A reader from Gloucestershire yearned for produce that ‘tasted

permanent

global summer

children live in a latter-day Garden of Eden. How else would you explain that eye-catching cornucopia? Modern consumers who actually eat the stuff, however, are less impressed.

In 2002 an article I wrote for *The Guardian* entitled ‘Strange fruit’, which attacked the quality of supermarket fruit and vegetables, received an unusually large, impassioned and supportive postbag. One Cambridgeshire reader wrote in referring to the ‘gastronomical tyranny’ of the supermarket fruit and vegetable shelves. ‘The supermarkets’ dumbing down of our

good as well as looked good’. A London reader was angered by a supermarket spokesman quoted in the article who had insisted that consumers were happy with their offering. ‘He needs to know,’ she wrote, ‘that people are *not* happy with what they are getting and that we don’t want “freshly prepared lines to fit modern lifestyles”. We want

seasonal produce with flavour. It's time to boycott supermarket produce and refamiliarise ourselves with our local greengrocers,' she concluded.

Increasingly, people have become disenchanted with supermarket produce. One reason is that it is predicated on a new nature-defying order in which every conceivable fruit and vegetable grown anywhere is available all the time; I named it 'permanent global summertime' (PGST). Supermarkets' pursuit of PGST means that they cannot be honest with customers. In January, for example, a knowledgeable greengrocer would know that there are no peaches to be had anywhere in the world that are worth eating by the time they arrive in the UK and would simply stop stocking them. Confronted with a customer seeking parsnips in May, he might gently suggest that they were out of season and recommend a more appropriate alternative. But supermarkets don't have this option, because such candour would give the lie to the dream they peddle in which it is both feasible and reasonable for the UK shopper to expect virtually every horticultural product on the planet every day.

Supermarkets promote this 'artificial reality' because they know that fruit and vegetables are a 'destination category': they form an initial impression that can clinch a consumer's choice of store. The fruit and veg section is attractive

stores, they stock as many different types of fruit and vegetables as possible.

PGST may look good, but in the name of consumer choice and public health the irregularity and diversity of the natural order have been eliminated – not to benefit consumers, but to fit the way our big food retailers like to do business. In essence, that means sourcing vast quantities of easy-to-retail, long shelf-life standard varieties that are grown to rigid size and cosmetic specifications and can be supplied 365 days a year. 'Quality in supermarket terms means a constant supply of produce that matches their stereotype in terms of shape, size and colour,' one packer told me. 'It must have acceptable sugar and pressure levels, and mustn't taste actively unpleasant. Hi-tech, low-taste, odour-free produce is the norm.'

No wonder the nation's fruit and vegetable consumption is declining. Eating 'five a day' is indeed a daunting and unrewarding mission if you shop in a supermarket selling Midwich Cuckoo-style produce. And in practical terms, by fostering the concept of the one-stop, weekly shop, supermarkets have drastically reduced our opportunities to purchase fruit and vegetables of any kind. Many consumers have entirely given up buying pricey items such as plums, strawberries, peaches and apricots because they are such a dismal let-down. The frisson of

in the middle of gondola three, on aisle number two, and they will always be Thomson Seedless. Food writer Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall put it this way: 'The downside of the culture of infinite year-round choice is a kind of options paralysis: there's so much on offer you don't know where to start. Understanding the seasons brings a sense of structure, rhythm and rightness to your shopping and cooking. In a world where the methods of food production are rapidly unravelling into madness, seasonality is sanity, offering the best and quickest solution to the never-ending question: "What shall I cook today?"' When Sainsbury's canvassed shoppers in its prestige Cromwell Road store in London as to what they most wanted from a supermarket, they put their fingers very accurately on our supermarkets' shortcomings. They said they wanted 'very fresh produce, in season, that reawakened their interest in food'; in other words, the opposite of what they usually get from supermarkets, which is unripe, low-risk, far-travelled unseasonal produce that deadens any instinct to cook.

Chef Dennis Cotter astutely summed up consumers' alienation with supermarket fruit and vegetables thus: 'Peaches, tomatoes, avocados, asparagus, broad beans, sugar snap peas, parsnips, leeks, aubergines, sweet peppers, apples, pears... These are extraordinary foods that can give us unique pleasure. Ironically, the more poor imitations we eat, the less pleasure we take. For many of us, the pleasure associated with these wonderful foods has been gradually replaced in our minds by a dull, nagging ordinariness bordering on disappointment, and ultimately we forget they were ever wonderful. When the foods have finally been reduced to ordinariness, we can pass them in the supermarket aisles without even noticing them.'

The problem isn't just the never-changing produce that is on the shelves, but also what ought to be there yet strangely isn't. Our fellow Europeans expect that the lion's share of produce in their shops and markets will be home produce, coming from identifiable native regions, or at least sold under a generic

summertime

window-dressing for everything else from washing powder to custard creams. Supermarkets would hate us to get the idea that one chain is very much like another. So to enhance the impression of astounding choice throughout their

excitement that true seasonality provides and the appetite-whetting response it should generate are absent. Inspiration is shrivelled, for example, by the stultifying knowledge that, whether it's March, July or November, you will always find grapes

national label. In Italy, you'll see produce marked '*nostrano*', literally 'local' – a point of fact, but also a statement of pride, evidence of a country with a thriving horticulture. The French use the tag '*pays*' in the same way. To visiting European nationals, accustomed to buying overwhelmingly their own country's produce and only a small proportion of imported lines, UK supermarket shelves must seem positively outlandish. I asked fruit growers why UK fruit was so poorly represented. 'Supermarkets can't be hassled with UK fruit, 300 boxes here, 400

such as thyme, rosemary and bay grow all year round in the UK. Others such as chives, sage, mint, rocket and parsley will grow in the UK for a good six months of the year. It is really only the most tender, sun-seeking herbs like basil and coriander that are problematic for our climate. If supermarkets were committed to supporting British production, they could sell British herbs when available and supplement them with ones from abroad only as necessary. But it is administratively much easier for our big food retailers to strike a deal with an Israeli consortium for

Although the big chains all like to make great play of the sophisticated technology that theoretically permits all kinds of fragile produce to be transported thousands of miles yet taste as good as when it was picked, the fact is that fresh produce simply doesn't travel well. No surprise then that consumers are encouraged by supermarkets to shop with the eyes only and all other senses suspended. Smells that might inform the foreign shopper about ripeness, in melons or peaches say, are outlawed. They don't fit in with 'aroma

Supermarket produce **never tastes** of anything much, because it has been **harvested prematurely** to stop it **deteriorating** during transportation and **on the shelf**

boxes there. They can't even be bothered switching on the computer for that,' one grower told me. 'Even companies with turnovers of £2m to £3m are seen as too small to bother with. Supermarkets just want to deal with multinational conglomerates,' said another.

Herbs are another striking example of supermarkets' preference for doing business with major players – even if they are thousands of miles away. Almost all the herbs on sale in UK supermarkets come from Israel, where big horticultural companies can guarantee a year-round supply. Yet several popular culinary herbs

a 365-days-a-year supply.

The sorry state of many less robust supermarket vegetables is an obvious consequence of supermarkets' preparedness to defy local, even European, seasons and source globally at the drop of a hat. Once unwrapped at home, and no longer under flattering lighting, these items are likely to resemble airport-weary, jet-lagged travellers. Much supermarket produce never tastes of anything much, because it has been harvested prematurely to stop it deteriorating during transportation and on the shelf.

management', the aim of which is to have a uniform smell throughout the store, save for the come-on smells of the in-store bakery. Indeed, aromas raise a dangerous spectre whose existence UK supermarkets deny: of seasonality, living material in a constant state of flux, development and decay.

Premature picking and over-refrigeration are not the only devices supermarkets employ to create the impression of true freshness, while simultaneously stretching shelf life to its limits. Selecting out certain problematic lines is another. Leeks, for example, are

now routinely sold 'de-flagged', without their green stalks. The supermarket justification for this is that shoppers don't have the time or inclination for green flags, because they might contain soil and need to be cleaned. The real reason is that if you leave flags on, leeks look older and sadder more quickly. So it is better for supermarkets just to whack them off and present the de-flagging as a helping hand towards convenience and easing the pressure of modern life. Add to that the advantage that the leeks can be made to fill exactly the shelf space allocated to them. Whole celery is becoming harder to buy. Supermarkets would really prefer to have growers dump the outer stalks and just sell packs of heads, because they have a longer shelf life. If supermarkets were to sell large-leaf British spinach loose, it would need to be sold in one or two days if it were not to look past its best. So supermarkets have simply stopped stocking large-leaf spinach, replacing it with infinitely more expensive baby-leaf spinach, often sold in pillow packs so as to artificially extend its shelf life. And, as any cook can tell you, the typical supermarket 20-gram pack of herbs is pretty useless. What cooks need is decent-sized bunches. But if you sell herbs in a sparkly stiff plastic carton, most of which is covered by a label, even tired and flaccid herbs can be given the illusion of freshness. Minimally wrapped fresh herb bunches, on the other hand, give a more accurate indication of age.

To sell really fresh leafy vegetables or herbs successfully, you need experienced greengrocers actively working to achieve a good turnaround. But such expertise is scarce in supermarkets. Store managers simply accept consignments of commodities pre-groomed to reduce all possible risk of spoilage. This skills-and-experience deficit extends to part-time shelf-stackers, who are not expected to know whether a Jersey Royal is a potato, a breed of cow or a Channel Island monarch. Further up the horticultural buying chain, there is also a vacuum where experience should be. An importer of Italian salads told me of his experience visiting one of the large supermarkets with samples. 'I met their boss man for fresh produce. He said he was looking to source something a bit different and I showed him a head of trevisse [a red chicory, common in Italy, similar to radicchio, but naturally pointed in shape]. "Obviously they must grow these in tubes to get them to grow into this shape," he said. He was so ignorant, I couldn't be bothered answering him.' An English fruit grower told me how one supermarket chain rejected a pre-agreed consignment of Worcester Pearmain apples

because they were not round enough. 'The quality controller didn't know that this variety of apple is naturally a bit pear-shaped; hence the name. "Help," we thought. "They don't know this but they are dealing with our produce!"'

The only relief from the standardised tedium of supermarket produce comes in the form of speciality ranges of fruit and vegetables that appear to have more going for them. Complaints about pink sludge supermarket tomatoes, aptly named 'Wasserbomben' in Germany, prompted the introduction of 'flavour-grown' varieties. These 'better-than-the-rest' ranges are in themselves an admission that the standard supermarket tomato is grown to satisfy non-taste criteria. Now the concept has been extended to all manner of produce. Tesco's Finest and Sainsbury's Taste the Difference labels feature items such as sun-ripened Jamaican ortaniques, extra-sweet golden kiwis, Delizia tomatoes 'grown in sandy soil to deliver [a] distinct, sweet flavour', and bananas 'left to ripen longer and grown exclusively on the tropical terraces of the Canaries'. In 2003 Waitrose launched a new fruit range packed in black and gold livery explicitly called 'Perfectly Ripe', consisting of up-market pears, stone fruit and tropical fruits such as mango and papaya that have been left to mature on the tree. These supermarket specialities cost substantially more than the standard equivalent and seek to make a virtue out of giving consumers what we always hoped we'd be getting anyway: ripe, fresh produce that actually tastes of something.

Extracted from *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* by Joanna Blythman published by Fourth Estate, 2004.



Bagged salads – fresh, convenient, versatile or overpriced leaves soaked in pesticides and produced by slave labour?

by FELICITY LAWRENCE

In an idle moment I decided to reconstruct the contents of a 99p bag of washed and ready-to-eat salad. Of course, you are not meant to do this; the whole point of bagged salad being that we are too busy to wash our own lettuce leaves, let alone count them. But I wanted to know how many you get for your money. Erring well on the side of generosity, I reckoned that for roughly £1 I had bought two leaves of frisée, one leaf of red radicchio, and two leaves of a pale green crunchy variety of lettuce. This portion was livened up by 18 tiny whole leaves and seven torn pieces of dark-green leaf about the size of a 2p coin.

Bagged salads did not exist before 1992. Now two thirds of households buy them regularly. The value of the UK salad vegetable market grew by 90 per cent between 1992 and 2002. By 2002 it was worth £1.25 billion – more than the total value of the sliced bread or breakfast cereal markets. This does not mean we are eating 90 per cent more salad; volumes have grown only by 18 per cent over the same period; just that the food industry has found ways to make much more money out of salad.

Time was when we ate lettuces in summer and, following our northern European seasons, switched to root vegetables and brassicas in winter. But now, thanks to global sourcing and advances in packaging technology, we have got used to the



'Pre-packed salad leaves are washed in a water-chlorine mixture that's 20 times more potent than in an average swimming pool'

idea of eating a variety of salads all year round.

Modified-atmosphere packaging (MAP) can extend the shelf life of prepared salad by more than 50 per cent, making it possible for supermarkets to sell washed and bagged salad from around the world. Lettuce and salad leaves are harvested from fields in the UK, southern Europe or the US one day, and reach a packing house either the same day or, if imported, a day or two later. The salad is cut or separated out into individual leaves by gangs of workers, then washed in

chlorine, dried and sorted before being packaged in pillows of plastic in which the normal levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide have been altered. Typically in MAP, the oxygen is reduced from 21 per cent to 3 per cent and the CO2 levels correspondingly raised. This slows any visible deterioration or discolouring. The salad is then trucked to a supermarket's distribution centre, where it will be

dispatched for delivery to individual stores. MAP keeps it looking fresh for up to 10 days. Some lettuces imported from the US can be kept fresh for up to a month.

Unfortunately, research published in 2003 in the *British Journal of Nutrition* suggested that MAP might actually destroy many of the vital nutrients in salad. The research detailed an experiment conducted at the Rome Institute of Food and Nutrition. Scientists took lettuce grown by a cooperative and gave it to volunteers to eat on the day it was harvested.



Abuse of Power

Supermarkets rarely have written contracts with farmers or pack-houses promising to buy specific quantities, although farmers are obliged to commit to supplying certain amounts to the supermarkets. The farmers are both required to take the loss on any surplus and to meet any shortfall at their own expense by importing if their own harvests do not meet demand. This is what happened in the summer of 2003. The exceptionally hot weather caused much of the UK lettuce crop to mature at once, leaving major producers with a shortfall on their commitments to supply supermarkets in subsequent weeks. UK

farmers had to make up quantities by air-freighting in lettuce from the US and selling it at a considerable loss. The market price for a head of lettuce went from roughly 30p to 80p. Some supermarkets continued paying farmers the lower price agreed at the beginning of the year, but were able to hike up their own prices in the shops because of high demand and shortages. When the farmers' profits are under such intense pressure, one of the few things they can still control is the amount they pay for labour. And the prices paid to farmers are nowhere near enough to justify them employing a permanent workforce large enough to cope with fluctuations in demand.

Lettuce from the same source was then given to volunteers to eat after it had been packed in MAP straight after harvesting and stored for three days. Blood samples from the two groups were analysed after they had eaten the salad.

The researchers noted that several antioxidant nutrients (which protect against ageing, degenerative disease and cancer) such as vitamin C, vitamin E, polyphenols and other micro-nutrients, seemed to be lost in the MAP process. The volunteers who had eaten the fresh lettuce showed an increase in antioxidant levels in their blood, but those who had eaten lettuce stored for three days in MAP showed no increase in antioxidant levels.

When the results of this trial were published, they provoked a defensive debate among packers in the UK. Jon Fielder, director of Waterwise – a company that sells ozone-based disinfecting systems to salad packers, wrote to the trade magazine *The Grocer*, saying that it couldn't be the MAP that was responsible for destroying nutrients. Fielder blamed the nutrient depletion on the use of chlorine, an

oxidising disinfectant, in the washing of salads. The leaves used by most UK packaged salad producers are immersed in a water-chlorine mixture. The chlorine level is usually maintained at a minimum of 50 milligrams per litre; that's 20 times higher than in the average swimming pool.

In fact, the salad used by the Italian researchers had not been treated with chlorine, so MAP must have been responsible for the nutrient loss they reported. But Fielder had made a helpful addition to public knowledge by airing the disinfecting industry view on chlorine washes.

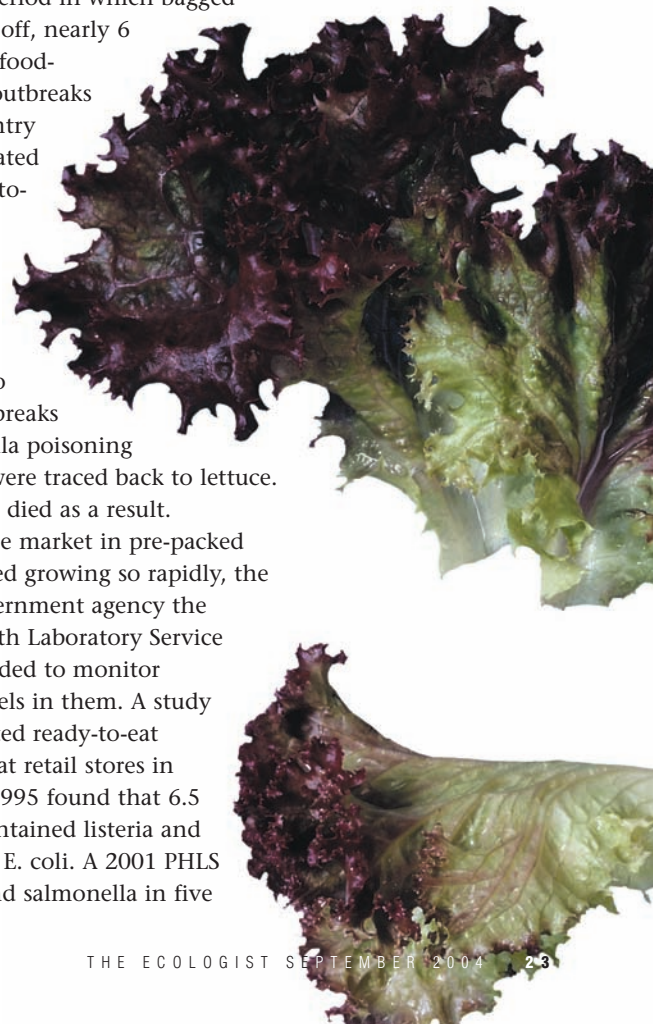
Chlorine washes leave surface residues of chlorinated compounds on lettuce, and because of this the process is banned in organic production. Some chlorinated compounds are known to be cancer-causing, but there appears to be little research on those left on foods treated with high doses of chlorine; the process having evolved in an ad hoc way.

'As well as disinfecting out bugs, they disinfect out the taste of fresh leaves, as anyone who has eaten salad straight from the garden knows,' Fielder [points] out. But it is controlling bugs rather than preserving taste or nutrients that supermarkets are most concerned about. Fielder [adds]: 'In a litigious society, and with the prospect of damage from bad publicity, no supermarket dares risk having E. coli food-poisoning bugs on the salad they sell.'

There appears to be good reason for supermarkets selling pre-washed salads to worry about bugs. Between 1992 and 2000, the period in which bagged salads took off, nearly 6 per cent of food-poisoning outbreaks in this country were associated with ready-to-eat salads and prepared fruit and vegetables.

In 2000 two serious outbreaks of salmonella poisoning in the UK were traced back to lettuce. One person died as a result.

Once the market in pre-packed salads started growing so rapidly, the former government agency the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) decided to monitor bacteria levels in them. A study of refrigerated ready-to-eat salads sold at retail stores in the UK in 1995 found that 6.5 per cent contained listeria and 13 per cent E. coli. A 2001 PHLS survey found salmonella in five



samples and high levels of listeria in one sample of ready-to-eat salad from three major supermarkets. One of the samples containing salmonella also contained E. coli; later, an outbreak of salmonella poisoning in different parts of England and Wales was linked to that salad. The majority of the samples were fine, but, as the authors of the study pointed out, the new methods of packing raised new dangers.

Effective decontamination of ready-to-eat vegetables is difficult. The decontamination efficiency of the washing system in terms of pathogen removal is generally unknown, and there is increasing concern regarding the microbiological safety of such products and the effectiveness of current methods.

E. coli bugs are usually spread from human or animal faeces, either from the unwashed hands of farm or pack-house labourers, from manure that has not been properly composted, or from contaminated water. Good hygiene practices are

essential to controlling them. But Fielder, himself someone who actually sells disinfecting technology, [says]: 'The longer the factory chain, the harder it is to control contamination. I always feel I should wash the lettuce I buy even if it is bagged and ready to eat.'

It might seem obvious to stress the importance of ensuring that those who work with fresh prepared foods are healthy, have access to

proper sanitation at all times, and are well trained in good hygiene. And standards of hygiene in factories and pack-houses are generally high and meticulously monitored. But in almost every other respect the system of employment that prevails in the food industry today militates against decent conditions.

The preparation and packing of fresh foods such as salad are now dependent on cheap, casual labour. That cheap labour is largely provided by migrant workers. The labour-intensive business of sorting, washing, cutting and packing leaves by hand could not be done without them. Many of them, however, are living in this country in appalling squalor.

Extracted from Not on the Label by Felicity Lawrence published by Penguin. Copyright © Felicity Lawrence 2004. www.penguin.co.uk



Sweatshop salads

The scale of migrant labour in the food industry is much larger than anyone is prepared to acknowledge, and a very substantial proportion of that labour is being employed illegally. In the 1990s Don Pollard did extensive research for the Transport and General Workers' Union on the exploitation of workers in agriculture and food processing. Pollard estimated that at least 50 per cent of workers in those industries were controlled by gangmasters, with

well beyond any legal limit on maximum hours. The supermarkets have driven down prices and transferred the risk to producers; the latter save money by not carrying the spare capacity that flexibility really demands.

The flatlands of the Fens are among the most productive agricultural areas in England, and the network of small towns around them has become the pack-house capital of the UK. Far from any large city that might

Think about it at the most basic selfish level.

Forcing people to live in squalor is not a good idea.

These are the people who are cleaning your salad.

perhaps as many as 100,000 people being involved. Another investigator told me that the figure for illegal workers in the UK as a whole is probably nearer 2 million.

As an enforcement officer working in East Anglia told me, the market for illegal migrant workers is largely driven by the supermarkets' determination to keep their costs down. 'It all comes down to money at the end of the day. I go to the supermarket and I want the cheapest price. That's where the chain starts, with all the competition to cut prices.'

However, both supermarkets' representatives and the National Farmers' Union deny that they have benefited from the low wages paid to illegal

workers. The producers argue that since they pay the gangmaster the going rate, not an illegal cut-price one, the system does not enable them to cut down on labour costs. But what it does enable them to do is turn the supply of workers on and off like a tap, and keep the tap running when they need to –

provide labour or housing, the scale of economic migration in the area is highly visible.

Thetford is typical of the region: a small town in the middle of Norfolk, surrounded by lowland heaths and wetlands. The Red Lion, the old coaching inn in the main square, is now 'the Portuguese pub', where the migrants who provide the labour to many of the area's food factories, pack-houses and farms congregate in their brief moments of leisure. It was there that I met Fatima. She was working through a new gangmaster doing 12-hour night shifts, six days a week, with no overtime payments, for a printer who prints the labels for supermarket ready meals. When she complained that it was too cold to work in the factory, she was threatened with a beating. She had decided to go home. 'There is a lot of racism,' she said. 'It's horrible here.'

There are 4,000 Portuguese workers living in Thetford and the surrounding areas, and an unknown number of Brazilians. Fatima is friendly with many of them and took me to meet Teresa and her husband Joao. Teresa was pale, thin and

seven months pregnant. She and Joao lived slightly north of Thetford in Watton, along with several other Portuguese workers. Joao's eyes were bloodshot with exhaustion, and he seemed to shrink into his fragile frame. Teresa had done shifts in many of the food factories and pack-houses in the area, always working through gangmasters because that was the only way she and her husband could get housing. She did a spell at a canning factory where they cut labels off supermarket cans that had been dented and put new labels on top to cover the dents. She'd work on the potato packing lines at weekends. During a period without work Joao had to sell his gold wedding ring to buy food.

Citizens' Advice Bureaux around the country have catalogued a huge number of cases similar to these. The list of abuses includes the use of violence to enforce conditions, threats of eviction, extortionate rents, dangerous housing, breaches of health and safety regulations, wages below the legal minimum, tax being deducted from wages but not paid to the Inland Revenue, and instant dismissal for trivial or personal reasons.

Thetford doctor Giles Smith wrote to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Efra) select committee on gangmaster licensing and registration, asking why no one could stop the gangmasters recruiting people. His practice has some 700 Portuguese on its list, as well as Russians and Chinese. Dr Smith told me he had seen increasing evidence of migrant vegetable-factory workers becoming 'long-term sick'. 'They are being abused and overworked. Quite a few have industrial injuries and get dumped on the sick system. They then apply for housing from the local authority. I feel for them, but I feel for the services the NHS is trying to provide, too. We're hanging on by our fingernails. There has been no extra funding to provide the care we should be giving. My

colleagues and staff are spending vast amounts of time sorting the problems of non-English speaking patients. The strain on the infrastructure – medical, police, education, housing, sewage, roads – is intolerable. There is huge resentment in the town. I fear there is going to be tribal war.'

After hearing at length evidence from retailers' organisations, farmers, unions and others, the Efra committee reported: 'The dominant position of the supermarkets in relation to their suppliers is a significant contributory factor in creating an environment in which illegal activity by gangmasters can take root. Intense price competition and the short time-scales between

orders from the supermarkets and deliveries to them put great pressure on suppliers who have little opportunity or incentive to check the legality of their labour. Supermarkets go to great lengths to ensure that the labels on their products are accurate... We believe they should pay equal attention to the conditions under which their produce is harvested and packed... Supermarkets cannot wash their hands of this matter.'

Nuno Guerreiro runs the Portuguese Workers' Association on a voluntary basis. He, like most others I have spoken to, is convinced things are getting worse. 'Look, never mind the questions of nationality and justice, let's say you don't care about social

tension either. Think about this at the most basic, selfish level. Treating people like this is not a good idea. We are forcing people to live in squalor, in bad housing with wages so low they cannot live. They are bound to be ill. Bad housing and bad diets – these are the sort of conditions that before the war sustained TB. These are the people who are cleaning your salad.'

Why, when the way the system works is so obvious to people labouring in it and to those living in rural areas, has there been such a conspiracy of silence about it? 'The government and the supermarkets want cheap food. But we'll all end up paying in the end,' said Guerreiro ominously.

Gangmasters

Authorities investigating the illegal use of labour in the food and agricultural industries can see a pattern emerging right across the country, and fear that it bears the hallmarks of a series of mafia operations.

Gangmasters set themselves up as 'employment agencies' in the form of one or more limited companies. They are usually small companies with two to three owners, but often have annual turnovers of £8m to £10m. They recruit workers from abroad, and are sometimes involved, either directly or indirectly, in smuggling them into the country and providing them with false documents.

The migrants will often have been charged huge sums to be brought here, and some are in debt to the gangmasters when they arrive. As cover, the

gangmasters may use a core of legal workers from EU countries, or students from eastern Europe and the former Soviet bloc given permission to work in the UK under government schemes for agricultural employment. Portuguese workers, for instance, are used as cover to bring in Brazilians on fake Portuguese IDs.

The gangmasters then provide workers with housing and transport, which not only ensures that the workers remain completely dependent on them but also helps disguise the fact that

they are being paid less than the minimum wage. Rents deducted are often extortionate. The gangmasters charge the pack-houses, factories and farmers the going rate of £6–£7 for an hour's labour plus VAT, and deduct tax and National Insurance from their workers' pay packets – even

when those deductions have nowhere legitimate to go because the workers are on fake IDs. This ensures that the books of the companies who are being supplied labour are kept clean.

Often, the gangmasters then declare themselves bankrupt before they pay tax and National Insurance, which are collected retrospectively. It is quite common for them to do so while owing between £1m and £3m in unpaid tax and National Insurance, much of which will have been moved offshore and will thus be inaccessible to UK authorities. Once they have gone into liquidation they frequently reappear as phoenix companies, with the same directors supplying workers to the same sites within a few days, but trading as new employment agencies under different names. Clone companies are also created and provide sub-contracted labour to the mother company – partly as a way of disguising frauds further, but also to get round restrictions preventing bankrupts being directors of other companies.



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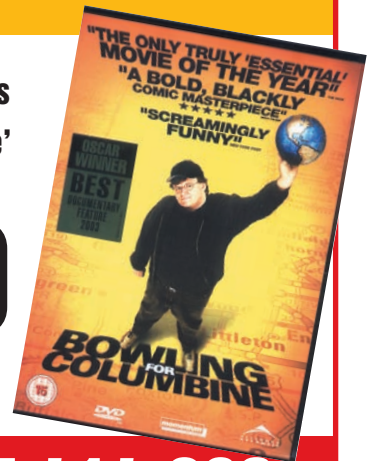
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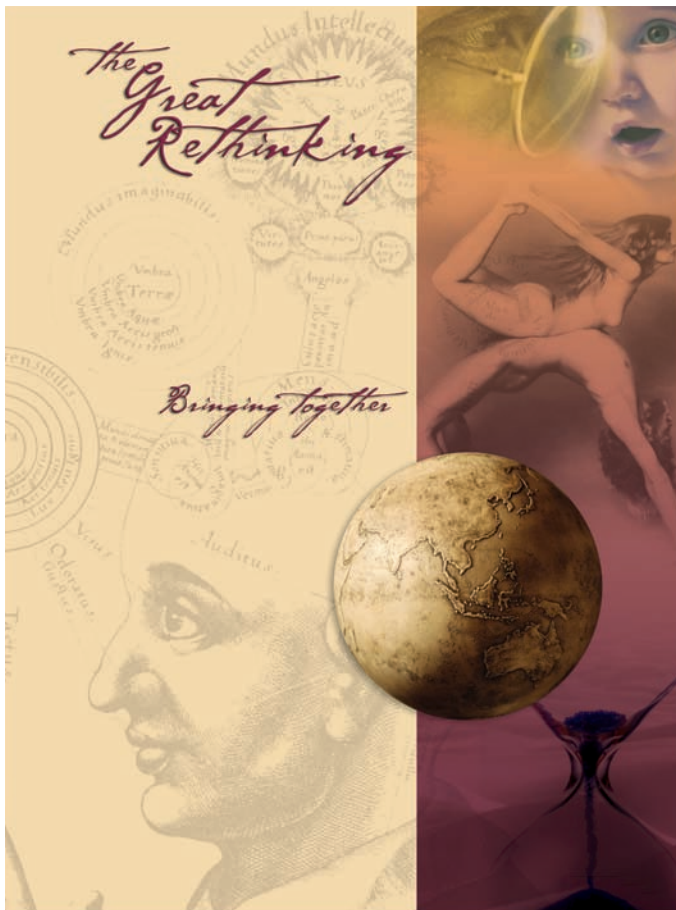


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Dibushe Oshu Feta, from Ethiopia, relies on coffee farming as the main source of income for her family but, as a small-scale farmer, she is at the mercy of global free market forces and giant corporations who use their power to demand low prices.

Don't like the bitter taste of poverty? – Take part in ActionAid's 24 hour Coffee Break on 4 March 2005

ActionAid's 24 hour Coffee Break is held during Fairtrade Fortnight and aims to highlight the effect of global trading rules on poor farmers as well as raising money to help ActionAid fight poverty. Take part by holding a coffee morning, fair trade tasting session, sponsored give up chocolate challenge or go the whole hog and hold a mocha marathon!

Register today by calling 0101460 238047 or visit www.coffeebreak.org.uk.

Go on, Roast a Bean to Raise a Bean!

Cosmetic perfection: at what price?

The pristine-looking salad leaves we have acquired an appetite for cannot achieve their cosmetic perfection without a little hi-tech help, particularly when they are grown outside their normal season. Intensive monoculture of salads with extended seasons of cropping allows the build-up of pests and diseases in the soil. There has been a correspondingly rapid increase in pesticide usage. Salad leaves are particularly likely to contain pesticide residues.

Most large producers in the UK are fairly coy about what pesticides they use. So, I spoke to an agricultural technical consultant who works with the agrochemical industry in Spain. He explained the system to me on the condition of anonymity.

'Lettuces have a two-and-a-half- to three-month growing period in Spain. They are sprayed every week with a mixture of fungicide and insecticide, except for the last two weeks. There is a lot of pesticide resistance, so the products we used last year

crops like wildfire. I also have to advise growers to use more pesticides than I would like, because if there is just one tiny aphid, their whole crop can be rejected by the supermarkets. If you want something so perfect that you can't even see one tiny aphid on it, as though it came not from the soil but from a factory, of course you have to use much more pesticide.'

The government's Central Science Laboratory records the overall usage of pesticides in this country. Its most up-to-date figures (from 1999) referred to outdoor salad crops receiving an average of four insecticide sprays, two fungicide applications and two herbicide doses; lettuces grown indoors were treated with even more fungicides. While there had been some decline in the amount of pesticides used between 1995 and 1999, the general usage of pesticides on these crops has increased dramatically since 1986 and is still several times greater than it was 20 years ago.

Government tests for residues in salads on sale in

'Supermarkets are on a chemical treadmill. Quite simply their demand for cosmetic perfection forces farmers to use more pesticides than they would otherwise'

were completely different to the ones we were using five or six years ago. Some of them are very toxic. For example, we treat the lettuces with dithiocarbamates as a preventive – the English seem to use a lot of these. They are very hazardous.

'This monoculture allows a lot of funguses and pests to flourish. It is devastating: you can lose half the crop. With the plastic hothouses it's bad, too: they are all so close together; pests spread through those

shops bear this out. One sample contained residues above the statutory maximum residue level of propamocarb, an insecticide that works on the nervous system in a similar way to organophosphates; and one contained residues of the endocrine disruptor vinclozolin, a substance not permitted for use in lettuces in the UK. Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that interfere with hormones, and are sometimes popularly called 'gender-benders'.

The Pesticide Safety



Directorate's survey of UK lettuce for 2001/2002 shows that the problem is continuing. Nearly one in five lettuces exceeded maximum residue levels, and 6 per cent contained pesticides not approved for use. An organophosphate banned in the UK was found in several samples, and at 10 times the EU-permitted level in one of them.

The effect of pesticide residues on our health is disputed. The government advisory body the Pesticide Residues Committee says that most residues are present at such a low level that they do not 'present a concern for consumer health'. Other experts are less sanguine. Dr Vyvyan Howard is a leading toxicopathologist at the University of Liverpool. He has studied the effects of pesticides on unborn children, and points out that the average Briton has between 300 and 500 chemicals in their body that were not present 50 years ago. 'We have substantially changed the chemical environment of the womb,' he says. 'Pregnant women are now exposed to completely novel molecules that their grandmothers were not. Quite a number of these are capable of hormone disruption, and it takes only extremely low doses to cause effects.' Dr Howard believes

there is ample evidence that the pesticide cocktail effect is producing enormous change. Exposure to endocrine disruptors in the womb could be one of the reasons for the much-decreased age of puberty in girls. Early onset of puberty is linked to breast cancer later in life. In the 1960s women had a one in 20 chance of getting breast cancer; now the probability is one in nine. Dr Howard recommends minimising exposure to pesticides on a precautionary basis.

The problem for the supermarkets is that, despite their protestation that they are doing everything to cut down on pesticides, they are on a chemical treadmill. Quite simply their demand for cosmetic perfection forces farmers to use more pesticides than they would otherwise. Although retailers have acknowledged public concern, and Marks and Spencer and the Co-Op have notably said they would work with suppliers to phase out some of the most worrying chemicals from their crops, analysis by Friends of the Earth of Pesticide Safety Directorate data from 2003 showed that supermarkets have not achieved any overall reduction of pesticide residues in the last five years.

The endless supermarket quest for visual perfection is leading to the decimation of the once glorious apple orchards of Britain.

by FELICITY LAWRENCE

The apple trail through Kent, the Garden of England, was perhaps the most famous of the old guided orchard tours, and Nick Swatland's apple farm near Sittingbourne in the north of the county used to be as fine a sight as any. But no more. A couple of years ago the Kent Tourist Board said the blossom trail would not run again, since so many of the orchards had been grubbed up. And in 2002 Swatland too packed up his apple business. His last year, 2001, was ironically one of the best ever, with a huge and good-quality crop, but he saw little from it. He was supplying the supermarkets through a marketing organisation, but the prices just kept getting lower and lower. 'We were being given 20 to 21 pence a kilo, they were selling them in the stores at twice that, and we needed 32 pence to break even. The prices would change by the day, and

then they'd take 60 to 90 days to pay you, when you'd already paid your labour. If you were a very good boy you'd get some money eventually. It was not good for the heart. It was a combination of things, I suppose, that finished us: the global economy, dominant supermarkets and the strength of the pound.'

John Dickson is a 56-year-old farmer in Cambridgeshire. He is hanging on with his apples, pears and plums, but only just. He averages a 70-hour week for an income of about £18,000. His farm now has orchards with 10,000 trees, which are home to owls, hawks and much other wildlife, but he hasn't earned enough to pay income tax in three of the last five years. He used to supply the big supermarkets direct but got de-listed, for complaining, he says. Most people are too afraid to speak out. He now supplies smaller supermarkets through a pack-house.

Dickson says: 'You'd agree a price at the beginning of the season, then the week after it would be cut, then it would be cut again, till you say, "very sorry, but I can't take that kind of money", and you get dropped. Most of the time you feel you have no choice about going along with them, because once you've been dropped you can't get back in at a decent price. And you've got all their bloody packaging and have had to pay for it.'

'Last year, I had to do a "promotion" on apples – three pounds for the price of two pounds, and I had to take the loss. I also had to pay two and a half pence extra for each sticker that went on the pack boasting about the offer. The supermarket said they knew I was making a loss on the apples but no one would pay more and they could always get them somewhere else abroad if I didn't want to do it.'

But perhaps the most maddening thing is the beauty parade. A

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supermarket apple must look good in front of the camera or risk rejection.

The 'Greefa Intelligent Quality Sorter' has cameras that take up to 70 colour pictures of every apple as it passes along a conveyor belt to determine the 'blush of non-equally-coloured fruit', and to grade it by size. It can detect deviations of as little as one square millimetre. So if the supermarket specification says that an apple of a particular variety must be 15–17 per cent blush red on green, for instance, it can 'grade out' or reject any apples that are 18 per cent red on green or a miserable 14 per cent red on green. The sorter's promotional literature cheerfully explains the reason for the beauty parade: 'Nature has many surprises... Buyers, however, require uniform fruit and vegetables of standard size.'

The beauty parade often means the difference between profit and loss for the farmer. Anything 'graded out' for failing the test ends up, if the farmer is lucky, as fruit for juice at give-away prices of three to five pence a pound, but as often as not it will just go to waste.

Then there's the penetrometer. It's a spring-loaded little tool that measures the resistance of fruit. Dickson is eloquent on the subject of the penetrometer. 'I had the buyer round and he said my pressures were out. He admitted my coxes were the best he'd tasted, but they weren't hard enough for his shelf life, and he told me I'd have to pick the fruit earlier. All the ripe ones have to come off when we go through the grader. No wonder people complain fruit doesn't taste of anything. They also

UK Apple Market

We have lost nearly two thirds of our apple orchards in less than 30 years. There are 6,000 varieties of dessert and cooking apples and hundreds more cider apples, but many of them have been lost to commercial production and survive only in the national fruit collection at Brogdale in Kent. By the end of the 20th century just 10 varieties accounted for nearly all

the eating apples in UK orchards, with 70 per cent of production being coxes and bramleys.

Bizarrely, it is actually easier these days to buy a tropical passion fruit in a British supermarket than it is to buy an English apple. Friends of the Earth found that even at the height of the British 2002 apple season, more than half the apples on sale in major

supermarkets were imported. When it carried out the same survey for the 2003 harvest, it found that matters were even worse. The average proportion of UK-grown apples sold in Tesco and Asda stores was 38 per cent. Meanwhile British farmers have been receiving EU grants to grub up their trees, as retailers switch to global sourcing.

get tested for starch and sugars and all that. I test mine the traditional way, with my front teeth. I can't get very excited about all this.'

The triumph of appearance over flavour has gone so far that the World Apple and Pear Association recently announced that it was considering drawing up 'an international organoleptic standards' label. Fruit that tasted of something would qualify for the new logo.

Size matters, too. Assuming the fruit can survive the penetrometer, it must conform to the supermarkets' vital statistics. For Dickson this presents its own problems. 'When I was a boy, 60 millimetres was considered the ideal size for an apple. That would be five or six apples to a pound; you'd sell larger 65-millimetre ones for a premium. But 65 millimetres gave you four apples to a

pound. Now the supermarkets want a minimum of 70-millimetre apples from me, so you only get three to a pound. Which, of course, means most customers end up buying more: to get four apples now you need to buy one and a quarter pounds rather than the traditional pound.

'But to achieve those bigger apples I have to prune my trees much harder, and overfeed them. The apple is less well balanced because of the excess fertiliser; it loses its flavour. Then you get bitter pit – that's brown spots, and I have to spray all the time with calcium to prevent the markings.' A cox may have been sprayed up to 16 times by the time it reaches the shops.

Extracted from Not on the Label by Felicity Lawrence published by Penguin. Copyright © Felicity Lawrence 2004. www.penguin.co.uk



by JOANNA BLYTHMAN

Only two months to go until Christmas and the recruitment machine at my nearest Asda Wal-Mart had gone into overdrive. This 100,000-square-foot super-centre was one of the 11 biggest Asda Wal-Marts in the UK. In the week before Christmas, sales for the store had been projected at as much as £2.3m – if, that is, there were enough staff to handle them. In theory the store had around 700 employees, but it was seriously understaffed. At the checkouts alone, of some 200 positions only 120 were filled. This store obviously needed people fast. It sounded like a fruitful place to look for a job.

Sure enough, 10 days after I had posted my application form I had become an Asda ‘colleague’. There are no members of staff at Asda Wal-Mart, only colleagues. And, I was to discover, there was more to being a colleague than wearing a badge that said ‘Joanna... Happy to Help’. I had to learn how to ‘Live the Asda Values’. I had to be trained in maintaining the perpetually smiley face and ‘can-do’ attitude that would make me a valued, respected member of the warm, cuddly Wal-Mart family. With the aid of simple rhymes, mottoes and ample alliteration I would learn all about ‘Miles of Smiles’, ‘Being a Buddy’, ‘Smiley Squad Stickers’ and ‘Pockets of Pride’. Asda Wal-Mart would show me how to ‘knock the customers’ socks off’, how to ‘Go the Extra Mile’ to ‘exceed customers’ expectations – *always!*’. I was to be given the ‘Big Welcome’.

The Big Welcome is a three-day induction course for new Asda recruits. We numbered 20 on day one. A further 100 would be going through the same course in the next week, we were told. My

new colleagues were a varied and multi-talented bunch, either young or middle-aged. They included a postman, a landscape architect, a business studies and accountancy student, a road builder, a couple of clothes shop workers, college students (one training to be a fitness instructor, the other trying to get the grades to break into marine biology), a computer hardware programmer and a petrol-pump attendant. Not one of them



Joanna Blythman describes how she infiltrated the employee-conditioning process of Asda, subjecting herself to its brain-melting mix of Maoist self-criticism and revivalist-style fervour

expressed any interest in a long-term career with Asda. They were candid: they needed the money. Night shifts paid £6.17 an hour for over-18s, rising to £6.75 after 12 weeks. My day-job starter rate was £4.62 an hour, rising to £5.06. This was at a time when the UK’s national minimum wage for someone my age was £4.50 an hour and the Low Pay Unit was recommending a minimum wage of £5.38. Under-18s on day shifts could earn £3.82 rising to £4.18. Our tea breaks would be paid, but not lunch breaks.

Walking in through the staff – sorry, *colleagues*’ entrance was a little bit like being back at primary school, or at a Scripture Union playgroup. The first wall display was dedicated to Asda’s parent company Wal-Mart, with photos of corporate HQ in Bentonville, Arkansas, a potted rags-to-riches history of the chain’s spectacular half-century rise from

nickel ‘n’ dime store to the world’s biggest retailer, the Stars and Stripes, and folksy wisdom from founder-chairman Sam Walton. ‘Treat every customer as if the world revolves around them... It does.’ ‘Never get so set in your ways you can’t change.’ And so on.

The other walls were plastered with motivational league tables on pastel-coloured paper with lots of stick-on stars. There were photos of colleagues who had

excelled themselves or, in Wal-Mart/Asdaese, ‘gone the Extra Mile’, and of the firm’s ‘Gold Star Challenge 100 per cent attendance winners’ with prizes, even trophies on display. It was as if a very earnest primary-school headmistress-cum-Guide pack leader had launched one massive Pavlovian collective-behaviour-modification

exercise. Not quite ‘well done Darren for eating your lunch today; a silver star for you, and if you keep this up you’ll get a gold star and then a badge’, but that sort of thing. One wall was given over to improving colleague relationships: the ‘Big Thank You’ from one keen colleague to another. ‘Carol! I just wanted to thank you for being chatty and helpful! From Beverly in provisions.’ ‘A hug to Helen for giving me help when I really needed it. From Brett in home and leisure.’ Colleagues with such star qualities could put themselves forward to be ‘buddies’, and so help motivate newer colleagues.

ASDA Way of Working

Communication



ASDA is a success story based on the ability to motivate. That’s why we spend a lot of effort ensuring everyone is as following.

Huddles. All teams across the business huddle every day to discuss the important issues - they might be results, or it is where they ask for it and we share the load out. Communication of innovation - so if you’re within earshot, Chant, too.

producing item', or VPI. Colleagues were actively encouraged to identify and increase sales of VPIs. We could also share with him our ideas about creating more 'Pockets of Pride' by suggesting cost-busting ideas that would make Asda proud of us. Alternatively, we could just fill in a 'Tell Tony' form.

Our training room was stuffy, windowless and lit with naked strip lights, and by now our attention was beginning to drift. Some people looked at their watches. I began to compose letters to Tony: 'Dear Tony, have you ever thought that a better basic pay rate might put an even bigger smile on colleagues' faces?' Or: 'Dear Tony, I find wearing a first-name-only badge demeaning.' Or: 'Dear Tony, turn off the in-store tannoy. It's driving me up the wall.' After lunch, one new colleague didn't return. The rest of the day passed by in a blur of in-depth security training, which covered 'shrinkage' (mainly shoplifting) and how to go about making a citizen's arrest.

By day two our group had shrunk to 13. 'Am I right in thinking that they just tell you the same thing over and over again?' asked the would-be marine biologist. It would be more of the same today, we agreed. 'We aren't brainwashed enough yet,' observed the would-be fitness instructor. But, boy oh boy, there was still so much for us to learn about; not least the mystery shopper employed by the company to keep colleagues on their toes. Kelly-Anne from customer services explained that every month the store was visited by a mystery shopper – essentially an inspector from an external company, whose job it was to 'assess colleague behaviour'. To score well when the dreaded mystery shopper turned up at your department, good service – 'hello' and 'goodbye' and a generally civil, polite response – was not enough. Asda was looking for 'amazing service', which should deliver a respectable score upwards of 80 per cent. And just in case you weren't sure of the difference between 'amazing' service and 'good service', there was a video to show you

examples of the former, prominently featuring 'Smiley Squad stickers' – £1 money-off vouchers – to mollify disgruntled shoppers. Our demeanour was all-important, too. We had to cultivate our '10 Foot' welcoming attitude, and having made unswerving eye contact with customers we should think carefully about the way we talked to them. We should 'inject enthusiasm' into our voices, and our tone should 'reflect sincerity and confidence'.

Somewhat embarrassingly, this particular store had come out seventh from the bottom in the mystery-shopper company league table, with scores of between 50 and 74 per cent. Everyone had vowed to do better. If you did well,

There were no negatives in Asda, only 'opportunities for improvement'. Make a pledge on the Miles of Smiles wall, and even the least smiley colleague could be considered rehabilitated

you could earn a gold, silver or bronze prize, which might win you a box of chocolates or a bottle of champagne. But the mystery shopper would not hesitate to award any colleague a 0 per cent score. This would be followed up with a one-to-one 'counselling session', out of which 'outcomes would be put forward for action'. There were no negatives in Asda, only 'opportunities for improvement'. Make a pledge on the Miles of Smiles wall, and even the least smiley colleague could be considered rehabilitated.

Monitoring of colleagues didn't stop with the mystery shopper. Asda's 'Penny for your Thoughts' phone line encouraged customers to phone in and say what they thought of the store or a particular colleague. In a Christmas training video there were numerous examples of favourable reports on colleagues who had amazed customers with exceptional service, such as driving harassed mums home when they broke down in the car park even though it was during the colleague's time off, or dashing out with brollies and welcoming

smiles to greet shoppers in torrential rain. In case you didn't get the idea, there was a 'SMILES' *aide-memoire*, which acted as a prompt for living the Asda values. 'S' for 'smile at the customer', 'M' for 'make contact' (say hello), 'I' for 'information' (offer correct information), 'L' for 'listen' (to what the customer has to say), 'E' for 'end it well' (say 'is there anything else?' or 'goodbye'), and 'S' for 'said it, now do it' (follow through your promise).

As an incentive to live the Asda values, colleagues were eligible for annual bonuses if the store exceeded certain targets. The happier the customers, the better the bonus would be – perhaps as much as £250 for a full-timer. So, colleagues had a direct financial interest in improving store

performance, our trainer explained. Our efforts might even extend to confidentially drawing to management's attention any other colleague whose behaviour didn't shape up.

By the end of day two, everyone had got the message: be nice to customers.

It was hard to imagine any company with a clearer training goal, or one that made such a long-winded effort to communicate it. Which made it all the more puzzling why this store was struggling to improve its mystery-shopper score and to fill vacancies. And if it was such fun to work at Asda, how come the chain had a 21.2 per cent annual staff turnover rate? I was beginning to see why. Even earning the princely sum of £4.62 an hour, I found that the place got on my nerves. It made me feel as if I wasn't quite an adult. Something about the set-up made me itch to go round with a felt-tip pen and turn all those smiley faces into grumpy faces or even positively naughty faces. I felt a growing urge to snarl some very rude words indeed at the mystery shopper. Perhaps I just wasn't cut out to live the Asda values. I didn't go back for day three, and I suspect I wasn't the only one.

Extracted from *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* by Joanna Blythman published by Fourth Estate, 2004.

Shelf abuse

No European country is as reliant on supermarkets for its food shopping as Britain. It is no coincidence that the UK also has the worst eating habits in Europe

by JOANNA BLYTHMAN

It's embarrassing, isn't it, to come from a country with a bad food culture? But that's how other countries see us: as a nation hooked on junk food. It's part of our national stereotype. Au pairs return home to regale their astounded families with tales of what British households eat. Visitors remark on the absence of food shops; their jaws drop at the sight of legions of office workers bolting down

their lunchtime sandwiches or schoolchildren breakfasting on packets of crisps and cans of coke.

Theories about the roots of Britain's gastronomic cluelessness stretch back to the enclosures and the Industrial Revolution – the dislocation of food-producing peasants from the countryside to make an industrial workforce, and so on. But increasingly, historical explanations seem inadequate to explain fully our current predicament. One contemporary factor is staring us in the face. No country in Europe is so reliant on supermarkets for its food shopping.

These days, many British consumers simply see no alternative to shopping in

supermarkets; that is not the case in countries where people eat better.

A Britain in which supermarket hegemony is challenged is invariably portrayed by our large retailers as a grim, inconvenient, post-rationing nightmare world, where no one has ever heard of kiwi fruit and we are all condemned to a monotonous diet of dull, labour-intensive raw ingredients. 'Queuing at one store, then trudging down Watford High Street in the rain to another shop... Is this what people actually want to go back to?' asked Tesco's chief executive Sir Terry Leahy.

Using that approach, supermarkets habitually present themselves as a progressive solution to Britain's food difficulties, when in fact their enormous power to determine what ends up on our plates is a major part of the problem of our food culture. It is no coincidence that the country most



The great sandwich trick

The prototype of the chilled sandwich was pioneered by Marks & Spencer. This non-supermarket food retailer has always been a de facto research and development laboratory and trendsetter for Britain's supermarket chains. In UK supermarket terms, the M&S sandwich is a huge success story, a food-retailing breakthrough. '[It] is now an icon, representing freshness, quality and flavour – a welcome replacement for the tired old British Rail sandwich,' observed one industry commentator.

But is it such a great leap forward? Pre-packed in its plastic carton, the modern chilled sandwich encapsulates much that is bad about British food. The fundamental concept is flawed because, as any baker can tell you, bread should never be refrigerated. The cold and dampness caused by refrigeration kill any possibility of a proper contrast between crust and crumb. The best sandwich is the sort that any small shop can whizz up: fresh bread and rolls straight from a local baker that morning, filled on the spot and sold

hours later for more or less instant consumption – a straightforward, simple, sustainable



process capable of delivering an end product worth eating. Large food retailers' centralised systems, however, mean that sandwiches are made by a few dedicated sandwich factories – the sort that also sell to petrol stations and mass catering outfits. In 2000 one pre-packed sandwich company supplied almost a quarter of all the sandwiches sold by UK multiple retailers. You may have noticed how many sandwiches seem somewhat similar even when you buy them

in different supermarket chains. This concentration of production in a few prolific companies is part of the explanation.

From these dedicated factories, sandwiches are delivered to a regional distribution centre and from there to stores. Because of the inevitable hygiene implications generated by this extended process and to survive distribution, they have to be chilled to a glacial temperature. Only certain types of technobread are suitable for this treatment: bread that won't fall apart when the moisture in the filling leaks into it as it sits on the arctic takeaway shelves. This bread is sandwiched over fillings made up in the supermarket's prepared food factories: soggy, chopped-up salad leaves, meats you recognise from the ready-meals aisles (chicken tikka, barbecue duck, etc), industrial block cheese, salty tuna and egg mayonnaise without any taste of egg. It's no wonder that the sandwiches make such unrewarding eating. But we buy them, even though they aren't cheap. We've got used to them, because that's the sort of sandwich supermarkets want to sell us.

attached to supermarket shopping has the worst eating habits in Europe, because we have effectively surrendered control over what we eat to a few powerful chains. In the guise of giving us choice, they simply sell us what suits them.

The particularly audacious thing about the supermarket prepared-food revolution is the way that supermarkets have taken the culinary limitations of

industrial food processing and put a positive spin on them. They claim – erroneously – that their innovation has broadened the British palate and introduced new tastes and flavours. In fact, they are mainly selling us the same standard components, continuously re-assembled and re-marketed in a multiplicity of forms. But since their clientele shop routinely in their stores, and so lack any alternative point of

reference, this fact usually goes unchallenged. Supermarkets know that, because they increasingly control where we shop, the public can be conditioned, by repetition and force of habit, to believe that supermarket TV dinners of the 21st century are better than anything they might cook, and possibly even just as good as what they might encounter abroad.

To sustain this tall tale, supermarkets appear to have set themselves a mission of subverting home cooking – the bedrock of any true food culture. Every supermarket chain churns out a stream of recipe cards that purport to encourage home cooking. But home cooking does not make enough money for supermarkets, which want the extra margins that can be slipped in with processing. The profits that can be made from convincing people that they don't need to mash a potato or wash a salad are substantial. So increasingly supermarket shelves are filled with foods that obviate, or at least minimise, the need for any home cooking, and make the stores' owners a tidy profit at the same time. When chef Rowley Leigh was asked to sample Marks & Spencer ready meals, he estimated that a St Michael pasta and vegetable bake priced £1.99 would cost only 40 pence to make at home, while a beef casserole priced £5.58 would cost £1.50 if home-made. Food writer Matthew Fort said: 'Hand in hand with the microwave and the deep freeze – and ably supported by manufacturers and retailers who can gouge higher profit margins on these "value-added" products – convenience foods have all but eliminated the tradition of domestic cookery from British homes.'

Supermarkets have played the major role in this, providing the means by which the UK has become a 'can't cook, won't cook' nation, where the idea of a gourmet night is eating a supermarket ready meal on a tray while watching a procession of celebrity chefs cook fantasy food on TV.

The Great British Cookery Paradox is evidence that supermarkets have made substantial inroads in undermining the nation's inclination to cook. In spite of

the plethora of TV cooking programmes, cookery books and cookery articles in magazines and newspapers, less and less cooking is being done in homes up and down the land. In 2002 British TV screened 4,000 hours of food programmes, and 900 food books and 25 million words about food and cookery were published in this country. But we seem to spend more time watching chefs cook than cooking ourselves. In 1980 the average meal took one hour to prepare; now it takes 20 minutes; it is predicted that this figure will shrink to eight minutes by 2010. The UK has become a nation of food voyeurs rather than cooks, and supermarkets have supplied both the means and the motive. Market analyst Keynote concluded: 'People who are proficient in cooking... are now beginning to represent a declining proportion within the population... They are arguably also more likely to recognise the difference in cost between purchasing ingredients for home cooking and buying prepared meals.' In other words, the more you cook and know about food, the less you are likely to see supermarket prepared food as either desirable or good value.

For years supermarkets have fostered the idea that all over the UK people are passing off ready meals as home-cooked food without anyone being any the wiser. If that is indeed true, it is a sad indictment of our food awareness. But the proposition strains credulity somewhat. Though it might be possible to pass off a supermarket ready meal as home-made to those whose only point of reference is pot noodles, most people can easily spot the difference, if only because supermarket ready meals look and taste depressingly familiar. Most recently, supermarkets have developed ranges of 'better-than-the-rest' labels, more upmarket-looking and -sounding 'gourmet' brands such as Safeway The Best, Tesco's Finest and Asda's Extra Special. These ranges are an attempt by supermarkets to head off criticism that their food all tastes

over-processed and industrial, and to keep people interested by inserting an aspirational top range into their portfolios.

Having successfully planted the idea that there is no need to cook because factory food is at least as good as, if not better than, the home-made equivalent, supermarkets have sought to extend their gastronomic empire by fostering the idea that there is no need to eat out in restaurants either. In this regard, the most daring stunt has been performed by Sainsbury's with its Bombay Brasserie meal kits, named after the celebrated London restaurant. The range is manufactured by Noon Products, whose chairman, Sir Gulam Noon, has described it as a way for Sainsbury's shoppers who live outside London to 'create their own Bombay Brasserie at home'. Noon said his company had worked very closely with the brasserie's chefs 'to ensure all the dishes were produced to restaurant standards', encouraging us to believe the implausible proposition that when we reheat a factory curry meal at home it will look and taste the same as one freshly prepared on the spot by top Indian chefs in one of the UK's foremost restaurants.

If you habitually shop in one supermarket chain for ready meals, you might occasionally wonder if you are missing out on variety by not trying out rival chains' offerings. Don't. There's a very,

very strong chance that despite their being sold by different chains, the contents of those boxes will resemble one another closely.

Carry out a 'tried and tasted' comparison – a popular tactic in consumer journalism for comparing the relative contents of various supermarket chains' offerings – and the resemblance between the appealingly packaged ready meals that line our supermarket shelves is striking. In 2003 Asian food expert Ken Hom performed precisely such a test on supermarket Thai green curry, sampling those sold by Tesco, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Somerfield and Marks & Spencer. The parameters of magazines' tried-and-tested comparisons are often skewed towards supermarkets – a reflection of the chains grip on the nation's psyche. Usually, for example, only supermarket samples are tested, and no restaurant or home-made samples are included in the comparison. An internal hierarchy is established, even if the entire category is lacking in merit. But the results in this particular taste test were more candid than usual. They spoke volumes about the homogeneity of supermarket food. The same taste criticisms came up again and again: 'dry chicken'; 'not spicy'; 'overly sweet'; 'not at all authentic'. Though the inevitable ratings implied that one chain's offering had some



British consumers
spend **£7,000 a minute**
on ready meals;
that's three times
more than any other
country in **Europe.**
Spending on ready meals
is set to **soar to £5 billion**
per year by 2007

slight merit over the others, Hom sounded distinctly underwhelmed. One tasted 'more like an airline meal'; another was 'not green curry as I know it'. The highest score went to 'the best of the bunch'. One sensed that given a free hand, Hom might have been happier offering a Eurovision Song Contest 'nul points' to the whole lot.

The fact that one chain's Thai green curry tastes pretty much like all the others – and not at all like any green curry you'd ever encounter in Thailand – is scarcely surprising. There's a good chance that they're made by the same company. Between 1995 and 2000, for example, Hazlewood Foods was a major chilled-meals supplier to Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose and Morrisons; S&A to Tesco, Safeway and Asda; Northern Foods to Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury's and Tesco; Geest to Sainsbury's and Tesco; and Noon to Sainsbury's and Waitrose. Another company, Uniq, has helped develop low-fat, 'healthy-eating' product ranges such as Marks & Spencer's Count On Us, Sainsbury's Be Good To Yourself, Safeway's Eat Smart and Asda's Good For You.

Of course, one cannot automatically assume, because of this clubby overlap, that supermarkets can't instruct their suppliers to introduce a genuine 'point of difference' to distinguish their offerings from each other. Recipes may differ, ingredients may come from distinct

sources, and so on. But taste your way around a few supermarket chilled meals and you will begin to notice how the white sauce in one chain's cod and parsley pie is surprisingly like another chain's moussaka topping, how the tomato goo on top of your pizza tastes oddly reminiscent of the tomato and basil sauce for your Mediterranean-style pasta, how the Mexican salsa tastes like the Spanish gazpacho, and how if you sampled the sauce on those Malaysian sweet chilli prawns blind you might easily confuse it with the gravy on the lamb steak with redcurrants.

Think about it a little longer and you'll pick up the same defining characteristics in almost all savoury supermarket-prepared meals. Any meat will probably be overcooked and dry – a consequence of bulk factory cooking followed by domestic reheating. A salty savouriness without any particular flavour profile prevails. Where a sauce or a liquid element is present, a gloopy consistency is de rigueur. Last but not least, don't be surprised if the meal bears little resemblance to the picture on the box. That enticing image, after all, is the product of long hours of toil put in by a team of food stylists, lighting managers and photographers.

Clearly, when so much food is made for our supermarkets by the same companies the results are likely to resemble

one another. The same state-of-the-art factory-line technologies and automated short cuts are used. Any personality is beaten out of the ingredients by the time they have been subjected to the various interventions of large-scale food processing. Hence the institutionalised sameness of supermarket ready meals.

Lest consumers begin to tire of this uniformity, supermarkets go in for what is known as 'sub-branding' or 'segmentation'. When their shoppers begin to feel like children at Christmas, rather jaded with their new toys, supermarkets like to feed us a stream of novelties that appear to refresh the category even though they are essentially variations of the same thing. It's just like Barbie, the doll with the abundant hair, pert breasts, long legs and impossibly narrow hips. There is Beach Barbie, Air Hostess Barbie, Aerobic Barbie and so on, but she always has the same essential hair, breasts, legs and hips. Supermarket ready meals are the food equivalent: they might as well be Thai Barbie, Bistro Barbie, Café Society Barbie, Vegetarian Barbie or Indian Takeaway Barbie. They look superficially different, but the underlying prototype remains the same. The resemblance stops there, though, because unlike Barbie most supermarket ready meals don't look good when they come out of their packaging. They look like what they are: a disappointingly slight, unappetising pile of overcooked food in a plastic tray.

Any positive selling point or new-sounding concept can, in supermarket speak, be 'rolled out' into stores to create a new range. Better-than-the-rest, ready-to-cook and 'value' ranges, lines that promote healthy eating or cater for special dietary needs like Sainsbury's Wellbeing or Safeway's Eat Smart, and celebrity-chef collections are all concepts that allow the creation of whole new family groups or tiers of products, products that are as desirable and collectable to trusting consumers as Pokemon cards and football stickers. These ranges boost the own-brand power of the chain by increasing the number of 'facings' with which shelves can be filled, preventing customer ennui from setting in and shoppers from drifting elsewhere.

Always read the label

Just as we are beginning to notice that our supermarket's chicken korma, for example, is expensive for what it is, not to mention pretty dull, the chain will relaunch it in a new, exciting 'Regional Indian' format, only tweaking the product itself but radically altering its appearance and the marketing pitch on the box. With only minor adjustments, factory spaghetti bolognese can be reinvented as spicy Manhattan meatballs with spaghetti. A change of packaging and, hey presto, chilli con carne becomes a chilli beef bowl. A few standard dishes, minimally altered then packed in a brown paper takeaway bag, can become a restaurant 'Chinese banquet'. Unable or unwilling to give us the true variety that comes from using a large number of suppliers with geographically distinctive, often seasonal foods, supermarkets offer instead the phoney choice of the merchandised factory meal in its seemingly infinite chameleon-like forms.

Sainsbury's summed up the UK's supermarket chains' claims to broaden the British palate when it said it could supply 'everything you need to launch you on a round-the-world voyage of culinary discovery'. For an example of what it had in mind, take its 'American-style mini battered chicken fillets with a honey and mustard sauce'. These look and taste indistinguishable from any number of other battered chicken products on supermarket shelves. It is not at all clear what is American about them. Their label says: 'Produced in Thailand... This product has been previously frozen and defrosted under controlled conditions making it suitable for re-freezing.' So there you have it: an unremarkable bit of battered chicken reared and manufactured in Asia (where chicken is produced at a lower cost than in the UK) to a nominally American recipe, which is then sent frozen from the other side of the world to be defrosted in the UK so you can re-freeze it at home. Is that a globetrotting foodie adventure worth having?

With such creations, far from broadening the UK's palate, supermarkets have conditioned it to accept travesties of the real thing. Supermarket convenience foods flirt with foreignness, exoticism and authenticity, but their taste remains essentially conservative, upholding the salty-sweet, gloopy status quo of industrial food production. As Safeway's buying manager for prepared foods put it, 'authenticity is not necessarily what people want, so we try to marry authenticity with the British palate'. The truth is that supermarket prepared food can't be made to taste like a good example of the real thing, and so supermarkets must feed consumers a dumbed-down version with a positive spin put on it. They have done so with notable success. British consumers, for example, spend £7,000 a minute on ready meals; that's three times more than any other country in Europe. Spending on these meals is set to soar to £5 billion per year by 2007. Cultural commentator Jonathan Meades once said that supermarkets have thrived on what he calls 'the British indifference to flavour, freshness and quality, the British preoccupation with the appearance of foodstuffs, the British insistence on choice'. How right he was.

Extracted from Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets by Joanna Blythman published by Fourth Estate, 2004.

They look good in the box and sell for a considerable premium, but the ingredients lists of aspiring home-entertaining specials can provide illuminating evidence of the gastronomic gulf between them and the home-cooked article. The ingredients list for a classic French *boeuf bourguignon*, for example, is relatively short and sweet, containing no unfamiliar or synthetic ingredients. The equivalent

sodium triphosphate, disodium diphosphate, preservative, sodium nitrite, antioxidant, sodium ascorbate, smoke flavouring), onion, modified maize starch, beef stock (concentrated beef broth, yeast extract, glucose, salt, vegetable fat, water, emulsifier, mono- and di-glycerides of fatty acids, rosemary extract), celery, carrot, vegetable stock (with emulsifier: mono- and di-glycerides of fatty acids),

With only minor adjustments, factory spaghetti bolognese can be reinvented as spicy Manhattan meatballs with spaghetti. A change of packaging and, hey presto, chilli con carne becomes a chilli beef bowl

list on one supermarket's 'better-than-the-rest' equivalent ran to a substantial paragraph, and you need a degree in chemistry to decode it.

Ingredients in Elizabeth David's recipe for *boeuf bourguignon* (from *French Provincial Cooking*):

Beef, salt pork or unsalted streaky bacon, onion, thyme, parsley, bay leaves, red wine, olive oil, meat stock, garlic, flour, mushrooms, meat dripping

Ingredients in a supermarket's 'better-than-the-rest' *boeuf bourguignon* casserole:

Beef, water, red wine, baby onion, bacon lardons (pork belly, water, salt, dried glucose syrup, stabilisers, sodium polyphosphate,

vegetable oil, white wine vinegar, salt, pork gelatine, thyme, dried glucose syrup, garlic purée, acidity regulators (sodium acetate, sodium citrate), ground bay, antioxidant (sodium ascorbate).

Even allowing for the additional information for manufactured food required under labelling regulations, the contrast underlines how a supermarket ready meal in a box is a very different animal from its home-cooked equivalent. An advert for Tesco's Finest range said: 'It's like a top chef preparing dinner for you at a moment's notice.' But how many top chefs use ingredients such as dried glucose syrup, mono- and di-glycerides of fatty acids, or acidity regulator?

bread

Supermarket in-store bakeries are nothing but bogus 'retail theatre'

by JOANNA BLYTHMAN

Who has not heard the story that supermarkets deliberately pump fresh baking smells into their stores to seduce the shopper's senses? Whether the story is apocryphal or otherwise (no one has ever pinned this one down, by the way), it is true that all the larger supermarkets these days have prominently sited in-store bakeries that look and smell like proper bakeries, and turn out wave after wave of breads, rolls and assorted cookies and cakes. Supermarkets like them because they inject some 'retail theatre' into stores.

Consumers are understandably seduced by the volatile compounds that make up these baking smells. Our senses are not finely enough tuned to tell us whether what is being baked is any good

or not. Bad bread smells as appealing as good bread. We think that supermarket in-store bread smells lovely, and assume it must be good. In the sterile, odour-free supermarket environment, it creates a warm, comforting effect, and supports the illusion that there are skilled, master bakers making a fresh product on the spot. The in-store bakery seems to encapsulate all the virtues of a traditional high-street craft baker. Its odoriferous homespun 'halo' shines a light that makes everything else in the store appear more winsome. The higher cost of in-store bakery bread creates an impression of genuine difference from the standard wrapped products. It is only when it has cooled down and you can really taste it that the reality becomes apparent.

In-store bakeries first started appearing in supermarkets in the 1970s.

They were devised to help supermarkets compete head-on with high-street bakers, and to give the impression that the supermarkets were selling craft bread, as opposed to bought-in, ready-wrapped, industrial bread made to the 1960s 'Chorleywood' or 'no-time' bread-making process, which is notorious for its pappy, crustless results.

So what is actually being baked in supermarkets up and down the land? The most labour-intensive bread you can expect to find is push-button 'scratch' bread. As its name implies, scratch bread is in theory made from scratch, from raw materials. Some chains still adhere to a loose definition of scratch baking. They have perfected a highly mechanised operation that can be carried out by relatively unskilled or rapidly trained staff. You mix a sachet of bread improvers with a fixed amount of pre-weighed flour. You press a button on a water meter and mix to create a 'no-time' dough. You scale the mixture into pre-set weights. You put the dough through a moulder to shape it. Then you bake it. This method is formula baking, a scaled-down version of the Chorleywood process. It is as skilled as in-store baking gets.

The rest of the in-store offering is 'bake-off': frozen-dough products that are factory-prepared and finished off in the store. In supermarket terms, bake-off is a wonderfully successful, money-spinning innovation. That it produces a supply of what one bread authority described as 'the same Europap from Dover to

Bread Wars

Sliced bread is in the front line of the supermarkets' war against small retailers and each other. It is an everyday product classified as a 'known-value item'. Supermarkets drastically cut the prices on known-value items to bring customers into their stores. At around 24 pence, a typical loaf sells for less than it

costs to be manufactured. In other words, bread is a 'loss leader'.

The practice of loss leading is illegal in most European countries, but not in the UK. It distorts the market in favour of the cheapest and unhealthiest foods: most loss leaders are highly processed manufactured products full of salt, fat and sugar. Thus, the

persistent selling of white bread below cost has been accompanied by a decline in the consumption of wholemeal bread. Lower-income households spend a higher proportion of their money on cheap staples such as bread and baked beans. So loss leading actually promotes a worse diet among lower-income groups.

'No time dough'

Dalmatia' is beside the point. It guarantees waves of identikit products: baguettes, paninis, pastries and buns, all with wonderfully evocative names. American-style cookies can be supplied as dough or shaped, frozen and ready to bake. US-style muffins and bagels, Danish-style pastries, French-style croissants and artisan-sounding French and Italian breads can all be bought in ready to bake, too. Bake-off bread comes in different forms at various stages of the baking process. Chains can buy in frozen and unproved, frozen and proved, or frozen and part-baked. In its most speeded-up form, bake-off bread might need only a few minutes in the oven to give it a crust and some colour. One supermarket baker explained to me that the only tricky thing about the process was remembering to take the part-bakes out of the freezer for defrosting. If certain lines – such as scones – weren't thoroughly defrosted before baking, the end result would be soggy.

Take a look at the label on your supermarket in-store bakery bread and you will see that the 'use-by' date is usually the day of or day after purchase. As you may have noticed, the bread dries out and stales very quickly. The irony of bake-off bread is that because of all the interventions designed to prolong its unbaked life, it does not last long after it has been baked.

In contrast to products from the in-store bakery, the wrapped breads on supermarket shelves cost less and seem to last for ever – or at least long enough to conform to the supermarket diktat that shopping should be a one-stop weekly event. Left to its own devices, bread stales as the starch in it hardens. But supermarkets have found that even though bread that keeps for a week can never be truly fresh, it can be made to seem fresh by ensuring it remains soft.

Industrial bakers provide the supermarkets with bread that stays squidgy because it has been made with crumb-softening enzymes. The Federation of Bakers explains: 'Advances in enzyme technology allow bread to stay fresher for longer... In the UK this has resulted in the shelf life of sliced and

Supermarket bread is manufactured from 'no-time dough' in a process that uses a combination of high-speed mixing and chemical additives to eliminate traditional fermentation.

The ingredients of 'no-time' dough include:

Flour: The vast majority of bread flour is ground under huge pressure in steel-roller mills. Up to 80 per cent of the wheat's valuable nutrients are removed during this process. As a consequence, the government requires modern flour millers to add vitamin B1, vitamin B2, iron and calcium carbonate to refined flour – but only at a fraction of original levels.

Yeast: As the fermentation period has been eliminated, excessive amounts of quick-acting yeast are used to make the bread rise. As this excess yeast may not always be fully fermented, it has been linked to an increase in allergies and yeast infections such as candidiasis.

Salt: Many craft bakers do not use salt, as flavour is naturally produced during the longer fermentation time of traditional dough preparation. With its minimal fermentation time, 'no-time dough' needs large amounts of salt to add flavour to and help control the volume and texture of the bread.

Water: Bread is sold by

weight, so added water, the cheapest ingredient, is one of the best ways to improve margins. According to the former House of Commons Foods Standards Committee, the amount of water in a typical loaf of bread had risen from 36 to 40 per cent in 1978 to 45 per cent in 1986.

'Fractionated fat': The structure of no-time dough is so weak that 'fractionated' fat has to be added to prevent the bread from collapsing. Fractionated fat replaced hydrogenated fats as the latter were found to increase the risk of heart disease. Yet, fractionated fat has been linked with heart disease, too.

'Processing aids': Custom-made enzymes, derived from substances including soya beans, wheat and pig pancreases, are used to promote 'fluffy dough',

increase shelf life, enhance flavour and enable manufacturers to add more water while using relatively low-grade flour. In theory, these are destroyed by the baking process. As a result, they do not have to be listed on the label.

Emulsifiers: These are used to provide dough stability, improve crumb 'structure', maintain softness and slow down staling. The most commonly used are data esters: relatively novel and complex compounds made from petrochemicals.

Anti-fungal agents: In order to give bread a longer shelf life, it is sprayed with either sorbate or calcium propionate. The latter has been linked to allergic reactions among bakery workers, and has been found to destroy the enzymes that enable the body to absorb the calcium in white bread.

Real bread

Traditionally, patience and care are integral to bread quality. For centuries, dough has been kneaded by hand, left to rest, kneaded again, then left to prove and ferment for about three hours or even overnight. During this process, wild yeasts in the flour begin to ferment the starches, which causes the bread to rise. Well-fermented bread has a ripe aroma and slightly tangy taste. The

fermentation period is vital as it 'pre-digests' some of the starches in the flour, making the bread more digestible for the human gut. Craft bakers are a dying breed in the UK today. In the 1950s there were 18,000 master bakers nationwide; today there are only 3,500 left, compared to 34,000 in France. Craft bakers make up a mere 1 per cent of the UK's bread makers.

wrapped bread, which normally stays fresh for only two to three days, doubling to one week.' Because these enzymes are classed as processing aids, and not ingredients, they don't need to be declared on the label. So, the consumer is none the wiser. That's how supermarkets supply 'fresh' bread that lasts a week. In

supermarket terms freshness means bread that stays miraculously soft and apparently fresh until it suddenly goes green: a timely reminder that it is time for yet another weekly supermarket shop.

Extracted from *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* by Joanna Blythman published by Fourth Estate, 2004.



Wander down the meat aisle of any supermarket and you will find mountains of chicken being sold at unbelievably cheap prices. The real reasons for this cannot be found on the label...

by FELICITY LAWRENCE

It was the scald tank that got me in the end. I had expected trouble in the slaughter room, but we'd moved through there without incident. We'd already passed the electrocution bath, and I'd slipped easily enough round the neck cutters slicing through carotid arteries. There wasn't as much blood as I'd feared.

I had been smuggled into a large chicken factory by a meat-hygiene inspector who was worried about standards in the poultry industry. We were gazing into a hot-water tank into which the dead birds were being dipped at the rate of 180 a minute, to scald the skin and loosen the feathers before they went into the plucking machine.

It was 3pm and, as at many factories,

the water was only changed once a day. It was a brown soup of faeces and feather fragments, and, the hygiene inspector pointed out, at 52 degrees centigrade, 'the perfect temperature for salmonella and campylobacter organisms to survive and cross-contaminate the birds'. We moved on to the whirring rubber fingers that remove the feathers. 'Plucking machines exert considerable pressure on the carcass, which tends to squeeze faecal matter out onto the production line. It only takes one bird colonised with campylobacter to infect the rest. The bacteria count goes up 10-fold after this point,' he continued. I found myself wondering who had done the counting.

We went outside. There, birds in towering stacks of crates delivered earlier in the day by a procession of juggernauts

were being given a chance to calm down before being shunted into the slaughter room. They need to settle for the men to be able to pick them up by their feet and hang them upside down on the moving belt on which they begin their journey through the factory process.

The crates are made of plastic mesh with holes. The birds, which have typically been kept indoors all their lives – in 23-hour-a-day low light for maximum productivity, tend to panic when they are taken into the fresh air and daylight for the first time. As they open their bowels, the faeces falls from the crates at the top down through the tower on to those below.

'Pretty daft, isn't it?' the inspector said.

The vast majority of the 820 million UK chickens we eat each year are now processed in huge factories like these, which combine an abattoir with cutting, packing and labelling the meat before it is transported directly to supermarket distribution centres. More than half the UK's chicken farms are ▶





45 days in the life of a broiler chicken

The modern broiler chicken has been bred to fatten in the shortest time possible. (The word 'broiler' derives from a combination of the two traditional methods of cooking chicken: boiling and roasting.) The broiler farms divide the year up into a series of eight-week cropping periods. Each 'crop' of chickens takes 40 to 42 days to grow from chick to two-kilogram bird ready for slaughter. One week is taken to clean and disinfect the sheds before the next crop is begun. The units are not cleaned during cropping. So, after two to three weeks the wood shavings on the floor of the sheds are completely covered with poultry manure, and the air is acrid with ammonia. Everything is automated. Computers control not just the heating and ventilating systems, but also the dispensing of feed and water,

which are medicated with drugs to control parasites, or with mass doses of antibiotics as necessary.

Sheds these days typically hold 30,000 to 50,000 birds. Space and heating cost money, so the more birds you can pack in, the greater the yield. The UK government guidelines currently advise that there should be a maximum stocking density of 34 kilograms of bird per square metre of floor space. In fact, a survey conducted by Compassion in World Farming in 2001 found that only Marks and Spencer stipulated this as a maximum. Most other supermarkets permitted stocking densities of up to 38 kilograms per square metre; that allows each mature chicken an area smaller than an A4 sheet of paper.

By the time the birds reach the end of their lives, the sheds are so cramped they can hardly move. Animal welfare groups have regularly video-recorded signs of acute stress in birds, including feather-pecking and cannibalism of dead chickens. Mortality rates are high – at 1 per cent a week, seven times

required for each kilo of weight. By the 1990s the number of growth days had been reduced to 42 to 43, and little more than one and a half kilograms of feed was required. The industry is working to reduce the lifespan still further. By 2007 birds are expected to reach the required two-kilogram weight in 33 days.

But genetic selection to produce birds that work like factory units of production creates serious health problems. Death from heart attacks or swollen hearts that



cannot supply enough oxygen to the birds' oversized breast muscles are common. A study in 1992 by the University of Bristol found detectable problems in 90 per cent of UK broilers, and that more than a quarter of birds have leg problems severe enough to affect their welfare. The industry has done its own survey and says that less than 4 per cent of birds have significant problems. It has not made its research available in the public domain, however.

Two companies – Ross Breeders and Cobb – supply 80 per cent of the breeding stock for commercial broilers around the world. Much research has been devoted to genetic selection to produce the most efficient bird. The RSPCA, which says that it sees the suffering of broiler chickens as one of the most pressing animal welfare issues in the UK today, took the photographs above comparing the growth rate of a normal chicken with that of a broiler.

In 1957 the average growth period for an eating chicken was 63 days, and just less than three kilograms of feed was

required for each kilo of weight. By the 1990s the number of growth days had been reduced to 42 to 43, and little more than one and a half kilograms of feed was required. The industry is working to reduce the lifespan still further. By 2007 birds are expected to reach the required two-kilogram weight in 33 days.

And for those broilers that are kept for breeding, and are therefore not slaughtered at six weeks, but allowed to reach sexual maturity at about 15 to 18 weeks; they have to be starved, otherwise they would become too big to mate.



◀ directly contracted to the factories, too, rearing chicks delivered to them from the factory hatcheries, although British poultry farmers are increasingly struggling to stay in business in the face of cheap imports, particularly from Thailand and Brazil.

In the late 1980s chicken farmers received slightly more than 30 per cent of the retail price of chicken, but today they are lucky to get 20 per cent. British chicken processors, whose factories require substantial capital investment and have high labour costs, are often working on margins of less than 1 per cent. If they cannot deliver the price the supermarket wants, retailers can use the stick of sourcing abroad – either from Europe, where the high value of the pound to the euro favours continental farmers, or from developing countries, where costs are lower and standards may not be so good.

It is only by keeping volumes high that conventional farmers and processors here can survive. Two thirds of chicken farms in the UK now consist of units of 100,000 birds or more. But that makes them dependent on the people squeezing their margins in the first place – the supermarkets. They are the only customers who buy in sufficient volume.

The story is not unique to chicken. Pig farmers and processors suffer similar problems. Ten years ago a British pig farmer made £9 profit per pig; in 2002 he lost an average of £3 per pig. Neither poultry nor pig farming receive subsidies. Only the biggest and most intense producers can compete. This is one of the consequences of our obsession with cheap meat. The constant drive to increase yields leads to ever-greater intensification. As the trade has globalised, the same trend is now being seen in developing countries. Small poultry farmers in Brazil and Thailand are being squeezed out by huge factory farms. It is a pattern that can be observed in most food sectors, from vegetable farming to confectionery manufacture. But where livestock is involved, the almost irresistible drive towards industrialisation has particular consequences.

Factory farming in these sorts of conditions is heavily dependent on the

a Dutch **additive supplier** were caught on video **undetectable methods**

The Netherlands is the centre of the 'tumbling' industry, the process in which the bulking up of chicken takes place. Dutch processors import cheap frozen chicken from Thailand and Brazil. The meat has often been salted, because salted meat attracts only a fraction of the EU tariff applied to fresh meat. The processors defrost the meat, and then use dozens of needles to inject into it a solution of additives, or tumble it in giant cement-mixer-like machines, until the water added to bulk the chicken out has been absorbed. The tumbling helps dilute the salt to make the chicken palatable. So, as well as avoiding substantial taxes, the processors can make huge profits by selling water. Once the chicken has been tumbled and/or injected, it is refrozen and shipped on for further processing by manufacturers or for use by caterers.

The story gets even less appetising, as I discovered when I met John Sandford, unsung local authority hero and leading trading

standards officer at Hull City Council. His investigations began in 1997, when trading standards officers were contacted by a restaurateur who couldn't get his chicken, bought from a wholesaler, to cook properly. It fell to the council to test the meat, and they found it contained 30 per cent added water.

Some samples being sold as chicken breasts were in fact only 54 per cent chicken

Sandford began puzzling over how the processor had managed to get so much water to stay in the chicken. Why didn't the water just flood out when it was turned into a takeaway or a ready meal or a chicken nugget? The chicken was from Holland. Some time later Sandford discovered that there was gossip among UK producers that some Dutch companies had found new methods of adulterating their meat. Now the authorities had to prove it. Sandford knew it would be a slog. 'When they realise you are on their trail, they just change their specification to disguise

what they are doing in different ways. They are multi-million-pound companies with limitless money to spend on technology.' Sandford has a budget of £20,000 a year to spend on laboratory tests.

The breakthrough came when the laboratory Sandford uses in

Manchester was able to develop new DNA testing that could pinpoint protein from different species of animals. The

first DNA tests on further samples of Dutch catering chicken – well-known brands that are used widely in takeaways, pubs, clubs, Indian, Chinese and other ethnic restaurants across the country – showed up lots of water and, astonishingly, pork.

Some of the samples of what were being sold as chicken breasts were in fact only 54 per cent chicken. Nearly half of the samples contained less meat than they claimed and were mislabelled. Most had originated in Thailand and Brazil. And instead of using the old trick of phosphates to hold the water in, the processors were using a

and a German **protein manufacturer** boasting that they had developed of adulterating chicken with **waste from cows**

new, little understood method involving hydrolysed proteins. Hydrolysed proteins are proteins extracted at high temperatures or by chemical hydrolysis from old animals or parts of animals that are not used for food, such as skin, hide, bone, ligaments and feathers. Rather like cosmetic collagen implants, they make the flesh swell up and retain liquid.

Shortly afterwards some documents came into my hands that suggested there was considerably more going on behind the scenes. These documents showed that, together with the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the Manchester lab had been looking for not just chicken adulterated with pork, but also chicken adulterated with beef waste. The possibility of BSE in chicken meat raised its ugly head. If the Dutch processors were injecting chicken with hydrolysed proteins extracted from cow material, as these documents suggested, which bit of the cow was that material coming from? And would the process of hydrolysis kill off any infective BSE prions?

The baton passed to Ireland where the food safety inspectors in Dublin, tipped off by their English colleagues, had started their own tests on chicken. Using a private lab with different and more sensitive DNA testing

techniques, they found what they had been looking for: undeclared bovine proteins in chicken breasts from Holland, and lots more pork in chicken labelled 'halal'. Since much of the chicken was destined for ethnic restaurants where pork would be abhorrent to Muslims and beef to Hindus, it presented considerable moral dilemmas.

The BBC's *Panorama* team was keen to take the investigation further and it made sense to join forces with it. I had traced the production of hydrolysed proteins back to factories in Germany and Spain. *Panorama* began secret filming. Its evidence was shocking.

Panorama caught a Dutch additive supplier and a German protein manufacturer on video boasting that they had developed undetectable methods of adulterating chicken with waste from cows. The cow proteins were mixed into additive powders, which were then injected into the meat, mostly chicken breasts, by poultry processors, so that it could take up as much as 50 per cent water. But they were able to break down the DNA of the cow proteins to such an extent that the authorities' tests would not find it. Proteins extracted from chicken waste could also be used, but the reason for choosing cows was that the raw material was even

cheaper. The owner of the Dutch company that mixed the proteins into powders for the chicken processors to use told the undercover reporters that for more than 10 years the industry had been extracting hydrolysed beef proteins to inject not only into chicken but also into other meats such as ham. At least 12 companies in Holland were using the new undetectable hydrolysed proteins.

At first the FSA maintained the line that it was a labelling issue, but then decided it was a major scandal and fraud. It is now pressing the European Commission to ban the use of proteins from other species in chicken, and to limit the amount of water that may legally be added to bird carcasses to 15 per cent. The industry says some added water is vital for technical reasons, to prevent the chicken from drying out.

Despite a pioneering investigation by its own scientific experts, the FSA was hamstrung by the fact that in European law there was

nothing illegal about what the Dutch were doing so long as they put it on an obscure label somewhere. A multi-million-pound hi-tech industry had been, and still is, able to import cheap frozen Thai and Brazilian chicken, doctor it with animal waste, and sell it to restaurants, institutions and manufacturers across Britain. It has run rings around the authorities for years. Eventually, no doubt, new regulations will grind their way through Brussels putting a limit on the amount of water you can add to chicken, and banning the use of foreign proteins; though how they will be enforced when processors already know how to beat the tests is not clear. Who knows how far the technology has spread? I have seen sales literature from additive companies offering protein mixes for all kinds of meats and for fish. It is worth remembering, meanwhile, that the good guys are those who only add, and presumably will continue to add, 15 per cent water to your chicken.

Chicken Nuggets

Mechanically-recovered meat is obtained by pushing chicken carcasses through a giant teabag-like screen to produce a slurry of protein. This is then bound back together with polyphosphates and gums. To

this slurry are often added large quantities of water, soya proteins to restore the texture of meat, emulsifying gums to stop the mix separating out again, and flavourings and sugars to make up for the lack of meat.

use of drugs to prevent or treat disease. Pigs, chickens, laying hens, sheep, calves, dairy cows and farmed fish all receive routine dosages of antibiotics either through injection or in their food and water. By the end of the 1990s about 450 tonnes of antibiotics were being used on farm animals in the UK each year – about the same quantity as on humans. Many of the antibiotics given to farm animals are the same as, or related to, antibiotics used in human medicine.

And yet, in 1997 the EU banned an antibiotic called avoparcin for use in animals because of the likely development of resistance in humans to the related antibiotic vancomycin. But the legacy of using avoparcin in factory farming remains. Because the drug was given in low dosages to chickens in feed or drinking water, it didn't kill bacteria completely but allowed some to survive and develop resistance. Now we are facing untreatable vancomycin-resistant

superbugs in humans. Vancomycin is the most powerful human antibiotic available, the last line of defence for patients with the hospital superbug MRSA.

In 1998 the UK poultry industry said it would remove all growth-promoting antibiotics from feed voluntarily, ahead of a European ban that comes into force in 2006. But by 2003 it had become clear that one in five producers had quietly slipped back into old habits. Many producers had found that their birds were falling ill without the growth promoters, and resumed administering them. Others had switched to far greater use of therapeutic antibiotics prescribed by vets. I have seen production sheets from a large chicken factory, sent to me anonymously, which make clear that its chicks, both free-range and indoor-reared, are still routinely given antibiotics in their water.

In February 2003 avian flu broke out

in the eastern Dutch province of Gelderland. The Dutch government enforced a ban on the movement of farmed birds in a desperate effort to stop the disease spreading through the country's intensive poultry units. By April the disease had spread to Belgium. Exports of eggs and chickens were banned. By the time the Germans had caught it in May 2003, and started sealing their roads, more than 30 million Dutch and Belgian chickens had been destroyed. A Dutch vet had also died, having caught the disease from an infected bird, briefly sparking fears that the virus could mutate and trigger a flu epidemic in humans.

The UK poultry industry escaped the European epidemic of avian flu in 2003, but it was back on red alert in January 2004 as the disease struck again – this time cutting through flocks in southeast Asia and claiming lives as it spread to the human population. The World Health

All banks lend your money to someone else. The trouble is they won't tell you who they're lending it to, so you may be shocked to find out what your savings end up funding.

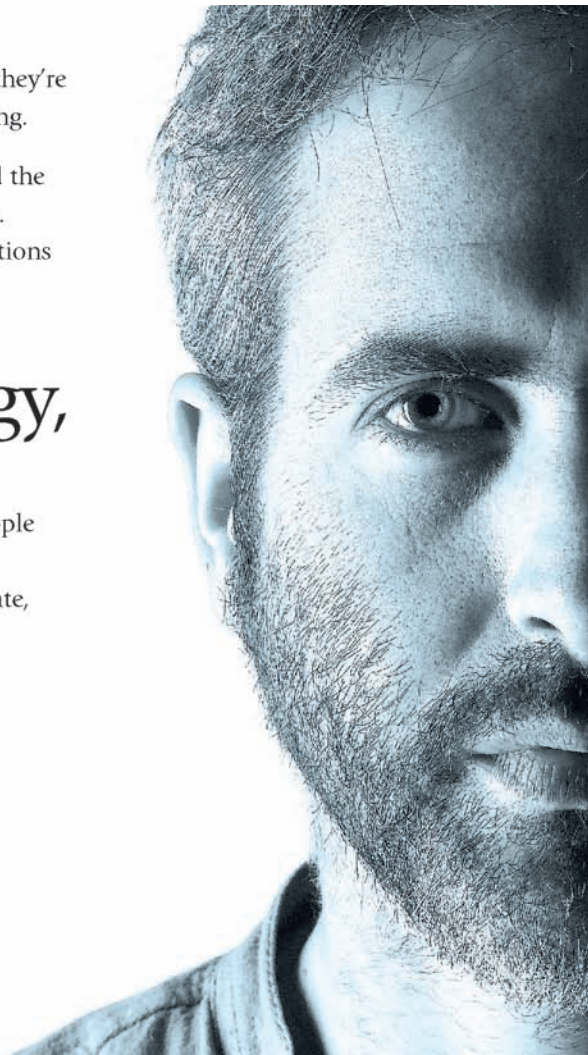
Triodos Bank is different. We only work with organisations that benefit people and the environment, like organic food production, Fair Trade companies and charities. We're the only commercial bank in the UK to publish an annual list of all organisations we lend to, which tells savers exactly where their money is working.

You believe in green energy,

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Organisation warned that if the bird virus mutated and attached itself to human flu, the consequences would be devastating. Imports of meat from Thailand were banned by the EU when it emerged that the Thai government had been covering up the fact that the country's flocks were infected. The strain of flu was particularly virulent, and *The Lancet* said that if it became contagious among people the prospect of a global pandemic was 'massively frightening'.

But despite these increasingly frequent food scares, just wander down the meat aisles of any supermarket and you will find mountains of chicken being sold at unbelievable prices. Chicken breasts: buy one, get one free... Chicken thighs: three for the price of two... Whole birds: half price. Chicken is cheaper than it was 20 years ago, and we're buying five times more of it, spending £2.5 billion a year. Chicken has become one of the weapons in supermarkets' price wars, but

being able to buy a whole chicken for not much more than the price of a cup of coffee comes at a cost.

Chickens, like other animals, have become industrialised and globalised. We no longer know where they are produced or how they are processed. By the time

we buy them in aseptic little packages, or processed into convenience meals, we have lost any sense of their origin.

Extracted from Not on the Label by Felicity Lawrence published by Penguin. Copyright © Felicity Lawrence 2004. www.penguin.co.uk

Traditional Farming Makes Sense

For centuries traditional farms were mixed, partly to take advantage of the virtuous circle of plants feeding animals whose manure could then feed crops, but also as an insurance against the risk of disease. Farm diseases are usually quite specific, and attack one type of livestock or crop. The best way to prevent

them is to avoid keeping too many of the same animals together in one place, and to rotate them so that the cycle of diseases and parasites is broken. Organic farmers know this. Once a disease does strike, just as isolation works with human illness, keeping animals away from contact with other animals of their type is

the best way of controlling it. Modern systems of monoculture do the opposite. Meat and livestock are not only regularly transported around the world; they are also kept together in great crowds in the same place year after year. By the time a disease has been noticed, it has often taken devastating grip.



yet your savings fund nuclear.

Lying on tilted beds of glistening ice, fish from around the world gaze unblinking at bored supermarket shoppers. Red snappers, 'air freighted for freshness' from the Indian Ocean; Chilean seabass 'previously frozen' from the Southern Atlantic; Farmed salmon from the Isles of Scotland; exotic, seemingly abundant fresh fish.

Who needs a traditional fishmonger?

'Carefully farmed salmon will have been fed a consistent diet, monitored and harvested at just the right time. Wild salmon fillets on the other hand can be inconsistent in flavour, as one never really knows just what conditions and problems the fish has had to tolerate.'

Sainsbury's website

'Carefully farmed salmon' in the Salmon fisheries of Scandinavia release nitrogen in quantities equivalent to that found in the sewage of 3.9 million people; that's roughly the population of Norway. In 2000 the World Wildlife Fund

estimated that Scotland's salmon farms produced the same amount of nitrogen as the sewage of 3.2 million people; phosphorous deposits were equivalent to the sewage of 9.4 million people; nitrogen and phosphorous can lead

to toxic algal blooms.

Researchers based at the University of Albany, New York, warned against eating more than three portions a year of Scottish farmed fish in order to minimise the chances of developing cancer. They had found that the fish contained high levels of contaminants such as PCBs, dioxins and pesticides.

And is the ubiquitous bright pink colour in farmed salmon the product of a consistent diet? No, it's from pink colourings astaxanthin and canthaxanthin, which are injected into the flesh of the fish.

by JOANNA BLYTHMAN

When I walk into a supermarket with a fish counter I can just tell by the smell alone that the fish is not fresh by my standards, and the look only confirms that,' one experienced fishmonger told me. He explained that fish auctions use various grades for supplies of wild fish, such as haddock, cod and whiting. The fish are graded not by size, but by age: the freshest fish command the highest prices. 'The supermarkets buy the poorer quality fish, because they consider the best fish is too expensive. The reason why many of their fillets often contain bones is because they like to buy "block" fish; that's cheaper



fish that have been filleted at speed. It's hard to see why supermarkets buy fish from all over the world to sell fresh when they can't even sell fish from the UK fresh,' he remarked.

Rex Goldsmith is an enthusiastic, young fishmonger from Surrey. He gave me an insight into the difference between fish from the independent fish trade and that from supermarkets. 'I drum into my assistant, "if you wouldn't buy it, don't sell it". I always go for quality,' he told me. On a sunny spring day, the selection on his slab was as vibrantly fresh as the weather: Whitstable oysters, Cornish cod, brill, skate, sole, Scottish mussels, south-coast line-caught sea bass, and west-coast scallops. None of it had been frozen. It was the sort of selection that gives you ideas and inspires you to cook.

By Goldsmith's standards, supermarket fish slabs are disappointing, even laughable. 'Supermarket fish is all about price and availability. They are stocking hundreds of fish counters, so they need big, regular supplies, such as little Californian squid that come frozen in one-pound blocks. My fish comes either from Billingsgate [fish market in

east London] or from quite local sources. My south-coast sea bass, for example, comes from two guys who go bass fishing with a small boat, and I take all they've got. Supermarkets couldn't be bothered with any supply so small.'

In smaller supermarkets the whole fish category is generally relegated to a blink-and-you'll-miss-it zone of shelf space. You'll find fish in pre-packs sealed with 'modified atmosphere', under film so tough and so tight that until you get home and pierce it with a sharp knife you won't have a clue whether the fish is fresh or not. Don't have high expectations. Fresh fish goes through a dumb period when it is not actively 'off' or malodorous but not exactly full of the joys of the sea either. Fish in that state is what you are likely to get when you buy supermarket pre-packs.

You're likely to have the further frustration of being locked into the retailer's idea of the typical 'meal occasion'. Salmon steaks, for example, commonly come in packs of two, designed for the supermarket's idea of a cosy *dîner à deux*. So what do you do if there are three or five people for dinner, or you live alone? Feed the surplus to the cat?

In bigger stores with distinct wet-fish counters, where fresh fish is laid out on the slab, supermarkets again seem incapable of delivering those two crucial criteria: freshness and range. The first thing that hits you is a preponderance of farmed fish (salmon, trout) as opposed to wild fish. Supermarkets say farmed fish is just a response to a shortage of wild stocks, but that is a partial truth. Supermarkets like farmed fish because it can be bought and sold like ball bearings. It is immune to the whims of the sea and so fits in with supermarkets' centralised, highly automated, nationwide buying systems. It takes only a couple of conversations between a supermarket fish buyer and a Scottish farmed salmon supplier, or a Greek sea bass farmer, to arrange a supply of fish of a standard weight in all stores, at a low price that can be guaranteed for a substantial period of time. By contrast, fleeting, ever-changing supplies of wild fish are a pain in the backside for supermarkets: the

catch changes each day; prices and availability fluctuate; supplies of fresh wild fish are inherently local, patchy and highly changeable. Supermarkets' buying requirements, on the other hand, are national and fixed.

Another common characteristic of supermarket wet-fish counters is that a large proportion of the fish has been defrosted from frozen. Read the small text on the label (it may not be obvious unless you look quite carefully) and

you'll see the words 'previously frozen'. By buying frozen fish, supermarkets get to have their cake and eat it. They have the ease of buying and transporting fish frozen, without any of the hassle or expense necessarily involved in handling a sensitive product like chilled fresh fish, which to be sold at its best needs as short and direct a supply chain as possible.

Extracted from *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* by Joanna Blythman published by Fourth Estate, 2004.

Behind the counter

Fish expert William Black has criticised UK supermarkets for having staff who do not always appear to be specifically trained to deal with fish and who therefore 'cannot match the service provided by a high-street fishmonger'. Rex Goldsmith, who used to work for a supermarket before becoming a high-street fishmonger himself, explained to me the consequences of that knowledge deficit.

'When I worked in the supermarket we used to have an operation manual for fish. It stipulated the species name and a corresponding number of days that it could be kept on the slab. Cod, for example, was the day of delivery plus two more days. But fish is different all the time. Some fish, such as sole or salmon, is better a few days old; others like

mackerel you should chuck out at the end of the day if they don't sell. It depends every day. It's not like bacon. You have to use your instinct and knowledge. Several times I spoke to the fish buyer about quality, saying that species X or species Y that was coming from a certain supplier was no good. The fish buyers were quite

open to this feedback but just didn't know any better. Usually, they came from cold meats or some other department and had no background in fish.'

Goldsmith's comments are confirmed by the following exchanges between customers and staff behind supermarket wet-fish counters.

Q: 'What's the best way to cook this [smoked haddock]?'

A: 'I don't usually cook fish. My mum does, and she microwaves it.'
(Waitrose, Marlow)

Q: 'Do you sell fresh (unfrozen) whole squid?'

A: 'We don't do fresh but we do have a stock of frozen, which we defrost and sell ready to cook.'
(Safeway, Inverness)

Q: 'Do you sell bones or trimmings to make a fish stock?'

A: 'No, we don't sell any of that. You'd need to go to a fishmonger.'
(Tesco, Eastville, Bristol)

'Most wild fish stocks are fished to their limits, so using fish farms helps us meet year round customer demand... We're now planning to farm other species to further reduce pressure on wild stocks.'

Marks & Spencer website

To produce one tonne of farmed salmon, takes three to four tonnes of fishmeal, a processed food made from less valuable fish species such as herring,

mackerel, anchovy, sardine and other relatively small varieties. So great is the demand for farmed fish that four of the top five fish species caught at sea are used

primarily as fishmeal and fish oil for aquaculture and livestock feed. Across the world, 35 per cent of all wild fisheries are used for fishmeal.

Are you a 'premium loyal', a 'loyal low spender', a 'can't stay away'... or don't you care? Tesco does, and uses the data collected from your loyalty card to dictate what you buy, when you buy and how much you buy.

Every little helps

by JEREMY SMITH

'Why not try spreading it on a muffin?'

I turn round trying to locate the shop steward but I am alone in the aisle. Just above the top shelf of cereals, however, I see the screen of a TV. I stand and watch as the banal nightmare unfolds on the screen in front of me: a 10-second clip of a woman spreading cheese onto a slice of bread is accompanied by a caption reading, 'it's great with bread, too'. The first clip is followed by one suggesting an inspirational way to make your own flan (buy a Tesco flan base; fill it with Tesco tinned fruit pieces; add Tesco gelatin).

And so it goes on. And on. Welcome to the world of Tesco TV: 24-hour advertising without the boring programmes in between.

Wherever I push my trolley, another TV glares at me. And depending on which one of seven retail sections I am in, I get a different set of adverts cunningly masked as handy hints, recipe suggestions or make-up tips.

This is Tesco's latest marketing development, and it looks set to be huge. By the end of this year, it will be 'available' at Tesco's 300 largest stores, which account for 530 million shopping

trips each year and 10 million shopping trips per week.

As Tesco explains to prospective advertisers, '10 million shoppers are equivalent to a '40 rating' on TV, which [is] comparable to a top-rating TV

'if you're buying a Britney Spears CD and you've got no one else registered on your card, you've either got young kids or you're a gay man'

programme'. In other words, Tesco can make big money by charging companies for showing their products for 2.5 or more seconds on its screens.

There is a certain amoral genius to the concept. Seventy per cent of purchase decisions are made in-store, meaning that the vast majority of advertising seen on TV outside of stores, or read in magazines or on billboards, is not in the front of consumers' minds when they are shopping. But if you see an advert while 10 feet from where the product is on sale, that, as Tesco media manager Bill Pennell somewhat evangelically explains, is

'advertising where it matters – at the moment of truth'. Indeed, according to Tesco, companies advertising on Tesco TV have already seen their sales of advertised products increase 10 per cent.

Furthermore, despite its reach, Tesco TV is not regulated by media regulator Ofcom. But not to worry, assures the UK's biggest supermarket, all adverts are vetted by Tesco's Orwellian sounding 'Editorial Governance Team'.

While the Editorial Governance Team is deciding what we are allowed to watch, another Tesco team is increasingly watching us. The company is investing heavily in RFID, which stands for radio-frequency identification, a technology that uses tiny computer chips smaller than grains of sand to track items. RFID chips can be placed either in packaging, or, if the products are non-food, in the products themselves. Each tiny chip is hooked up to an antenna that picks up electromagnetic energy beamed at it from a reader device. The chip then sends back its unique identification number to the reader, allowing the item to be remotely identified up to 20 or 30 feet away. Tesco began including RFID chips with non-food products in April of this year.

Imagine you walk into a Tesco store wearing a jumper with an RFID chip

woven into its fabric. Tesco knows who you are. Because you also use a store card, it knows exactly what you have bought on any given hour of any given day. It knows you only shop in the evenings, probably after work; so you will probably be tired, maybe more susceptible to offers. It knows you like chocolate. How long before the television is programmed to talk to you and sell you exactly what you are most ready to buy?

Is such a relationship between surveillance and shopping far-fetched? So great is supermarkets' knowledge of their customers that, as Jessica Williams writes in her book *50 Facts That Should Change The World*, they now know more about you than the government does. So, when the government looked to develop its proposed ID cards, who did it turn to for advice? Tesco.

Last year Tesco was secretly trialling RFID tags in Gillette shaving products in a store in Cambridge. A camera was placed above the shelf where the razors were, and everyone who picked up the products was photographed. Only a protest by members of the public outraged at this invasion of their privacy got the trial stopped.

Earlier this year shopper Lynn Pierce went to her local Tesco to buy some flowers for her mother's grave, using her Tesco loyalty card when she paid. At home two days later she answered a knock at the door only to find the police standing on her doorstep. Someone monitoring Tesco's in store CCTV had seen Mrs Pierce put her scarf into her handbag. Wrongly assuming she was shoplifting, Tesco found her home address from data stored in her loyalty card account. It was only when the police inspected the CCTV footage themselves and saw that she had entered the store wearing the scarf that the mistake was realised. 'I'm disgusted that information from my store card

was passed on to the police and used in this way,' Pierce later told a reporter.

Some might not see the problem. 'If supermarkets want to sell me things,' you might think, 'better if it is more tailored to what I actually buy. If they understand my shopping habits and respond to them more accurately, I'm more likely to get what I want.' But what if your shopping habits happen to be the same

as a terrorist's? Would you also be happy to know that following the 9/11 terrorist attacks a grocery chain in the US voluntarily handed over all its loyalty card records to the FBI, without telling its customers? Apparently, the US authorities had reviewed loyalty card transactions made by the 9/11 hijackers and created a profile of the ideal terrorist's shopping preferences. By comparing this pattern with the pattern of every shopper at the helpful grocery store they were able to see which shoppers were potential terrorists.

Loyalty cards are increasingly big business. In the UK a 2002 Mori poll showed that more than half of UK adults use loyalty cards. And while most of the major supermarkets (with the notable exception of Asda) have them, the Tesco card has been by far and away the most successful.

Before it launched its loyalty card, known as Clubcard, Tesco was the UK's second-ranking supermarket. In the eight years from the launch of Clubcard to the end of 2002 Tesco gave away more than £1 billion in vouchers, yet managed to run the Clubcard scheme since 1995 for no net cost. The increase

in sales that accompanied the 'loyalty' generated among users of the card more than covered its cost. Indeed, research by management consultancy McKinsey found that rather than saving money from loyalty cards, 48 per cent of people who join such schemes actually increase the amount they spend in supermarkets. But then that's the point.

THE CASE AGAINST PRUNELLA SCALES

The most successful celebrity endorsement ever, Prunella Scales' TV ads have added more than £2.2 billion to Tesco's profits. And yet she says she really cares about the environment. She was president of the CPRE from 1997-2002 and is now a face of the Woodland Trust.

1 While you were president of the CPRE, your organisation launched a campaign against Tesco claiming that a planned store in Hadleigh 'would be very damaging to local suppliers, generate traffic and have an impact on historic buildings and the vitality of the high street.' Were you unaware of this action, or were you just unconcerned at the conflict of interest?

2 You want 'severe penalties' for car commuters. Does the same apply to those people compelled to use their cars to go shopping in the out of town Tesco now that their local shops have shut down, unable to match its prices? Does it matter that three-quarters of supermarket customers now

travel by car and that a typical out-of-town superstore causes £25,000 worth of congestion, pollution and associated

damage to the community every week?

3 As departing president of the CPRE your farewell was an attack on planning laws. Have you read the lobbygate story concerning the string of

'coincidences' that connect a sizeable Tesco donation to the millennium dome and an alteration in a proposed Car Park tax that would have cost it £20 million?

4 You are quoted as saying: 'In our carelessness, we have flooded the night sky with light, so that many of us can no longer see the stars. But we can reverse this trend, quickly, cheaply and easily. It's time to bring back the night sky.' How do you feel giant Tesco stores open 24 hours a day contribute to this trend?

5 How do you think Tesco's paying the lowest rates of any of the supermarkets to UK farmers helps in the 'protection of rural England'?



21 tricks of the supermarket trade

How supermarkets manipulate you into buying more than you need

1 Giving you a basket

Supermarket research discovered 75 per cent of those who carry a shopping basket with them while they shop actually buy something, compared to only 34 per cent of those who don't. So when a supermarket has a member of staff handing everyone a basket on their way in, this is not for your benefit, but theirs.

2 'Ripe and Ready' fruit

Because supermarkets want their fruit to last as long as possible on the shelf they make the suppliers pick it early, even though this means it won't taste as good because the sugars won't have properly developed. Having got us used to the idea that fruit is always hard when you buy it, they now charge us extra for the privilege of ripe fruit.



3 Irrational Pricing

Irrational pricing is putting the price of items at say £4.99 instead of £5. The reason is based on memory processing time. Rounding upward involves an additional decision compared with storing the first digits. Furthermore, due to the vast quantity of information available for consumers to process, the information on price must be stored in a very short interval. The cheapest way to do so, in memory and attention terms, is by storing the first digits. Customers think they are getting a better deal than they in fact are.

4 Buy one Get one free ('BOGOF')

Has been shown to increase purchases by up to 150 per cent. Unlike 50 per cent off, which actually does save money, 'BOGOF' deals accustom us to consuming more of a product than we normally would, so that when the offer ends we are more likely to carry on buying more. And besides encouraging us

to buy more than we really need – these offers hide a hidden cost to the producer of the product, as it is they, and not the supermarket, that is paying for this promotion. Supermarkets use it as a way of shifting stock that's not selling.

5 Children

When Sainsbury launched cooking classes for children (for which parents pay £5)

during the 2003 school holidays in selected stores, it pegged them to its Blue Parrot Café children's brand which features self-styled healthier versions of children's junk food such as chicken nuggets and pizza. Participating children went away with a Blue Parrot 'goodie bag' and a Blue Parrot apron, reminders that if they didn't feel like cooking, they could always get their mother to pick up something ready-made at Sainsbury's.

6 'Eye level is buy level'

Products positioned at eye height sell twice as well, so the more expensive products will often be put there. Look lower down the shelves and you may see cheaper alternatives. Likewise look where the unhealthy children's products are positioned – at children's eye level – it's them they are selling to, not you. Adults are far more likely to buy something unhealthy their children pester them for, than something they see themselves.

7 Hard to compare weights.

Similar products will be sold in differing weights making it hard to compare prices. 28p a pound for loose carrots may not seem much. How about £1.39 for 300g of crisp baby carrots in a sealed pack? As the weight of one is given in grams and the other in pounds, it is not easy to compare prices. (The 'crisp baby carrots actually cost £2.09 a lb, over 10 times as much as the loose carrots. Do they really taste 10 times better?)

8 Celebrity endorsement

If a chef as fashionable as Jamie Oliver is approving your food, or an actress as beloved as Prunella Scales your prices, it lends credibility to a supermarket's claims. Since starting work for Sainsbury, Oliver is reckoned to

have boosted the stores profits by over £1.2 billion. Prunella Scale's TV ads, meanwhile, have added over £2.2 billion to Tesco's worth.

9 Known-value items

Known Value Items such as bread, butter, milk and sugar bring customers into supermarkets and are invariably sold below cost to try to beat the competition (Tesco usually have 160 items for sale below cost). Also known as loss leaders, they sound like a good deal for customers (who know roughly what they cost and so notice any discounts). Don't be fooled. Supermarkets make up for this by raising prices on other items that we can't remember the cost of.

10 New box, old product

Tired of Chicken tikka massala? Why not try new regional speciality Keralan Massala chicken? The difference is all in the packaging.

11 Free samples

You may not buy the product after tasting the sample offered to you, but your stomach will start releasing gastric juices, making you feel more hungry. And if you feel more hungry, you are more likely to buy more food, especially over-priced food you can eat as soon as you leave the store.

12 Reading habits

People who read from left to right also scan shelves from left to right. Therefore the most expensive varieties of a given product will be found on the left, the cheaper on the right.

13 Music

Over a two week period, French and German music was played on alternate days from an in-store display of French and German wines. French music led to French wines outselling German ones, whereas German music led to the opposite effect on sales. It's not only music type that affects buying – the tempo matters too. We walk at approximately 90 paces per minute. Music slower than 90 beats per minute slows us down subconsciously, making us spend more time in the aisles.



14 Fake bargains

Supermarkets promote a product at a price, alongside a higher price that you assume it's been reduced from. They never actually sell it at the higher price – but because it appears to be a bargain, we buy it.

15 Value added products

An apple costs 9p. But slice the apple, put it in a bag and sell it as 'Apple bites' and it costs 49p for less than half an apple. Who has so little time that they can't slice and apple?

16 Walking distances

In order to maximise shopper and product contact time, shops place the most popular items and brands in the middle of aisles, ensuring that from any direction the customer has to walk the furthest to reach them. Likewise, essentials, such as bread and milk are often found at the back of the shop. People have to walk past the rest of the produce to get to them, increasing the chance of impulse buys.

17 Savings schemes

Since 1991 Tesco has run the Computers for Schools scheme, whereby tokens on certain products can be exchanged for computer equipment for local schools. However, as Ben Laurence wrote in the Observer: 'Whilst the cost to Tesco is modest: customers have to spend £110,000 on groceries for a school to get a basic PC.'

18 Freshly baked bread (the smell of)

Supermarkets don't really bake their bread in store, they just finish it off. All the kneading and proving is done somewhere else. The supermarkets only defrost the dough and heat it up – at the point when the warm, comforting bread smells start.

19 Loyalty cards

Or as the supermarkets want us to call them 'Reward cards'.

We do our shopping and they give us discounts off future purchases. What could be more generous than that? If it is such a giveaway why has Tesco managed to run its card scheme for the last eight years at no net cost to the supermarket – because we spend more money once we are loyalty card holders. First, 42 per cent of us spend more once we own the cards, perhaps under the mistaken logic that the more we buy, the more discounts we will get, and therefore the less we will spend. Second the purpose of the discount vouchers we are

awarded is not to save us money, but to get us buying products we don't normally buy. It's like a drug dealer giving us a free hit to get us hooked.

20 Zone specific television

Tesco's new 'Tesco TV' plays different adverts at you

depending on what zone of the store you are in. As 75 per cent of shopping decisions are made in the 10 feet before the product, this is marketing at its most powerful.

21 Pester power

When you get to the till at Marks and Spencer (and other supermarkets, although M&S seem to be the worst) the shelves around the till are filled with sweets. Apart from tempting adults, they prove irresistible to children. As the parent is trying to sort out paying and packing, the child pesters them for sweets. Tired at the end of a stressful journey around the supermarkets, parents often succumb.



So how did Tesco achieve this? What the loyalty card allows Tesco to do is to follow your shopping patterns, and from that build up a profile of what sort of shopper you are. (As one supermarket customer forecaster explained, 'if you're buying a Britney Spears CD and you've got no one else registered on your card, you've either got young kids or you're a gay man'.) Tesco's 'valued' customers are split into a series of 27 categories, known as 'Tesco Lifestyles', depending on how, when and why they spend their money. For despite all their and every other supermarket's social rhetoric, that is all you are to Tesco – a spender of money. Perhaps you are a 'premium loyal', one of the 20 per cent of customers who account for 80 per cent of its sales. Or maybe you're a 'loyal low spender', a 'can't stay away', a 'weekly shopper' or a 'high-spending superstore family'.

Once it has worked out what sort of group you are in, it can then track down any aberrant behaviour. For example, suppose you enjoy asparagus and organic wine, only shop late in the evening when you are home from work, buy your copy of

**We walk at approximately
90 paces per minute.
Music slower than 90
beats per minute slows us
down subconsciously,
making us spend more time
in the aisles**

Cosmopolitan magazine and the occasional Dido CD. Tesco knows what sort of person you are. But for some reason you aren't buying fresh Parmesan or over-priced shampoo – just the sort of things your group is supposed to love, according to the company's research. Once Tesco knows who you are, it will start selling you the products you *should* be buying.

It all makes complete economic sense. Through analysing the information gleaned from Clubcards, Tesco has learnt that regular customers often shop in 12 out of 16 areas of its stores. Maybe they buy all types of food, but never even look at the CDs, or washing products, or beer. The store discovered that if consumers could each be persuaded to shop in the other four sections just once every three months, Tesco's revenue would go up by £1.8 billion. As the company says, every little helps.

Every three months, therefore, Clubcard holders are sent a letter with a series of money-off vouchers for products available in Tesco stores. (Tesco charges companies to make offers in the mailings, so the coupons are already half-funded by suppliers). Not everyone gets the same set of vouchers, however. Far from it. Depending on your shopping profile you could get any one of 8 million possible variations of the mailing. In your particular mailing there will always be discounts for products Tesco knows you already buy (thus encouraging you to buy more of them), as well as discounts for products you have never tried before but

should (that's where the Parmesan and shampoo discounts come in). So customised are the mailings that although it is possible for Tesco to arrange its combinations of vouchers and offers in 8 million different ways, it has only charted 4 million different combinations of customer behaviour. In other words, the mailing is more individual than you or I.

Of course not all your vouchers will offer you savings on food. In recent years Tesco has increasingly diversified. It wants to be all things to all people. So profitable have Tesco's sales of non-food products become that Sainsbury's told the UK's Competition Commission that they account for 73 per cent of its profits. (Sainsbury's said all of Asda's profits come from the sale of non-food goods.)

Tesco now sells books – at such cheap prices that one of the

country's leading book suppliers recently shut down, unable to make ends meet. It now sells CDs. Think about the number of adverts you have seen for new albums on TV. What is always at the bottom of the page? Tesco's logo. So powerful has Tesco become in the music industry that it is considered impossible for a single to get to number one without being sold through its stores. In fact, Tesco sells more CDs than Woolworths and Virgin combined. Tesco sells magazines and newspapers. It sells clothes. Cleaning products. Make-up. Plants. More toiletries than Boots and Superdrug combined. Now, add all these up and think how much information your shopping habits tell Tesco about you.

But Tesco is about selling much more than products: it's about selling lifestyles. One of the main ways it does this is

through specialised clubs that are open to Clubcard members to join – World of Wine, Healthy Living, Kids and Baby and Toddler clubs.

These clubs wield great influence. In its first two years, for example, two out of every five expectant mothers joined Tesco's Baby and Toddler Club. More than half of those did not join themselves but were enrolled by their own mothers. What better marketing could a store ask for? 'We're so trustworthy your own mother is enrolling her granddaughter with us.' The result? A third of new-to Tesco shoppers remained loyal to the supermarket after their Baby and Toddler Club membership lapsed. Rather than resist their marketing efforts, customers have made it easier for the supermarkets. When they enrol their children for Kids Club, Tesco asks parents if they will allow the store to send free samples direct to their children. Seventy per cent say yes.

As well as these clubs, Tesco has entered all

THE CASE AGAINST JAMIE OLIVER

Just as he does in countless TV shows and cookery books, Jamie Oliver encourages Sainsbury shoppers to eat better food. The store even has a range of products that have quotes from Jamie on them.

1 Last year you were a very vocal supporter of the campaign to stop the expansion of Stansted airport, which would have increased the noise levels near your new Essex home. You said: 'Personally, I have no interest in politics, except in certain areas (where it concerns food for example) but I know that the feeling in the community is that if Stansted is chosen, it would have been chosen for the wrong reasons. It isn't just the beautiful countryside and the villages that will be destroyed by an extra runway, but also the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of people.' Do you not think the massive growth in aeroplane traffic might have something to do with supermarket global sourcing policies? You say you have no interest in politics unless it has something to do with food. In the last three



years the value of food imported by air grew by nearly 50 per cent with fruit and vegetables the largest category of commodity being imported this way. Does that count?

2 At the Soil Association conference last year you said: 'I love farmers markets and buying from small farms'. Do you think Sainsbury's does? If so why is it so proud to declare that half its sales come from 100 suppliers and that half its suppliers have sales through it in excess of £10 million And why are only a third of its sales by value (£6 billion out of £18 billion) of British foods? Referring to the previous question, how many of the other £12 billion do you think might have come by plane?

3 You say you don't take an interest in politics, but you have spoken out on GM before, telling ABC news: 'Yeah. Well, it doesn't sound right to me. Basically, you know, I'm a chef, I love eating food, I love making food. Things like GMO foods don't really interest me. I mean, at the end of the day you're cooking

it, you're putting it in your mouth and you're swallowing it. And you don't do that to many things, and it's pretty personal stuff really. And we don't know – there's no evidence of what happens to it. You know at the end of the day you want good food, like stuff grown how it should be grown.' Does it not concern you that Lord David Sainsbury, who is retiring as Tony Blair's science minister at the next election in order to return to running the supermarket business, is one of the leading proponents in the UK for GM with major financial interests in companies developing the technology? If you'd like to know more about your future boss, why not read his profile at <http://www.lobbywatch.org/profile1.asp?PrId=116>

4 On the same note, does it concern you that Sainsbury is still not able to confirm that its milk is all from cows fed on GM-free diets?

5 In the *Mirror* earlier this year you attacked children's junk food, calling Dairylea Lunches 'just gum and crap, and processed meat which is just fucking donkey bollocks! There's so much shit in the industry these days.' So why do you support a company that makes vast profits from selling them?

What better **marketing** could a store ask for? 'We're so **trustworthy** your own **mother** is enrolling her **granddaughter** with us.'

manner of other markets – always insisting that 'every little helps'. The UK's largest grocer now runs the world's most successful internet supermarket, delivering to more than 1 million homes and with nearly 400,000 regular shoppers. Two out of every five customers using Tesco.com are not regular shoppers at Tesco stores. By tracking what you buy through your Clubcard, Tesco creates for you a favourite products list (similar to a list of favourite websites). When you connect to Tesco.com there is the list of products you normally buy. A helpful short cut, or too much information about you? One woman contacted Tesco when she saw condoms on her favourites list: she was puzzled because she and her husband didn't use them when they were having sex. Tesco knew her husband was having an affair before she did.

The company is also one of Europe's fastest growing financial services providers. Tesco Personal Finance had 3.5 million customers and made profits of £96 million by 2003. By the same year it had lent £1 billion in personal loans, and insured the cars of 500,000 customers and more than 250,000 of their pets.

Until it was replaced earlier this year with a free in-store magazine, *Clubcard* magazine had the highest circulation of any

lifestyle magazine in Europe, and was sent to 8.5 million people. It too was an effective marketing tool. More than half of all UK adults read a supermarket magazine, and 64 per cent are likely to buy products because of articles they read in those magazines. That means 5.4 million people were being influenced in their buying patterns by a single magazine. The front cover of the new magazine tells you exactly what it wants to offer: 'Ideas... Solutions... Lifestyle'. Just about everything, really.

Tesco has launched its own mobile phone service, its own

home phone service, and in 2000 it launched Tesco SchoolNet, which is now the largest school internet service in the world. When your children are learning, they're staring at the Tesco logo as they do so.

Tesco has long seen

linking up with schools as a great way to get its name out there. Since 1990 it has run the Computers for Schools scheme, whereby tokens on certain products (including such healthy alternatives as Walkers crisps and McVitie's biscuits) can be exchanged for computer equipment for local schools. Tesco is very proud of this scheme, which in October 2000 won the Nestlé Social Commitment prize at the UK Food Industry Awards. However, as Ben Laurence stated in *The Observer*, the cost of Computers for Schools to Tesco is modest. Laurence



wrote: 'Customers have to spend £110,000 on groceries for a school to get a basic PC.' Of course, most computers provided by the scheme bear the Tesco logo.

Recently, Tesco has been one of many companies getting involved in New Labour's beloved private finance initiative (PFI). Education Action Zones (EAZs) are a type of PFI that involve companies like Shell, ICI and McDonald's in the funding of local schools. The benefits for business are obvious. An article on the website of Dingle Granby Toxteth EAZ reports: 'Pupils and staff from Beaufort Park School enjoyed a fabulous visit to Tesco Metro recently.' The visit was supposedly organised to promote healthy eating. To that end, Tesco staff showed children round the store, 'pointed out healthy foods and then demonstrated how to use the electronic tills'. As the emphasis on healthy eating faded further into the background, the children were then given a 'chance to ice a cookie in the [store's] bakery' before being shown how they could buy floral bouquets for Mother's Day. 'To round the visit off,' the website states, '[Tesco's] staff provided treats for the children to take home.' Who benefited most? The school, the children, or Tesco?

On top of all of this there are the constant messages displayed all across Tesco stores assuring you of the company's values. The most conspicuous are located in the fruit and vegetable aisles, where can be found a series of signs telling you only half the story – the half Tesco wants you to hear. What, other than bland assurances, is offered by statements such as 'quality you can trust', 'our growers respect and protect wildlife', or 'daily deliveries ensure freshness' (but not 'daily deliveries mean much more CO2 released into the atmosphere by our lorries and planes')? These messages crop up in the most unlikely of places, displaying the extent to which Tesco will go to remind us that every little helps. In

the car parks outside stores are fenced-off areas where people leave their trolleys once they have unloaded them into their cars. Signs read: 'To make your shopping trip easier we have a wide selection of trolleys.'

Throughout the store every price tag has some sort of pledge. 'Everyday low prices,' read some. Others claim: 'We won't be beaten on value,' which is, of course, much harder to prove than

it is considered impossible for a single to get to number one without being sold through Tesco stores

whether Tesco is beaten on price. Every single price tag reminds the consumer that buying the company's products earns them Clubcard points. For everything we do is fed back into the mainframe.

Where will it end? You are born and enrolled in the Baby and Toddler Club, then graduate to Kids Club. At school you look up information on a Tesco website on a computer earned for your school by you and your friends eating lots of food bought at Tesco. Your lunchbox is, of course, full of Tesco lunchables. On school trips you visit Tesco supermarkets to see how things are done in the only store left in town.

When you leave school you could go to university and study one of the many courses sponsored by Tesco, or you could just bite the bullet and start working there yourself. You don't want to stack shelves or man the tills? No problem. The UK's biggest private employer has openings for qualified pharmacists, GPs, etc.

What about your life outside of Tesco? What do you mean, outside? You do all your shopping there. What you've forgotten, you order online. You buy your clothes, your CDs, your books, your videos... all from Tesco. You read the Tesco magazine each month, deciding how to cook the food you bought from the company. Each year on your mum's birthday you use Tesco's flower-delivering service to send her a bunch of roses.

When you are ill you see the Tesco in-store GP, and get your prescriptions from the in-store chemist. Your mobile and home phone were bought at Tesco, and operate on a Tesco tariff. Your home, car, pet, holiday and even your life are insured through Tesco. Your bank account is with Tesco, as is your mortgage, and each month a portion of the salary you earn working for Tesco goes from a direct debit in your Tesco bank account to pay off the Tesco loan you took out to pay for your car (filled

with petrol each week at the station in the Tesco forecourt).

And so life goes on. One day when you are older you might sit back and reflect. You might remember the old days when people used to waste so much of their time walking up and down streets, going into all those different shops, having to talk to all those different people, hearing about all their different lives. Now it's just old dears running charity shops full of unwanted goods bought at the local Tesco, bookmakers where you can bet on the 3:30 Tesco Handicap at Doncaster, and a gift card shop you don't use that much. Now the community's gone, there's no one to send a card to anyway. It's lonelier, too, now your husband's died. But at least you'll be with him when you go. Thank God he took up the buy-one-get-one-free offer at Tescoffins.com. Wasn't so keen on what they engraved on the headstone, though. There it was, in three-inch high silver letters just below his name:

'Every little helps'.



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Photo: Simon Wood

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'Tesco buying managers have a reputation for securing the hardest bargains... One of them was given a new wine to taste... and was asked for his reaction. He sniffed the contents of his glass, tasted it and replied: "Not enough margin".'

Beware the buyer



by JOANNA BLYTHMAN

Supermarkets are keen to portray themselves as loyal and supportive business partners, nurturing suppliers in their quest for the best deal for consumers. Tesco says it is 'committed to maintaining strong mutually advantageous relationships

with our suppliers'. Asda asserts its 'belief in good relationships, which we work to improve all the time'. And Sainsbury's says: 'We are very proud of the good relationships we have with our suppliers'.

To the consumer, this sounds reassuring. Occasionally, however, the mask of benevolence slips, as was the case

in an interview with former Safeway chief executive Carlos Criado-Perez. Pushed as to why there was growing unrest among suppliers and complaints that Safeway was acting aggressively, Criado-Perez insisted that his firm's relations with its 2,000 suppliers were good. But he offered an unusually forthright insight into Safeway's current business strategy. 'We are very keen negotiators and, increasingly, it becomes a more challenging dialogue. It's our job to prise every penny out of suppliers. Every single penny comes either from them or the customers. We try to do business ethically, but we also want to do what is best business for our shareholders.'

Speak to suppliers directly and they will tell you precisely what they make of that. The fine words supermarket generals reel off about their dealings with suppliers do not seem to filter down the ranks to the foot soldiers who actually carry out their business and generate their profits. One supplier described negotiating a deal with a supermarket thus: 'As soon as the chief executive officer walked out the room, it was business as usual. The buying team was just a bunch of thugs.'

The public image of the Dudley Moore-style cuddly supermarket buyer, tirelessly scouring the globe for food finds like a latter-day Indiana Jones, is wide of the mark. The typical supermarket buyer for a large multiple, the person who negotiates the detail of any business with suppliers, is likely to be in their mid- to late 20s, and is routinely changed at short notice. One minute they could be in charge of pet food, the next Christmas gifts, then ready meals or toiletries, and so on.

Even supermarket insiders sometimes recognise the problems this causes. When

PAY UP OR GET OUT

- One supermarket requested £1m up front from a large dairy co-operative in order for negotiations about listing the co-op's milk to begin.
- One South African wine supplier was required to pay £100,000 to have its bottles moved up just one shelf.
- Pea farmers in the south of England, who had contracted to supply a supermarket at an agreed price at the beginning of the season and planted

accordingly, were told on the eve of the harvest that their price would be halved.

- Safeway wrote to suppliers of 1,000 of its most popular lines asking for a £20,000 contribution for each line to guarantee its availability.
- Tesco asked for suppliers to cover its costs of compliance with the Ethical Trading Initiative, an alliance of organisations that promotes fair trade.

the small, family-owned, regional supermarket chain Booths trounced every other supermarket chain to win the title of 'Overall Wine Merchant of the Year' in *Wine Magazine's* 2002 'Oscars', it publicly attributed its success to the fact that its knowledgeable wine buyer had been in the job for four years – an uncharacteristically long tenure among the ever-changing personnel of supermarket procurement. 'Many supermarkets swap buyers between departments,' remarked Booths, 'and this often means that the frozen-vegetable or lingerie buyer of today may well be the Bordeaux or Riesling buyer of tomorrow. This can easily lead to difficulties in telling a claret from a carrot or a hock from a sock.'

Several established suppliers told me of their difficulties when trying to present products to such inexperienced and uninterested buyers. 'You're in this cubicle deep in the chain's HQ. You're talking away

passionately about your product, waxing lyrical to a 26-year-old and you can almost see the cartoon bubble coming out her head saying "yawn" or "bored". All she wants to know about

is getting the maximum sales from each square metre, and the only way she knows how to do that is by reducing wastage, increasing sales by price cutting and increasing margins,' said one. The wine writer Tim Atkin gave readers an insight into the world of supermarket wine buying, recounting his experience at a wine tasting. 'Tesco buying managers have a reputation for securing the hardest bargains... One of them was given a new wine to taste... and was asked for his reaction. He sniffed the contents of his glass, tasted it and replied: "Not enough margin".'

Supermarket buying is rapidly turning into a know-nothing, profit-obsessed occupation. To get a job as a supermarket buyer, no substantive knowledge of the product category is required, and it is questionable if it is even seen as a benefit. In the words of one recruitment consultant, 'all [the buyer] needs to know about is profit margins and doing deals'. Buying is just a job requiring the same set of negotiating skills for each product category. One product is just like any other. By

constantly moving buyers around, supermarkets can ensure that they do not become too reliant on regular suppliers, which might blunt their desire to get the best deal. One supplier told the investigation that led to the 2000 Competition Commission report on UK supermarkets: 'Multiples switch their buyers around every six to 12 months in order that relationships and loyalty to suppliers can be avoided. The new buyer is given carte blanche to de-list suppliers, who are frequently treated with complete contempt.'

One UK supplier told me of a chilling encounter with a new vegetable buyer. This buyer had previously been in charge of paper goods, and had been in the vegetable job for only two weeks when he came to visit the supplier. 'He told us how he had worked in the paper department. When he came into the job, he told us, the chain was paying £13 a thousand for a particular product. By the time he'd been

in there two months it was paying 75p a thousand; he had kicked out all the main suppliers and moved the chain's margin up from 20 per cent to 50 per cent. He told us that he intended to do the

same thing with vegetables.'

Failure to go along with a buyer's requests can be disastrous. In 2002 a story circulated throughout the book trade about a publisher whose key account executive was unceremoniously dismissed from a buyer's office as a result of refusing to give a 65 per cent discount on the publisher's lead spring title. The buyer was reported to have said: 'If you are not willing to negotiate on that title, you may as well pack up now. I don't want to see the rest of your list.'

Another supplier expressed his feelings to the Competition Commission investigation in a particularly heartfelt way: 'On the whole, supermarket buyers and store managers are blackmailers. They are not fair, and always have their own way; hence the reason why our business is no longer trading... Thank you for giving people the chance to express themselves and show supermarkets for what they really are.'

Extracted from *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* by Joanna Blythman published by Fourth Estate, 2004.

With the pressure they are under it is no wonder that one farmer commits suicide every six days.

"One winter, it was so frosty we couldn't get the leeks out the ground. But we knew if we didn't get them to the retailer, it would be a black mark against us and probably affect the growing programme they gave us next season. So we literally went out and chiselled the leeks out of the soil rather than tell them that we had a problem." *Surrey farmer Charles Secrett*

"I went to a supermarket producers' meeting where representatives of the supermarket in question and its abattoir/processors were present. I stood up and talked about my negative experiences with the supermarket and got backing from other farmers. Shortly afterwards I was told by a fieldsman working on behalf of the supermarket and its processors that he was sorry but he could no longer come to look at my cattle. Because I had spoken out publicly, they couldn't take my meat any more." *Devon beef farmer Richard Haddock*

"We had planted 20 acres of beetroot. We had lifted half of it, when suddenly the chain decided to stop selling this beetroot line. Just like that, we got a phone call saying the chain couldn't take any more beetroot. They had given us a programme for 12 months but we had nothing in writing. All because the buyer, a 25-year-old lad, had decided not to stock it. What are you meant to do with 10 acres of beetroot all of a sudden?" *Anonymous beetroot grower*



Keep smiling: he could be the mystery shopper

by JOANNA BLYTHMAN

I had always wondered what it was like to work at a supermarket checkout. So when I stumbled upon an article about a Tesco scheme called Twist – short for Tesco Week In Store Together – I took my chance. This was a scheme for head-office top brass to get a taste of what it was like to work on the supermarket shop floor. It started me thinking that I should carry out my own version of Twist. I knew, because of my Asda Big Welcome experience (see page 30), that supermarkets were always on the lookout for checkout operators. Even so, I was surprised at the speed with which I was hired by Tesco. I dropped off my application form on a Sunday afternoon, and by the following Saturday I was on checkouts being trained. By the following Monday, I had been let loose on an unsuspecting public, albeit with a sign that read ‘Newly trained staff... Your patience is appreciated’. Thank heavens for that protection.

I was thankful, after my Asda Big Welcome, that my Tesco training was short and sweet and infinitely less corny. The principles were the same, though: be nice to customers and impress the mystery shopper. To nudge you in the right direction there was the acronym Echo – Every Customer Help Offered. The mystery shopper had a tick list, and offering help

with packing was on it. But the mystery shopper was a bit dense. You could automatically pack a customer's shopping without asking, but that didn't count as offering help with

packing. Even a ‘would you like a hand with your packing?’ was borderline. You had to utter the prompt word ‘help’ clear as a bell if you were to be sure of getting that tick. ‘Hello’ and ‘goodbye’ were also expected, and ‘do you have a Clubcard?’ was essential script.

My first proper shift lasted for four and a half hours, during which I was entitled to one 15-minute break. When I took my break, by the time I had walked through the store, gone to the toilet, poured a cup of free canteen tea and drunk it, it was time to be back on the job. At first, the concentration required in mastering the checkout made the time whizz by. The shift didn't seem too bad. The next day's shift was six and a quarter hours with two 15-minute breaks. Time began to drag. By now I could chirrup ‘have you got a Clubcard?’ in my sleep.

As the week went on I began to get to know more about the other staff. They were kind, welcoming and supportive – and not because anyone had sent them on a charm course. It was genuine.

Snatched five-minute chats with fellow workers at break times were treats that lit up the day, as was the banter with the more amiable customers. But this wasn't enough to compensate for the tedious monotony of the checkout or the stressful and tiring nature of the work environment. As the week drew on, I became more and more aware of a stabbing ache between the shoulder blades. Helping customers pack is

Life

The necessity to endlessly parrot
‘do you have a Clubcard?’
 sapped any willingness left to engage,
 even superficially, with customers.
 Even if you wanted to **try to be pleasant...**
 it was **impossible** to keep it up

all very well, but doing that and scanning goods at the same time involves twisting and stretching your torso in an unnatural way, often putting downward weight on wrists. I found myself struggling with 12-packs of beer and bumper boxes of pet food. It was easier to pack standing up than sitting down, but doing that only meant swapping a sore back for tired legs. Twist began to take on a whole new meaning. I wasn't in the least surprised to discover that the Health and Safety Executive had found that in a busy four-hour shift a checkout operator might lift the equivalent of one ton in

random locker or airport-style clothing searches. What's more, he was paid an awful lot of money to be professionally charming to people while I was being paid just £4.94 an hour to do so. It would rise to £5.22 after six months and £5.49 after a year, but that wasn't much more than the £5.38 the Low Pay Unit was recommending as a minimum wage. Neither tea breaks nor lunch breaks were paid.

Yes, I knew that there were all sorts of benefits open to staff who stick it out. A Save As You Earn share scheme, a 10 per cent staff discount, a decent pension, career breaks,

on the checkout

weight, nor that back complaints are common in checkout operators, as are reports of aches and pains in the upper limbs.

I began to appreciate why more often than not checkout staff look jaded. There was no daylight or fresh air. I sat under strip lights. The air-conditioning and heating fans clicked on and off all the time, creating a low-level hum of noise, punctuated by a discordant symphony of repeat beeping as the line of operators scanned goods through the checkouts. I constantly felt dehydrated. Frequent changes in temperature as the fans regulated the store temperature left me feeling shivery and uncomfortable.

After several hours at a time any urge to be cheery or pleasant was overtaken by an all-pervasive, mind-numbing blankness. I began to feel spaced out, as though dulled by drugs. Any energy I might feel at the start of a shift soon ebbed away. The necessity to endlessly parrot 'do you have a Clubcard?' sapped any willingness left to engage, even superficially, with customers. Even if you wanted to try to be pleasant, after only so long it was impossible to keep it up.

In quieter moments, I found myself thinking about Tesco's chief executive Sir Terry Leahy. He could have a cup of coffee or a glass of water at his desk any time he liked. He could amble over and take a look out of the window when he felt like it, too. He didn't have to put his hand up to ask to go to the lavatory. It was a sure bet that he wasn't subjected to

parental leave, and more. But by Saturday, at the end of a killer 10-hour shift (eight and a half hours with an hour off for lunch and two 15-minute tea breaks), I was virtually brain dead and physically exhausted, fit only for eating a meal and collapsing in a chair in front of the TV. The thought of spending every Saturday like this was downright depressing. I could fully appreciate why many people wouldn't stick around to realise those benefits, and why Tesco's annual staff turnover rate was running at 29 per cent.

My admiration for the people who do this job day in, day out, while coping with everything else in life, is enormous. Industry surveys show that the vast majority of them are women working part-time with a host of other commitments. Some of them have other part-time jobs too, such as childminding. They can't just slip off home after work and put their feet up. At the checkout they face an omnipresent threat of violence. A checkout operator in my store had recently left because she had been assaulted – totally out of the blue – by a couple of men out of their minds on drugs or drink or both.

So, if you insist on shopping at supermarkets, always, but always, be nice to checkout operators. And if they don't beam back at you, please don't judge them harshly.

Extracted from *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* by Joanna Blythman published by Fourth Estate, 2004.

A world dominated by supermarkets is a world without communities. Is this a world you want?

Ghost-town Britain

by FELICITY LAWRENCE

The law of unintended consequences represents an important challenge to modern democracies. Imagine a new shopping centre opens out of town. Half the town, seduced by free parking, chooses to do just a third of its shopping there. Suddenly, the balance of retail activity is tipped, so that shops in the middle of town see a drop in revenue of 17 per cent. It is no longer viable for them to stay in business. The people who go to the out-of-town supermarket still want to do two thirds of their shopping

in town, and the other half of the local population still want the use of the town centre, but the fall in revenue is enough to kill off the other shops. How should planners tackle such anomalies?

So far, they have failed to get to grips with the issue at all. The concentration of power in British grocery retailing is unprecedented. Between them, Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and the newly merged Safeway/Morrisons group command more than three quarters of the British grocery sector. Tesco has become dominant, almost unstoppable, with the latest figures giving it a share of more

than 27 per cent of the market. (A share of 25 per cent of any market is normally considered enough to trigger a monopolies inquiry.) Ironically, the only way to counter Tesco's dominance would be to allow another powerful chain to take over a rival and form a counter force, as Asda executives are keen to explain.

In fact, most in the industry assume further consolidation in the supermarket sector is inevitable.

'The slide rule is being run over two to three companies even now,' former Office of Fair Trading director-general

Supermarkets say they care for the environment, but really they...

...Increase pollution and congestion by encouraging extra car use...

- A survey of shopping journeys in inner London showed that just 8 per cent of people visiting high-street shops reached them by car, compared to 60 per cent of those shopping at a Sainsbury's superstore.
- In the mid-1980s Britons made an average 1.5 trips by car to supermarkets each week; 10 years later we made 2.4 such trips a week.
- This increased

dependency on cars for our shopping also discriminates against the elderly and those in lower income brackets, who may not have cars.

...Increase the risk of flooding by exacerbating climate change...

- All the planes flying food into the UK, all the lorries driving it up and down the country, and all the shoppers forced into their cars to get to the supermarket mean that the combined yearly emissions

from food transport and food shopping trips in the UK alone is greater than the annual CO₂ output of Paraguay, Ethiopia, Georgia, or Honduras. To make matters worse, Sainsbury's and Tesco now offer AirMiles on their loyalty cards, meaning that the more over-transported food you buy, the more you can fly.

...Add to litter and waste

- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) estimates that

supermarkets generate 200,000 tonnes of compostable material every year. Campaign group Corporate Watch reports: 'Supermarkets have persistently lobbied against returnable packaging as [being] too labour-intensive, [and refuse] to stock it.'

- Apart from compostable material, supermarkets contribute up to eight million tonnes of other waste to landfill every year, including an average of 323 plastic bags per household.



Supermarkets say they love community, but really they...

...Destroy towns and villages



professor John Bridgeman said at a seminar earlier this summer. Speaking at the same meeting, the warning from Bill Grimsey, the chief executive of Iceland's parent company the Big Food Group, was even more stark. We are at a point, Grimsey said, where what we do now about supermarkets will set the terms of our social legacy for the future. We can either act to curb monopolisation, or allow choice to be dramatically reduced. If we fail to act, the affluent could find themselves with a choice of 'Tesco, Tesco or Tesco', while the disadvantaged would simply be denied affordable access to good fresh food.

If Grimsey's words sound like those of a rival on the run, the fates of Bicester, Brackley and Buckingham are worth considering. Tesco is the only superstore operator in each of these three neighbouring towns. Tesco's recent acquisition of the One Stop chain of convenience stores (incredibly, unopposed by the competition authorities) has given it four stores and a dominant position in Bicester town centre as well, plus stores in the centre of Brackley and Buckingham. Residents

The Countryside Agency claims that seven out of 10 English villages are now without a shop of any kind. The agency's director Margaret Clark said: 'Villages which lose their shops quickly lose their identities. The residents are forced to move into towns. The danger is that villages will become the preserve of the well-off, and that threatens the very fabric of rural life.'

For example...

SHERINGHAM

- Describing plans for a new Tesco in the town, Paul Brown wrote in *The Guardian*: 'First, the town centre map was redrawn to accommodate the site. Now the community centre, the fire station, a block of flats for social housing and a row of flint cottages are to be demolished to allow Tesco to build a superstore to serve 38,000 people in the region... Only 7,000 live in Sheringham.'

- Ronald Wright, of Blyth and Wright ironmonger's (founded in 1898), said: 'This is a wonderful town, but Tesco will suck the life out of the greengrocer's, butcher's [and] off-licence... Then it is only a matter of time for us, too.'

The personal service is why holidaymakers come to Sheringham, but with a giant Tesco it will be like everywhere else.'

STALHAM

What has been forecast for Sheringham has already taken place in the nearby town of

Chinese restaurant and the butcher's has had to go into wholesaling to survive.'

EAST DULWICH

In 1992 Sainsbury's opened a branch at Dog Kennel Hill in East Dulwich. The next three years saw the closure of a wealth of local shops, including five greengrocers' and two butchers'.

Local resident William C Dowling said: 'We came to Dulwich over 30 years ago and were surrounded by shops, none more than five or 10 minutes away,

which was good as my wife had just come out of hospital. Two weeks ago the last shop went bankrupt; all the others – the butcher, the greengrocer, the fish shop – had already closed. Leafy Dulwich is devastated. Why? Sainsbury's Dog Kennel Hill superstore is open on weekdays and [itals] Sundays. Lord Sainsbury has been made a member of the Order of the Garter; no doubt for his marketing techniques in moving trade from our high streets to his green-field sites.'

seven out of ten English villages are now without a shop of any kind

Stalham.

- Candy Sheriden, the chair of the town's business association, said: 'The site where Tesco built was our car park, marketplace and weekly auction. There were 70 good businesses in the town when they opened, but it has become a ghost town. All that made Stalham different is slipping away.'

- Local shopkeeper Nigel Dowdney said: 'Tesco has hit the town really badly. My turnover went down 50 per cent the day it opened. The local Co-Op is now a funeral parlour, the baker's has become a



of the towns have to travel significant distances by car to reach alternative superstores. This helps explain an apparent paradox in new research by Lancaster University's Management School. Although in theory we have more choice, most of us in fact feel more constrained than ever as we struggle to fit buying our food around our busy household routines.

Today's big supermarkets typically offer 40,000 to 50,000 different products. In a brutal battle for position, they are also cutting prices. So why aren't we happier with them? The reality is that most people's choice boils down to driving to the nearest supermarket. We have no way of comparing prices in different stores over the range of what we buy, or of really knowing which company is cheapest for us. Since most things are unmarked except on the shelf, we usually can't remember what they cost. Nor do we have time to master the layout of anywhere unfamiliar. Any idea of being able to choose between shops is abandoned the minute we have parked the car. So, in reality, unprecedented choice comes down to agonising between 20 different boxes of over-processed cereal or six different thicknesses of loo paper.

More troubling is the picture the Lancaster research paints of the impact of supermarket power on vulnerable households. These include families on low incomes, but also single-parent households and the elderly across all income groups. As competitive pressure closes down local shops, those who depend on buses or lifts struggle to reach the superstores. They feel excluded from many bargains, eligibility for which depends on being able to buy goods in bulk. They resent the fact that those who are richer or more mobile get the better deals. For the elderly the sheer

Supermarkets say they support

...Operate local monopolies in order to destroy local shops...

- To ensure consumer choice and promote healthy competition, anti-monopolies regulations stipulate that no company can control more than 25 per cent of any given sector. In 2002 Tesco, which already had a 24 per cent share of the UK supermarket sector at the time, applied to take over the T&S chain of convenience stores. Tesco successfully persuaded the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) that convenience stores and supermarkets were different sectors. Tesco now controls 27 per cent of the market.

In some places the supermarket giants have massive market shares: more than 50 per cent for Tesco in Uxbridge, Milton Keynes, Cambridge, Twickenham and Salisbury; the same figure applies for Sainsbury's in southwest London and for Safeway in Dumfries.

...Sell goods below cost to destroy small businesses...

- UK dairy farmer Gareth Watkins said: 'My buyers are being squeezed by the supermarkets, which sell liquid milk at below acceptable levels to attract customers. I am being asked to run a business at a loss. I have done all I can to become efficient and meet high welfare and farming standards. But unless I get a fair deal from the supermarkets I will not be able to continue.'

...Put fishmongers and fishermen out of business...

- Between 1990 and 2000 supermarkets' share of the fresh-fish market increased from 21.4 to more than 66 per cent, while fishmongers' market share fell to 20.3 per cent.
- In 2002 there was also a 16 per cent decrease on the previous year in the number of people employed at catching fish at sea, and 20 per cent fewer anglers were catching fish in rivers and creeks. While these people traditionally had relationships with the fishmongers they served direct, the supermarkets want large, regular supplies of fish, which demands either vast international trawling operations or aquaculture, both of which are seriously damaging to the marine environment. According to Defra, the average fish farm employs just two people.

...Put community pharmacies out of business...

- The number of family-owned pharmacies has already declined from 78 per cent of the sector in 1988 to 51 per cent today.
- In January 2003 the OFT recommended lifting restrictions on the community pharmacy market, thus paving the way for supermarkets to open up more pharmacy services.
- Former OFT head Lord

Borrie said: 'The ambitions of supermarkets to dispense prescriptions may have a seriously adverse effect on local pharmacies, to the detriment of the sick, in general, and the elderly sick, in particular, who find it hard to get to out-of-town supermarkets.'

...Don't source locally...

- In a study conducted by the New Economics Foundation, Tesco reported that local purchases represented no more than about one per cent of turnover. Asda, despite having a policy on local sourcing, was only aiming for two per cent. Small producers don't suit supermarkets, which want companies that can supply an identical product in volumes large enough to be distributed to all their stores across the country – 364 days a year.

...Put local farmers out of business

- Fifty years ago, farmers in Europe and North America received between 45-60 per cent of the money consumers spent on food. Today, that proportion has dropped to just 7 per cent in the UK and 3.5 per cent in the USA, but remains at 18 per cent in France. Campaigning group FARM say supermarkets' practice of underpaying farmers and bypassing smaller producers has contributed to the disappearance of over 4,500 farms a year, or 12 a day.



local business, but really they...

...Put local butchers out of business

- In 1985, there were over 23,000 butchers in the UK. By 2000 that figure had dropped to just 9,721 – a loss of nearly 60 per cent of independent outlets. Brian Blackwell, whose father and grandfather were both butchers, closed the door of JA Blackwell's in King's Hedges for the last time recently. He said: 'Trends in shopping have changed over the years and people tend to pick up meat in polystyrene trays in supermarkets.'

...Destroy our local cattle breeds

- 'Until the supermarkets came along, there was a very constant interface between butchers and farmers. They knew each other well and understood what each other wanted. It worked well. The supermarkets came on the scene in the mid 1960s looking for bulk. At first they bought from the market, then couldn't get enough from them and found they could get more supply cheaper from slaughterhouses...it was important to them to get a uniform product. Animals started to be judged by their shape and fat cover. Farmers reacted by saying if those are the standards now operating, let's get Continental breeds because they grow fast and lean quicker. So the quality of meat plummeted. The

supermarkets broke up two millennia of cattle breeding because of their need to buy huge quantities of meat at the lowest price and farmers have been forced to dance to their tune. It's a national disaster.' Butcher David Lidgate in *Shopped*.

...Put independent local garages out of business...

- In a 1998 report called *Checking Out The Supermarkets*, Lib Dem MP Colin Breed said: 'In just eight years supermarkets have achieved a leap from 8 per cent to 22 per cent of the motor fuel market, largely through discounting prices below cost. This threatens the survival of independent garages, often in rural areas already drained of

'our community will be poorer for Tesco moving in'

services. Such garages usually have repair workshops, providing employment and serving local needs. More than 2,000 garages are estimated to have closed in the past year, with the loss of 10,000 jobs.'

...Put local newspapers out of business...

- In 1997 the London Economics Report said that the supermarkets' move into newspaper and magazine sales threatened 10,000 newsagents with closure over

the following three years. Three years later one newsagent was closing every day.

...Put local cornershops out of business...

- Increasingly, the supermarkets are moving in on convenience stores, buying up chains such as T&S and opening Tesco Metro and Sainsbury's Local stores. In December 2002, Masood Butt of the Institute of Asian Businesses warned 'Asian businesses are not going to have the muscle to fight this. But they are the biggest employers in Asian communities.'

...Put local post office out of business...

- When Tesco took over local convenience stores in Witney in Oxfordshire they said they would close the post offices which had been operating in the shops, leaving 10,000 people without a local post office. The community isn't happy...

'I am a pensioner and disabled and will be in difficulty if Cogges Post office closes. Altogether the closure of Cogges Post office will make difficulties for many people on the estates, especially for the elderly. I cannot agree with Tesco's claim that they are coming to serve the local community. It seems to me that the community is being sacrificed to the god of money.' *Margaret Wardell, pensioner*

'The closure of the post offices in Witney by Tesco will cause great problems for the people I help as a community nurse. Our community will be poorer for Tesco moving in.' *Richard Dossett-Davies, community nurse*

...Put local bakers out of business...

- Supermarkets now control 85 per cent of the UK bread market. 'The supermarkets have killed off a lot of the bakers in this country. They've turned bread into a commodity. They sell a cheap loaf at 7p; so cheap that pig farmers buy it because it's cheaper than cattle cake. I can't even buy enough flour to bake a loaf for that.' *Eric Milne, of long-established family baker Fisher & Donaldson*

...Put every other shop on the high street out of business...

- In 2003 Tesco chief executive Terry Leahy gave a taste of things to come in the UK, commenting: 'We only have 5 per cent of the non-food market. There's a lot left to go for.'

Because supermarkets use single companies to supply all their stores across the UK with everything from food to printing or cleaning contractors, local businesses lose further potential trade. Studies have shown that local communities could be losing inward investment of up to £100 billion every year because of supermarket centralisation. That translates to £2,000 for every person in the country.



physical distances involved in walking through huge hyperstores is too daunting. Those who feel excluded in these ways are not a fixed group: we move in and out of exclusion as our personal circumstances change. Cheaper food, which seems an indisputable good, is not so great if the poor end up paying more because of it.

There is now a coalition of interests that want to see curbs on supermarket power, from the National Federation of Women's Institutes, through farmers, independent shops and environmental groups to trade unionists. Their concern goes beyond social exclusion. Concentration has allowed the big four to abuse their buying power and squeeze suppliers and competitors. Price cuts are not funded by cuts in profits: Tesco's turnover increased by 60 per cent in the five years to February 2003, and the company's group

operating profit by 75 per cent; its margins increased over the period. Those who bear the brunt of the cuts are at the bottom of the chain. British farmers have been driven out of business or pushed to the margins of survival as supermarkets source whatever is cheapest and fly it in from around the

If we are to prevent irreversible damage to our towns and communities we need a change of direction now

globe. But this is not what most shoppers would choose; when asked, they say they prefer British farm food.

The supermarket system of centralised distribution that has turned our motorways into warehouses has also spawned a new industry: packing. As

suppliers and farmers have been squeezed, the pain has often been passed down the line to migrant workers paid less than the minimum wage and treated like slaves. No one knows how many migrant workers are employed in the UK food sector today. A conservative estimate puts the number at more than 100,000. Most migrants move

in and out of the food, agriculture and construction sectors; one well-placed source, with no anti-migration axe to grind, puts the total across the three sectors at nearer 2 million. Given that many of these people work double shifts, seven days a week, small wonder our productivity figures look good. This is one reason why the government has been so limp

about supermarket power. Increased productivity and deflation in food prices help hold down inflation, while corporate profits soar. The incentive to interfere is not great.

The competition authorities – now technically independent of government –

Supermarkets say they save you money, but in reality they...

...Suck money out of your community...

- When your money goes into the till at the supermarket, most of it does not go back into the local area but into the bank balances of shareholders with no interest in your neighbourhood.
- Local, independent shops, in contrast, bring enormous social and economic benefits to communities. Money spent in the high street circulates around the local economy and generates more jobs.

One study found that 81 shops in Saxmundham, Suffolk, employed 548 people and sourced food from 295 local producers.

- Farmers' markets also benefit other shops. The Winchester branches of WH Smith and Debenhams reported that their takings rose by 30 per cent when the local farmer's market was on.
- A study by the think-tank the New Economics Foundation found that £10 spent on a local organic box scheme in Cornwall generated £25 for the local economy. It also suggested that if every person, tourist

and business switched only 1 per cent of their current spending to local goods and services, local economies would net, on average, an extra £52m annually.

...Rip you off...

- In 1998 the BBC TV programme *Panorama* revealed that meat prices in a supermarket at Grantham were up to 30 per cent higher than in the Lincolnshire town's butchers. Vegetables at the store were 40 per cent more expensive than on the high street.
- In 1999 *The Guardian*

reported that Huddlestons, a high-street butcher in the Northumbrian market town of Hexham, was charging £1.89 and 99p per pound for lamb chops and steak mince, respectively; at a nearby Safeway store the prices were £2.79 and £2.99 per pound.

- In 2002 Friends of the Earth surveyed 151 supermarkets, 58 greengrocers and 29 street markets. The average price for a kilogram of cox's apples was £1.02 at market stalls, £1.07 at greengrocers, £1.27 at Morrisons and Asda, and £1.44 at Sainsbury's.



A world without communities.

have done little better. They no longer apply a broad public-interest test, but (driven by European competition law) judge what is competitive on the narrowest of definitions: price. When the Competition Commission conducted an inquiry into supermarkets in 2000, it decided that large one-stop grocery stores formed a separate market from convenience shops and should therefore not be seen as being in competition with them. It was, as professor Bridgeman acknowledges, a 'huge flaw' and failed to anticipate the way the big four would take over smaller chains.

The 2000 inquiry did at least call for a statutory code of practice to stop abuse of suppliers. But in 2004 we are still waiting for the Office of Fair Trading to review the watered-down voluntary code it eventually introduced. It has, by common consent, done nothing to help.

If we are to prevent irreversible damage to our towns and communities we need a change of direction now. The definition of the market should be changed so that the big four can no longer take over small chains. A statutory code of practice that stops supermarkets bullying suppliers and abusing their power is needed urgently. Government should also recognise that the public interest in competition matters goes far beyond prices. It must include consideration of environmental and social good. With supermarket executives from the big four – and Tesco in particular – able to whisper directly into the ears of Downing Street (two of Tesco's current directors came straight from Whitehall), shoppers might want to send their own message – by voting with their feet and buying elsewhere.

Felicity Lawrence's book *Not On the Label: what really goes into the food on your plate* [itals] is published by Penguin (£7.99)

Supermarkets say they promote jobs, but in reality they...

...Destroy local jobs...

- When local shops close, other local businesses are affected, too. Accountants, solicitors, window-cleaners, carpenters, decorators and plumbers all lose clients. Local entrepreneurs lose valuable local outlets for their products and services. The unemployed lose informal routes back into work as part-time jobs disappear.
- The Retail Planning Forum, which is part-funded by the supermarkets, studied the changes that had taken place in the areas surrounding 93 new superstores. The forum found that the stores were responsible for a net loss of 25,685 employees: every time a large supermarket opened, in other words, 276 people lost their jobs. It said: 'If the

superstores had not opened, employment would have risen. All of the reduction in employment that occurred in the catchment areas is attributable to superstore openings.'

- In 1998 the New Economics Foundation calculated that every £50,000 spent in small local shops creates one job; in superstores, £250,000 needed to be spent to create any employment.

...Replace local jobs with banal shift work

The major supermarkets employ approximately 750,000 people in the UK, more than two thirds of whom are part-time; the majority are women and many are students and temporary or agency workers.

- Asda's corporate culture has been

described as one in which shop-workers have been: expected to entertain customers by juggling and wiggling in hoola-hoops; 'bullied' into buying £12.99 sweatshirts displaying a cartoon bear named after former Asda chief executive Archie Norman; denied free drinking water in the staff canteen; and refused a Christmas bonus if they have been on maternity leave.

- After a man with a beard was denied a job at Safeway, a company spokesman said: 'The rules do not allow for the unorthodox or unconventional.'



Supermarkets are taking control of our lives...

...And won't stop till they control the whole world

- Three out of every 10 pesos that Mexicans spend on food are spent in Wal-Mart.
- In 2000 only 25 per cent of food sales in

Croatia were made in supermarkets; by 2002 the figure was 51 per cent.

- Tesco's largest depot is not in the UK but in South Korea. It also has stores in Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Czech Republic,

Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Ireland. By 2003 it was the market leader in six of the 11 countries where it has established a presence, and by 2003 18.2 per cent of its sales were made outside the UK.

Is this a world you want?



This special report on supermarkets has been built on two remarkable books: *Shopped* by Joanna Blythman and *Not on the Label* by Felicity Lawrence. We urge you to read them both. Having read them we doubt you'll ever shop in a supermarket again.

Don't keep the truth about supermarkets to yourself – buy copies of both books for friends and family. There's only one thing that allows supermarket bosses to sleep well at night and that's the sound of ringing cash tills.

1 ALTERNATIVES TO SUPERMARKET SHOPPING

A Shop in small, independent local shops

B Support local farmers

- Go to farmers' markets
- Use farm shops
- Sign up for organic box schemes

For all of the above, see our Green Pages Directory, pages 70-84

C Grow your own fruit and vegetables

If you don't have a garden, find out where your nearest allotment society is. Allotment societies allow you to rent or buy a space to grow your own produce. To find an allotment near you call the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners on 01536 266576 or visit their website www.nsalg.demon.co.uk

D Help set up new methods of local distribution

• Collective Buying Co-ops

Banbury Wholefood Coop was created in the late 80's, when 10 households around Banbury, Oxfordshire came together and began to order food in bulk. They hold meetings every six to eight weeks where members order their groceries. They purchase goods from a wholesaler with ethical policies that influence which product lines they stock. Because they buy in bulk, the Co-op generally benefits from lower prices.

• Community Supported Agriculture

Tumblers Patch Pig Co-op is a small scheme where members rear pigs for their own consumption. 12 people committed £1,000 each, rearing nine organic pigs on a 0.25ha plot. This worked out to £1.58 per kilogram of meat. Members commit to a feeding rota, which takes about half an hour a day and members must pay if they miss their turn. Tim Baines, the organiser, said, 'Members really felt that they were taking responsibility for their food production, especially those who accompanied the pigs on their final journey to the abattoir'. See www.cuco.org.uk for more on community supported agriculture schemes or call 0117 914 2425.

2 SIGN UP TO ANTI-SUPERMARKET CAMPAIGNS

Not shopping at supermarkets and sourcing as much of your food and goods locally is already a huge step in undermining supermarket dominance, and ensuring the survival and growth of your local community. If you've got more energy and want to take the fight to them, then here is a list of campaigns against supermarkets:

Fight Supermarket Power

Press for change and fight the supermarket bullies by contacting your local MP to strengthen the supermarket Code of Practice, and make sure it's enforced. Go to www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/real_food/press_for_change or call Freephone 0808 800 1111.

Campaign for healthier food

Good food should be tasty, nutritious and safe to eat – so why is our food a major cause of preventable diseases such as obesity, cancer and strokes? Go to the Food Commission's campaign for safer, healthier food. See www.foodcomm.org.uk or call 020 7837 2250.

Breaking the Armlock

A new alliance of 14 farming, environmental and consumer organisations calling for stricter controls over the major supermarket trading practices. Go to www.breakingthearmlock.com

Fair Prices for Farmers

FARM – the independent voice of farmers – regularly takes on the power of supermarkets on behalf of farmers and the general public. Get involved in their Milk Campaign, which highlights what is being lost as thousands of dairy farmers go out of business. Go to www.farm.org.uk or call 0207 352 7928.

Farmers for Action

Campaigning for a sustainable level of income for farmers and growers. Go to www.farmersforaction.org or call 01291 690224.

Sustainable Food Chains Project

Go to www.sustainweb.org to campaign against the social and environmental problems involved with the long distance transport of food.

Organic Campaign

Put pressure on the government and supermarkets to increase the amount of home-produced organic food for the UK market. Go to www.sustainweb.org or call 020 7837 1228.

3 START YOUR OWN LOCAL CAMPAIGN

Is a supermarket planning to open in your area? Several groups across the country are fighting similar schemes in their areas. Corporate Watch provides an excellent resource pack detailing how to start your own campaign, also giving contact details for other campaigns and stories of what they have done. Download it at www.corporatewatch.org.uk/pages/check_out_chuck_out/intro.htm or call 01865 791 391.

SPECIAL OFFER

The Ecologist readers can order *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets* by Joanna Blythman at the special price of £9.99 (rrp £12.99)

by calling 0870 787 1724 and quoting ref: 841G. Postage and packing is free on all UK orders. Please allow 21 days for delivery. Offer expires 31 December 2004.

green pages



HOW TO EAT WELL WHERE YOU LIVE

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p68-84

GREEN CUISINE

and hundreds of other courses to inspire you

p94

AND FINALLY....

Green funerals for a happy ending

p93

It's not all bad news. Our new 32-page Green Directory offers hundreds of alternatives to shopping in supermarkets as well as numerous independent suppliers of everything from organic baby products, to green funerals and courses. And if you have any comments, suggestions or businesses we've missed, we'd love to hear from you at greenpages@theecologist.org

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Freedom Organic Beer

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www.freedombrewery.com

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020 8996 2085
www.fullers.co.uk

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www.junipergreen.org

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Organics R Us

www.organicsrus.co.uk

Pennard Organic Wines & Cider

01749 860 393
www.pennardorganicwines.co.uk

Sedlescombe Organic Vineyard

0800 980 2884
www.englishorganicwine.co.uk

St. Peter's Brewery

01986 782322
www.stpetersbrewery.co.uk

UK5 Organic Vodka

www.uk5.org

Vinceremos

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www.vinceremos.co.uk

Vintage Roots

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www.vintageroots.co.uk

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01531 660233
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Waterland Organics

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St Ives

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Whittlesey

Market Place
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Wisbech

Market Place
01354 622229

Peterborough

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Ash Farm Organics

Ash Farm
Bintree

World Shop

38-40 Exchange Street
Norwich

ORGANIC FLOUR

Le Theringsett Water Mill

Riverside Road
Holt

ORGANIC MEAT

Harveys Puremeat

63 Grove Rd.
Norwich

Traditional Norfolk Poultry

Garage Farm
Shropham
Norwich

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Arthur's Organic Deliveries

Attleborough
01953 887582

Eostre

Norwich
01603 631007

Paradise Organics

Norwich
01508 494260

Salle Moor Hall Farm

Norwich
01603 879046

FARMER'S MARKETS

Norwich

Sainsbury's, Longwater
01953 681715

Wayland (Watton)

Watton High Street
01953 883915/883394

Aylsham

Market Place
01263 734580

Norwich

The Assembly House, Theatre
Steet
01953 681715

Dereham

Railway Station
01362 693821/07985 700754

Harleston

01379 853226

Wymondham

Market Place
01953 601482

SUFFOLK

ORGANIC MEAT

Red Poll Meats

Cherry Tree House
Woodbridge

FARM SHOP

Longwood Farm

Tuddenham St. Mary
BurySt.Edmunds

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Bushy Ley Farm Shop

Elmsett
Ipswich

Carley & Webb

52 Thoroughfare
Woodbridge

Focus Organic Ltd

76 High Street
Southwold

Hungate Health Store

4 Hungate
Beccles

Longwood Farm

Tuddenham St. Mary
Bury St. Edmunds

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

DJ Produce Ltd.

Newmarket
01638 552709

Hillside Nurseries

Ipswich
01473 652682

Longwood Farm

BurySt.Edmunds
01638 717120

FARMER'S MARKETS Beccles

Beccles Heliport
01502 476240

Needham Market

Alder Carr Farm
01449 720820

Woodbridge

Community Centre
01379 384593

Felixtowe

Trinity Methodist Church Hall
01379 384593

Elveden

Elveden
01824 890223

LONDON

ORGANIC BREAD

Bread Shop, The

65 St John's Wood High Street
NW8

Celtic Bakers, The

42B Waterloo Road
NW2

Grain Shop, The

269a Portabello Rd. W11

Neal's Yard Bakery

6 Neal's Yard
WC2H

Old Post Office Bakery, The

76 Landor Rd
SW9

Sally Clarke

122 Kensington Church St
W8

WHY ARE ANIMALS REARED ON AN ORGANIC FARM HAPPIER?

Organic farms are based on environmentally responsible farming, driven by concern for animal welfare, wildlife conservation and a sustainable rural economy.

Sheepdrome Organic Farm, believes in allowing animals to:

- Express their natural behavior
- Roam freely outside
- Grow at their natural rate
- Be reared in family groups
- Remain naturally healthy without the need for regular antibiotics or hormones

Pigs are reared outdoors with mud baths in summer and warm shelters in winter; beef suckle their natural mothers until they wean themselves; **sheep** naturally lamb at the beginning of the year, so there is no need to use drugs to stimulate them into season, as is so often the case in conventional sheep farming,

Is organic food really better for you?

The answer is yes and organic farming is better for animal welfare and the environment.

ORGANIC MEAT

A. Miller

152 Waldergrave Road
TW11

Lidgate

110 Holland Park Avenue
W11

Thorogoods of Ealing

113 Northfields Ave
W13

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Alara

58-60 Marchmont Street
WC1N

Alternatives Health Store

339 Ballards Lane
N12

Baldwins Health Food Centre

171 Walworth Road
SE17

Brixton Wholefoods

59 Atlantic Road
SW9

Bumblebee

30-33 Brecknock Rd.
N7

Bushwacker

132 King Street
W6

Dandelion

120 Northcott Road
SW11

Farm W5

19 The Green
W5

Fresh & Wild

49 Parkway Camden
NW1

196 Old Street
EC1

305-311 Lavender Hill
SW11

210 Westbourne Grove
W15

69-75 Brewer Street
W1R

38-40 Stoke Newington
Church St
N16

Gaia Wholefoods

123 St. Margaret's Road
Twickenham

Grain Shop, The

269a Portobello Road
W11

Greenwich Organics

68 Royal Hill
SE10

Heartstone

106 Parkway
NW1

Here

Chelsea Farmers' Market
SW3

Just Natural...Organic Solutions

304 Park Road
N8

Luscious Organic

240-242 Kensington High
Street
W8

Mother Earth

5 Albion Parade
N16

Natural Health

339 Ballards Lane
N12

Old Spitalfields Organic Market

66 Brushfield Street
E1

Olive Tree

84 Willesden Lane
NW6

Oliver's Wholefood Store

5 Station Approach
TW9

Organic Grocer

17 Clifton Road
W9

Peppercorns Natural Food Markets

193-195 West End Lane
NW6

Planet Organic

22 Torrington Place
WC1

25 Effie Road
SW6

42 Westbourne Grove
W2

Portobello Wholefoods

266 Portobello Road
W10

Provender

103 Dartmouth Road
SE23

Revital Health Shop

35 High Rd
NW10

Sesame

128 Regents Park Road
NW1

Spitalfields Organics

103a Commercial Street
E1

Temple Health Foods

17 Temple Fortune Parade
NW11

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Abel & Cole

SE2
020 7737 3648

Bumblebee

N7
020 7607 1936

Capricorn Organics

SE6
020 8306 2786

Food Ferry Company, The

SW8
020 7498 0827

Fresh Food Co, The

W12
020 8749 8778

Greenwich Organics

SE10

Here

SW3
020 7351 4321

Just Organic

N4
020 7704 2566

Organic Delivery Company, The

EC2
020 7739 8181

UK5 Organic

E5
07799790279

BURGER SHOP

Real Burger World

252 Lavender Hill
SW11

FARMER'S MARKETS

Islington

Essex Road, N1, (opposite
Islington Green)

0207 7049659

Blackheath

Blackheath Rail Station Car
Park, SE3

0207 7049659

Notting Hill

Car park off Kensington
Place, corner Ken. Church St
W8
0207 7049659

Peckham

Peckham Square, Peckham
High St, SE15
0207 7049659

Swiss Cottage

Car park of the O2 Centre,
Finchley Rd, near Homebase
NW3
0207 7049659

Twickenham

Holly Road car park, Holly
Road, off King St, TW1
0207 7049659

Wimbledon Park

Wimbledon Park First School,
Havana Rd, SW19
0207 7049659

Ealing

Leeland Road, West Ealing
W13
0207 7049659

Pimlico Road

Orange Square, corner
Pimlico Rd & Ebury St SW1
0207 7049659

Stoke Newington, London

The Old Fire Station, Leswin
Road, N16
0207 5027588

Marylebone

Cramer Street car park, just
off Marylebone High St W1
0207 704 9659

Ilford

Ilford High Road, IG1, next to
Boots
0207 704 9659

Chapel

Chapel Market N1
0207 704 9659

Camden Lock

Camden Town
020 7284 2084

Barnes

Essex House, Station Road
020 8878 5132

MIDLANDS

DERBYSHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Lower Hurst Farm

Hartington
Nr. Buxton

Nix Organix

Brailsford
Ashbourne



**EAST ANGLIAN
ORGANIC GROWER
CO-OPERATIVE**

SELLING TO:
SOCIAL GROUPS • INDEPENDENT
RETAILERS • BOX SCHEME
OPERATORS • CATERERS •
RESTAURANTS

ALSO ON OLD SPITALFIELDS
SUNDAY MARKET

EAT GOOD ORGANIC LOCALLY PRODUCED

CALL 01953 789 639

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Natural Choice

24 St John Street
Ashbourne

Organic Stores, The

Brooklyn Farm
Nr Chester

Wild Carrot

5 Bridge Street
Buxton

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Beano's Wholefoods

Matlock Bath
01629 57130

Organic Pumpkin

Derby
01332 370254

Organic Shop, The

New Mills
01663 747550

Organic Stores, The

Brooklyn Farm
01244 881209

FARMER'S MARKETS

Ripley

Market Place
01773 841542

Belper

Belper Market Place
01773 822116

Hartington

Hartington Moor
01629 534302

Bakewell

Agricultural Business Centre,
Agriculture Way
01629 813777

HEREFORDSHIRE

DAIRY/ CHEESE

September Organic Dairy

Unit 5
Weobley

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Field Fayre

18-19 Broad Street
Ross-On-Wye

Green Acres Organic Growers

Green Acres Farm Shop
Hereford

Hay Wholefoods and Delicatessen

41 Lion Street
Hay-On-Wye

Organic Options

15A Broad Street
Leominster

Survival Wholefoods

Unit 1, Prince Of Wales
Business Park, Bridge St.

Wholefoods of Leominster

24 West Street
Leominster

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Abundance Produce

Hereford
01981 540181

Arkstone Mill Produce

Kingstone
01981 251135

Butford Organics

Bodenham
01568 797195

Green Acres Organic Growers

Hereford
01568 797045

FARMER'S MARKETS

Hereford

High Town
01886 821237, 07710 290929

Ross on Wye

Below Market House
01886 821237, 07710 290929

Leominster

Corn Square
01886 821237, 07710 290929

Bromyard

outside leisure centre
01886 821237, 07710 290929

LEICESTERSHIRE

ORGANIC FLOUR

Claybrooke Mill

Frolesworth Lane
Claybrooke Magna

ORGANIC MEAT

Quenby Hall Organic Foods

Quenby Hall
Hungarton

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Currant Affairs

9A Loseby Lane
Leicester

GNC

18 Silver Street
Leicester

Manor Farm

Manor Farm
Loughborough

Naturally Good food Delivery Service, The

The Stable Yard
Main Street Cotesbach
Lutterworth
SEE ADVERTISEMENT PAGE 69

Picks Organic Farm Shop

The Cottage
BarkbyThorpe

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Bambury Organic Farm

Countesthorpe
0116 247 8907

Manor Farm

Loughborough
01509 646413

Naturally Good Food

Lutterworth
01455 556878

Naturally Good food Delivery Service, The

Cotesbach
01455 556878

Picks Organic Farm Shop

BarkbyThorpe
0116 269 3548

Watts, DA

Sapcote
01455 272840

Woodlands Farm

Nr. Boston
01205 722491

FARMER'S MARKETS

Hinckley

The Market Place
01530 261379

Coalville

Market Hall
01530 261379

Castle Donington

St Edward's School
01530 261379

Melton Mowbray

Cattle Market, Scalford Road
01664 562971

Leicester

Market Place
01530 261379

Oadby

The Parade
01530 261379

LINCOLNSHIRE

ORGANIC FLOUR

True Loaf Bakery Limited

Mount Pleasant Windmill
Kirton-in-Lindsey

ORGANIC MEAT

Woodlands

Kirton House
Kirton
Nr. Boston

FOOD COOPERATIVES

Louth Wholefood Co-op

7-9 Eastgate
Louth

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Holbeach Wholefoods

32 High Street
Spalding

Lincolnshire Organics

Holme Hall
Scunthorpe

Silverlane Foods

2 Silvre Lane
Stamford

Spice of Life

4 Burghley Centre
Bourne

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Eden Farms

Spilsby
01790 763582

FARMER'S MARKETS

Brigg

Brigg Market Place
01652 657053

Market Rasen

Market place
01427 628270

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Save The Bacon

5 Castle Ashby Rd.
Yardley Hastings

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Daily Bread Co- Operative Ltd

The Old Laundry
Northampton

Goodness Foods

South March

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Arcadia Organics

Kettering
01536 525298

Goodness Direct

Daventry
0871 871 6611

FARMER'S MARKETS

Brackley

Market Place
07775 938517

Higham Ferrers

Market Square
01933 312075

Daventry

High Street
01327 322317

Wellingborough

Market Place
01933 231739

Towcester

Richmond Road car park (adj.
Safeways)
01327 322317

Northampton

Market Square - near building
Societies
01604 838444

Oundle

The Market Place
01832 272 055

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

ORGANIC FLOUR

Green's Mill

Green' Mill & Science Centre
Sneinton

Farm Shop

Trinity Farm
Cossall

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Out Of This World

Unit 1 Villa Street
Nottingham

Roots Natural Foods

526 Mansfield Rd.
Nottingham

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Farmshop Home Delivery

CarColston,Nr.Bingham
0800 169 7009

Roots Natural Foods

Nottingham
0115 960 9014

Trinity Farm

Cossall
0115 944 2545

FARMER'S MARKETS

Mansfield

Buttercross Market
01623 463733

Wollaton

Wollaton Co-Op Store, Trowell
Road
0115 987 3933

Retford

Exchange Street
07836 244392

SHROPSHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Corvedale Organic Lamb

Corve House
Much Wenlock

Pimhill Organic Farm

Harmer Hill
Shrewsbury

FOOD COOPERATIVES

Honeysuckle Wholefood Co-operative Ltd

53 Church Street
Oswestry

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPSS

Broad Bean

60 Broad Street
Ludlow

Food For Thought

Unit 3
Heath Hill Industrial Estate
Dawley

Harvest Wholefoods

Lydham
Nr Bishop's Castle

Myriad Organic Foods

22 Corve Street
Ludlow

Wild Thyme

1-2 Castlegates
Shrewsbury
Salop

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Boxfresh Organics Direct

Nr.Shrewsbury
01952 770006

Food for Thought

Telford
01952 630145

Organic By Order

CravenArms
01588 660747

FARMER'S MARKETS

Oswestry

The Bailey Head
01691 680222

Wem

Leek Street
01939 232771

Ludlow

Castle Square
01584 890243

STAFFORDSHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Wootton Organic

Farley
Oakamoor

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Real Food Company, The

50 Sandbach Road
South Alsager

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Real Food Company, The

Stoke-On-Trent
01270 873322

FARMER'S MARKETS Lichfield

Market Square
01543 309853

Stafford

Market Square
01785 245935

WARWICKSHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Browning, GNF & GA

Frankton
Rugby

FOOD COOPERATIVES

Gaia

7 Regent Place
Leamington Spa

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Gaia

7 Regent Place
Leamington Spa

Organic Enterprises

Ryton Organic Garden
Coventry

Warwick Health Foods

40A Brook Street
Warwick

Wholefood Shop, The

Church Street
Rugby

Wild & Free

2 Central Buildings
Rugby

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Browning, GNF & GA

Rugby
01926 632246

Gaia

Leamington Spa
01926 338805

Wild & Free

Rugby
01788 570400

FARMER'S MARKETS Warwick

The Market Place
01926 632128

Kenilworth

Talsiman Square
01386 870073

Rugby

Clock Tower
01788 572150

Southam

Market Hill
07971 806346

Coleshill

Church Hill
01872 716551

Stratford Upon Avon

Rother Street Market
01299 250484

Leamington Spa

Pump Room Gardens
01299 250484

WEST MIDLANDS

ORGANIC MEAT

Finn Butchers

19 Stanton Road
Birmingham

Rossiter, S & A - Traditional Butchers

247 Maryvale Road
Birmingham

FARM SHOP

Hopwood Organic Farm

Bickenhill Lane
Solihull

Organic Roots

Crabtree Farm
Birmingham

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Down to Earth

96a Earlsdon Street
Coventry

Sage Wholefoods

148 Alcester Road
Birmingham

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Down to Earth

Coventry
024 7667 7500

Hopwood Organic Farm

Solihull
0121 711 7787

Organic Roots

Birmingham
01564 822294

FARMER'S MARKETS

Birmingham

New Street
0121 303 0300

Moseley

Moseley Green, centre of
Moseley
0121 449 3156

WORCESTERSHIRE

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Beewell

4 Royal Arcade
Persnore

Bennett's Foods Ltd.

Manor Farm
Lower Wick

Greenlink Organic Foods

11 Graham Road
Great Malvern

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Oxton Organics

Persnore
01386 860477

FARMER'S MARKETS

Kidderminster

High Street
01905 795937

Worcester

Royal Worcester, Severn
Street
01905 795937

Persnore

Broad Street
01905 795937

Droitwich

Victoria Square
Droitwich
01905 795937

Bewdley

Opposite Dog Lane car park
01905 795937

Malvern

Council House Car Park,
Avenue Road
01905 795937

Welland

Welland Village Hall
01905 795937

Bromsgrove

High Street
01905 795937

FOUR REASONS TO BUY FAIR TRADE COFFEE

The Farmer: For many small coffee farmers the cost of production is greater than the value of their crop on the international market. Fair Trade guarantees farmers a minimum of \$1.26 per pound in a volatile market where most farmers earn less than 50 cents.

The Environment: As traditional farmers don't have the capital to clear large areas of the forest, much of their coffee is shade-grown in small plots of mixed crop and is organically produced. These plots

can have up to 97% more species diversity than monocrop plantations.

The Community: Due to poverty and lack of facilities many locals are forced to the cities. Fair Trade coffee ensures that people have the funds to invest in their own communities.

The Quality: Because it is grown organically in harmony with the forest, Fair Trade coffee has the best aroma. Good, both for your taste buds and your conscience.

Broadway

Village Centre
01905 795937

Webbs

Webbs Garden Centre
01905 795937

Evesham

Market Square
01905 795937

NORTH EAST

DURHAM

ORGANIC MEAT

Piercebridge Farm

Piercebridge
Darlington

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Acorn Dairy

Darlington
01325 466999

NORTHUMBERLAND

HOME DELIVERY - MEAT

Northumbrian Quality Meats

Monkridge Hill Farm
01434 270184

Farm Shop

Rock Midstead Organic Farm
Rock Midstead
Alnwick

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Grain Shop, The

30 Bridge St.
Berwick upon Tweed

Out Of This World

Gosforth Shopping Centre
Newcastle Upon Tyne

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Cropped Up

Corbridge
07947 856641

Grain Shop, The

Berwick upon Tweed
01289 305566

North East Organic Growers

Bomarsund, Bedlington
01670 821070

FARMER'S MARKETS

Hexham

Market Place
0796 3426932

Morpeth

Town Hall
01670 535148

Ponteland

Memorial Hall, Darras Road
01670 535148

Amble

Amble Town Square
01665 712929

Berwick upon Tweed

Berwick upon Tweed
0191 3719167

Alnwick

Town Square
01670 825895

Amble

Amble Town Square
01665 712929

TYNE AND WEAR

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Out of This World

106 High St.
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne

Yorkshire

FARMER'S MARKETS

Bingley

Chapel Lane Market
01535 670950

York City Centre

Parliament Street, York City
Centre
01904 551355

Doncaster

Goose Hill, Doncaster Market
01302 886479, 07986 881389

Driffield

The Showground,
Kelleythorpe
01377 257494

Harrogate

Market Place/ Cambridge St
01423 556027

Knaresborough

Market Place
01423 556027

Ripon

Market Square
01423 556027

Holmfirth

Holmfirth Market Hall,
Huddersfield Road and
Hollowgate
01484 223195

Northallerton

Applegarth car park
01748 884414

Richmond

Market Square
01748 884414

Thirsk

Town Square
01748 884414

Bedale

Town Square
01748 884414

Leyburn

Town Square
01748 884414

Pinchinthorpe

Pinchinthorpe Hall,
Guisborough
01287 633377

Whirlow, Sheffield

Whirlow Hall farm Trust, just
off A625 Ecclesall Road, 4 m
from city centre
0114 235 2678

York (Murton)

York Auction Centre, on A166
junction with A64 bypass
01904 489731/07801 685662

Stokesley

The Square
01748 884414

Selby
01757 292168
Tadcaster
01757 292168

EAST YORKSHIRE

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Arthur Street Trading Co
Hull
01482 576374

Barmston Organics
Driffield
01262 468128

Green Growers
Nafferton, Driffield
01377 255362

Slater Organics
Hull
01964 527519

NORTH YORKSHIRE

FARM SHOP

Growing with Grace
Clapham Nurseries
Clapham
Nr. Lancaster

Hazebrow Organic Farm
Hazebrow Farm, Low Row
Richmond

Organic Farm Shop, The
Standfield Hall Farm
Westgate Carr Rd.

Organic Pantry, The
St. Helens Farm
Tadcaster

Pasture Cottage Organics
Bog House Farm
Mickleby
Nr. Whitby

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Alligator
104 Fishergate
York

Camphill Village Trust
Stokesley Road
Middlesbrough

First Season
1 St. Ann's Lane
Whitby

Greenhouse, The
5 Station Parade
Harrogate

In A Nutshell
31 Chesterfield Road
Sheffield

Sunflours
Hutts Mill
Ripon

Wensleydale Dairy Products
Gayle Lane
Hawes

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Bluebell Organics
Richmond
07759 832234

Farm-A-Round
Richmond
020 7627 8066

First Season
Whitby
01947 601608

Goosemoorganics
Cowthorpe
01423 358887

Greenhouse, The
Harrogate
01423 502580

Growing with Grace
Clapham
01524 251723

Hazebrow Organic Farm
Richmond
01748 886224

Leafcycles
Northampton
01604 628956

Low Leases Organic Farm
Northallerton
01609 748177

Organic Farm Shop, The
Westgate Carr Rd.
01751 472249

Organic Pantry, The
Tadcaster
01937 531693

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

FOOD COOPERATIVES

Beanies
205-207 Crooks Valley Road
Sheffield

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

5 A Day
5 Listerdale Shopping Centre
Ro Therham

Down To Earth
406 Sharrowvale Road
Sheffield

Natural Choice
72 Westbourne Road
Huddersfield

New Roots
347 Glossop Road
Sheffield

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Beanies
Sheffield
0114 268 1662

Down To Earth
406 Sharrowvale Road
0114 2685220

WEST YORKSHIRE

FOOD COOPERATIVES

Beano's Wholefoods
36 New Briggate
Leeds

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Beanstalk Organix
Unit 9
Townhead Trading Centre

Helen Kemp
79 Victoria Road
Shipley

Org
79 Great George St.
Leeds

Organic House
2 Market Street
Hebden Bridge

Out Of This World
20 Newmarket Street
Leeds

Swillington Organic Farm
Garden Cottage
Coach Road

NORTH WEST

CESHIRE

DAIRY/ CHEESE

Cheese Shop, The
116 Northgate Street
Chester

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Abbey Leys Farm
Peacock Lane
Nr Knutsford

Demeter
12 Welles Street
Sandbach

O Zone, The
8 Framingham Road
Sale

Organic Stores, The
Brooklyn Farm
Chester

Organicfair
43 St. James Street
Chester

Rainforest
51 Watergate Row
Chester

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Cheshire Organics
Lymm
01925 758575

Nor Thern Harvest
Warrington
0845 602 3309

O Zone, The
Sale
0161 291 8862

Oakcroft Organic Gardens
Malpas
01948 860213

Organicfair
Chester
01244 400158

FARMER'S MARKETS

Congleton
The Bridestones Centre (next to Safeway)
0151 2611200/0788 5757233

Vale Royal, Kelsall
Eddisbury Fruit farm
01829 759157

Ellesmere Port
Adjoining Market Hall
0151 3566894

CUMBRIA

ORGANIC BREAD

Village Bakery
Melmerby, The
Melmerby
Penrith

ORGANIC FLOUR

Watermill, The
Little Salkeld
Penrith

ORGANIC MEAT

Hallsford
Hethersgill
Carlisle

Whitewholme Farm
Roweltown
Carlisle

ORGANIC/ SUSTAINABLE FISH

Hawkshead Trout Farm
Ridding Wood
Hawkshead, Ambleside

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Alston Wholefoods Ltd.
Front Street
Alston

Castletown farm Shop
Floriston
Carlisle

Howbarrow Organic Farm
Cartmel
Grange-over-sands

Kan Foods
9 New Shambles
Kendal

Sundance Wholefoods
33 Main Street
Keswick

FARMER'S MARKETS

Penrith
Market Square, Town Centre
01768 212147

Brough
Brough Memorial Hall
01768 342135

Orton
Orton Village, Market Hall (2m
from jct 38 off M6)
01539 624899

Pooley Bridge
Village centre, behind Sun
Hotel
01539 624899

Appleby
Boroughgate, Town Centre
01768 212147

Harrison & Hetherington
Borderway Mar
01228 590490

Brampton
Next to the Moot Hall, Town
Centre
01539 732736

Carlisle
City Centre
01539 732736

Ulverston
Outside the Market Hall
01539 732736

Kendal
Market Place
01539 732736

GREATER MANCHESTER

FOOD COOPERATIVES

On the 8th Day Co-Op
111 Oxford Rd
Manchester

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Chorlton Wholefoods
64 Beech Road
Chorlton-cum-Hardy
Manchester

On the 8th Day Co-Op
111 Oxford Road
Manchester

Health and Vegetarian Store
33 Old Church Street
NewtonHeath

Mossley Organic And Fine Foods
11-13 Arundel Street
Mossley

FARMER'S MARKETS

Manchester
Manchester
0161 234 7356

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Chorlton Wholefoods
Manchester
0161 881 6399

Limited Resources
Stockport
0161 477 2040

Mossley Organic And Fine Foods
Mossley
01457 837743

LANCASHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Roy Porter
9 Bridge Road
Cli Theroe

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Single Step Co-op
78a Penny Street
Lancaster

Taste Connection
76 Bridge Street, Bury

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Gielty, A&D
Aughton Green, Ormskirk
01695 421712

Growing with Nature
Nr.Preston
01253 790046

FARMER'S MARKETS

Colne Farmers Market
(Car park outside & in Market
Hall) Market Street
01282 661240

Ribblesdale (Clitheroe)
Clitheroe Auction Mart
01200 423325

Scarlsbrick
Village hall, Smithy Lane
01704 880623

MERSEYSIDE

ORGANIC MEAT

Forster Organic Meat
Shoots Delph Farm
Moss Bank
St Helens

FOOD COOPERATIVES

Windmill Wholefood Co-op
337 Smithdown Road
Liverpool

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Church Farm Organics
Thurstaston, Wirral
0151 648 7838

Windmill Wholefood Co-op
Liverpool
0151 734 1919

SOUTH & SOUTH EAST

BEDFORDSHIRE

FARMER'S MARKETS

Amphill
Bedford Street car park
01525 404355

Leighton Buzzard
High Street
01525 382424

Bedford
Harpur Square
01234 221672

BERKSHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Sheepdrove Organic Farm
Warren Farm
Lambourn

Whitings
20 Coldicutt Street
Caversham

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Garlands Organic
6 Reading Road
Pangbourne

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Ellis Organics
Reading
0118 972 2826

Sheepdrove Organic Farm
Lambourne
01488 67 47 47

FARMER'S MARKETS

Maidenhead
Grove Road Car Park
01628 670272

Newbury
Market Place
0870 2414762

Ascot
Car park 3, opposite
racecourse
0870 2414762

Wokingham
Market Place (integrated into
the daily market)
0118 9783185/07973 858767

Reading
The Cattle Market, Great
Knollys Street
0870 2414762/07904 521434

Eton
Eton Court, off the High Street
0780 1166234/ 01865 391136

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

FOOD COOPERATIVES

Sustainable Lifestyle Cooperative
The Office
Dinton

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Fuller's Organic Farm Shop
Manor Farm
Milton Keynes

Healthright
27 High Street
Chesham

Only Natural
41 Chalfont St. Peters Court

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Fieldfare Organic and Natural Ltd
Wendover
0845 601 3240

Organic Trail
Milton Keynes
01908 568952

FARMER'S MARKETS

Beaconsfield

Windsor End, Old Town
0870 2414762

Princes Risborough

High Street
0870 2414762

Olney

Market Place
01234 711679

ESSEX

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Ashlyns Organic Farm

High Laver Hall
Ongar

Buntings

89 High Street
Maldon

Organic Choice

60 High St.
Halstead

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Ashlyns Organic Farm

North Weald
01992 525146

Fair organics

Ongar
01277 890188/9

Legg, RG

Brentwood
01277 211883

Organic Choice

Halstead
01787 478471

FARMER'S MARKETS

Colchester

St Mary's Arts Centre
01206 367776

Dedham

Assembly Rooms
01206 367776

Maldon

Swan Hotel, High Street
01359 270925

Witham

The Grove Shopping Centre
01376 519440

Takeley

Silver Jubilee Hall
01279 871532/0790 4032393

Hadleigh

Hadleigh Home Farm,
Benfleet
01702 552963

Barnston

Barnston Village Hall
01279 871532/0790 4032393

WHAT DOES THE SOIL ASSOCIATION CERTIFIED ORGANIC SYMBOL REALLY MEAN?

We only grant our symbol when we are absolutely sure that a product has organic integrity. This bans GM ingredients and their derivatives, irradiation, all colourings (except annatto) and all artificial flavourings. We only permit about 30 of the least innocuous additives (compared to over 500 additives used in non-organic food). Our standards ensure the highest animal welfare as we ban routine antibiotics and encourage good husbandry to help reduce disease. There are no recorded cases of BSE in any animal born or reared organically. As for

the crops, organic farmers cannot use pesticides except as a final resort, and even then, can only use seven (compare this to over 450 unrestricted pesticides in non-organic farming).

SA Cert does not make exceptions for imports – every single ingredient has to meet our same rigorous standards.

Elisabeth Winkler, Soil Association



Barleylands

Barleylands Craft Village &
Farm Centre
01268 290229/532253

Loughton

Centric Parade
0118 945 1799

Harlow

Market Square
0118 945 1799

North Weald

Weald Hall farm, Canes Lane
0118 945 1799

Leigh-on-Sea

Leigh Community Centre, Elm
Road
01702 716288

Ugley

Ugley Village hall
01799 550711

Great Chesterfield

Great Chesterfield Village Hall
01799 550711

HAMPSHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Week Farm/Avon Organics

Wattons Lane
Ringwood

FARM SHOP

Park Farm Organics

Park Farm
Heckfield

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Mill Farm Organic Shop

Mill Farm
Nr. Alton

Scottocks Health & Vegetarian Food

1 Market Place
Ringwood

Sunnyfields Organic

Jacobs Gutter Lane
Southampton

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Harroway Organic Gardens

Whitchurch
01256 895346

Laverstoke Park Produce

Whitchurch
01256 890900

Naturally Health Foods

Andover
01264 332375

Naturally Organic

Clanfield
023 9236 0196

Park Farm Organics

Heckfield
0118 932 6650

Sunnyfields Organics

Southampton
023 8087 1408

FARMER'S MARKETS

Farnborough

Queensmead Precinct
01962 845135

Palmerston Road Precinct

Southsea
01962 845135

Ringwood

Furlong Centre - next to
Waitrose
01962 845135

Alton

Market Square & Ladyplace
car park
01962 845135

Andover

High Street
01962 845135

Basingstoke

Top of town outside Willis
Museum
01962 845135

Fleet

Gurkha Square, off High St
01962 84513

Hythe

High St.
01962 845135

Odiham

High Street
01962 845135

Petersfield

Market Square
01962 845135

Romsey

Broadwater Road car park
01962 845135

Winchester

Middle Brook St & Middle
Brook St car park
01962 845135

New Milton

Station Road (South)
01962 845135

HERTFORDSHIRE

ORGANIC MEAT

Eastwoods Of Berkhamsted

15 Gravel Path
Berkhamsted

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Clare James Health Foods

13A Hempstead Road
King's Langley

Cook's Delight

360-364 High Street
Berkhamsted

Destiny

Batters Green Farm
Radlett

Fairhaven Wholefoods

27 Jubilee Trade Centre
Letchworth

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Everybody Organic Ltd.

Potters Bar
01707 651243

Farm2door

Watford
01923 490526

FARMER'S MARKETS

Dane End

Dane End Memorial Hall
01920 438947

Hatfield

Town Centre (White Lion
Square)
01707 357547

Sandon

Village Hall
01763 287216

St Albans

Town Hall Square, Market Place
01727 819268

ISLE OF WIGHT**ORGANIC/
WHOLEFOOD SHOPS****Godshill Organics**

Yard Parlour Newport Road
Godshill

**BOX SCHEMES/
HOME DELIVERY****Godshill Organics**

Isle Of Wight
01983 840723

FARMER'S MARKETS**Newport**

St Thomas' Square
01983 865720

KENT**ORGANIC MEAT****Burscombe Cliff Farm**

Egerton, Ashford

FARM SHOP**Brockman, AG & Co.**

Perry Court Farm
Garlinge Green

Ivy House Farm

Ivy House
Ash, Nr Canterbury

**ORGANIC/
WHOLEFOOD SHOPS****Canterbury Wholefoods**

1 & 2 Jewry Lane
Canterbury

**Herbs, Gardens and
Health**

27 Northdown Rd.
Broadstairs

**Organic Health Shop,
The**

10 High St.
TunbridgeWells

Wellhouse Organics

Perry Court Farm
Canterbury

**Wingham Country
Market**

Shatterling Wingham

**BOX SCHEMES/
HOME DELIVERY****Brockman, AG & Co.**

Canterbury
01227 732001

Church View Farm

Ightham
01732 886680

**Dabbs Place Organic
Farm**

Gravesend
01474815393

Ivy House Farm

Ash, Nr Canterbury
01304 812437

**Luddlesdown Organic
Farms Ltd.**

Nr.Cobham
01474 813376

**Organic Health Shop,
The**

Tunbridge Wells
01892 538155

**Simply Wild Food
Company**

Horsmonden
08456 586141

**Wingham Country
Market**

Canterbury
01227 720567

FARMER'S MARKETS**Rochester**

Corporation St car park
01634 338143/07867 583023

Rolvenden

Parish Church St Mary The
Virgin & Village Hall opposite
01797 252248

Tunbridge Wells

Civic Way (in front of Town
Hall)
01892 554244

Wye

The Green, Centre of Wye
01233 813303

Grays

High Street
0118 945 1799

Cranbrook

Vestry Hall
01580 713843

Egerton

Millenium Village Hall
01233 756548

Capel-le-Ferne

Village Hall
01303 245399

Canterbury

The Goods Shed, Station
Road West
01227 459153

OXFORDSHIRE**ORGANIC FLOUR****Matthews Ltd, FWP –
The Cotswold Flour
Millers**

Station Road
Chipping Norton

ORGANIC MEAT**Feller, Son & Daughter**

54/55 Covered Market
Oxford

Real Farm Foods Ltd.

Blandys Farmhouse
Wantage

**ORGANIC/
WHOLEFOOD SHOPS****Beanbag Natural Health**

2 Wesley Walk
Witney

Frugal Food

17 West St. Helen Street
Abingdon

One Village

Charlbury
Oxford

Uhuru

48 Cowley Road
Oxford

**BOX SCHEMES/
HOME DELIVERY****Chipping Norton
Organics**

Chipping Norton
01608 642973

North Aston Organics

North Aston
01869 347702

Organico

Reading
0118 951 0518

FARMER'S MARKETS**Deddington Farmers and
Community Market**

Market Place
01869 338282

Witney

The Green
01993 861482

Woodstock

Woodstock Market Place
0870 2414762

Chipping Norton

Market Square
0870 2414762

Abingdon

near the Market Place
0870 2414762

Banbury

Cornhill
0870 2414762

Wolvercote

Wolvercote School (off First
Turn)
01865 310693

SURREY**ORGANIC MEAT****Drydown Farm**

Hound House Rd.
Shere

Organically Speaking

No 2 Hartley Mews High
Street
Wintney

Wintershall Partnership

Wintershall Estate Office
Bramley

Wootton Organic

Ramshorn
Oakamoor

**ORGANIC/
WHOLEFOOD SHOPS****Body & Soul Organic
Food**

1 Parade Court
East Horsley

**Cranleigh Organic Farm
Shop**

Lower Barrihurst Farm
Cranleigh

**BOX SCHEMES/ HOME
DELIVERY****Horti. Halcyon**

Fox Corner, Worplesdon
01483 232095

Organically Speaking

Wintney
01252 845577

Sunshine Organics

2 Knowle Lane
01483 268014

Wintershall Partnership

Bramley
01483 892167

**FARMER'S MARKETS
Guildford**

Guildford High Street
01483 444401

Milford

Secretts Farm, Chapel Lane
01483 523203

Woking

Town Square
01483 743208

Walton on Thames

Ashley Road, High Street
020 8707 2865

New Addington

Central Parade
0208 6474291

Wallington

Old Town Hall & Library
Gardens
0208 6474291

Epsom

Market Place
01372 732562

Reigate

Tunnel Road
01737 276629

Farnham

Farnham
townclerk@farnham.co.uk

SUSSEX**ORGANIC MEAT****Arthur Alderman**

20 Hartfield Road
Forest Row

Saxonbury Wood

10 Knowle Cottage
Frant

FOOD COOPERATIVES**Infinity Foods**

Co-Operative Ltd
25 North Rd
Brighton

**ORGANIC/
WHOLEFOOD SHOPS****Acorn Centre, The**

Todhurst Site
Pulborough

**Aldingbourne Country
Centre**

Blackmill Lane
Norton
Chichester

**Boathouse Organic
Farm Shop**

The Orchard
Ringmer

Cornerweighs

Elm Lodge
Caudle Street
Henfield

Down to Earth

2-3 Goldrings
Midhurst

Franchise Manor Farm

Spring Lane
Burwash

High Weald Dairy

Tremains farm
Horsted Keynes
Haywards Heath

Laines Organic Farm

47 Newbury Lane
Cuckfield

**Landsdown Health
Foods**

44 Cliffe High St.
Lewes

Natural Way

33A Carfax
Horsham

Seasons

10-11 Hartfield Road
Forest Row

**Simply Wild Food
Company**

Scragoak Farm Shop
Robertsbridge

Sunny Health Foods

76 Beaconsfield Road
Brighton

Wealden Wholefoods

Pilgrims
Wadhurst

Whole Food Shop, The

12 The Hornet
Chichester

**BOX SCHEMES/ HOME
DELIVERY****Ashurst Organics**

Plumpton, Nr Lewes
01273 891219

Barcombe Nurseries

Lewes
01273 400011

Down to Earth

Midhurst
01730 815133

Herons Folly Garden

Mayfield
01435 873608

**Landsdown Health
Foods**

Lewes
01273 474681

Real Food Direct

Brighton
01273 621222

Willow Nursery

Barnham
01243 552852

FARMER'S MARKETS**Arundel**

TownSquare, Town Quay,
Jubilee Gdns
01789 865804

Ford, nr. Arundel

Ford Airfield
02392 613601

Horsham

Horsham Carfax
01403 733144

Burgess Hill

Church Walk
02392 471548

East Grinstead

High Street (south side)
02392 471548

Haywards Heath

Haywards Road West Car
Park
02392 471548

Shoreham by Sea

david.steadman@lineone.net

Hailsham

Hailsham Cattle Market Site
01323 833359

Lewes

Cliffe Pedestrian Precinct
01273 470900

Uckfield

Luxford car park
01825 760646

Heathfield

Co-Op car park
01435 862798

Crowborough

Crowborough
01892 664064

East Dean

near Beachy Head
01323 423906

**SOUTH
WEST****AVON****ORGANIC/
WHOLEFOOD SHOPS****Better Food Company,
The**

The Bristol Proving House
Bristol

Earthbound

8 Abbotsford Road
Bristol

Harvest Natural Foods

11 Gloucester Road
Bristol

Southville Deli

262 North Street
Bristol

Wild Oats

9-11 Lower Redland Road
Bristol

**Windmill Hill City Farm
Shop**

Philip Street
Bristol

**BOX SCHEMES/ HOME
DELIVERY****Leigh Court Farm**

Abbots Leigh
01275 375756

FARMER'S MARKETS**Bristol**

Corn Street
0117 9224016

CORNWALL**DAIRY/ CHEESE****Roskilly's of Cornwall
Ice Cream**

Tregellast Barton
St. Keverne

ORGANIC MEAT**Cusgarne Organics**

Cusgarne Wollas
Cusgarne
Nr. Truro

Nuncarrow Organic Farm

Maranzanvose
Truro

Rosuick Organic Farm

Rosuick
Helston

Vivian Olds Ltd

2 Chapel Road
Penzance

FOOD COOPERATIVES**Camel Valley Farm Shop**

Unit 2, St. Kew Services
Bodmin

**ORGANIC/
WHOLEFOOD SHOPS****A & N Health Foods**

62 Fore Street
Saltash

Quality produce from a workers co-operative. Committed to ethical trading, we strive to provide quality

Prepared to stick your neck out for more ethical foods?

Tall order? Get Essential branded products & be sure of what you eat. We establish partnerships across the world - bringing you great food while giving producers a better deal. Fair Trade + socially aware co-operation, looking forward to an equitable future.

Trust Essential and help support our communities.

Essential
WORKERS CO-OPERATIVE
www.essential-trading.coop

For your nearest supplier please phone 0845 458 0201

Quality produce from a workers co-operative. Committed to ethical trading, we strive to provide quality

vegetarian, vegan, organic and fair-trade products for an equitable and ecologically sustainable world

Archie Brown's Healthfoods

Old Brewery Yard
Penzance

Camel Valley Farm Shop

Lower Tredore
Nr. Wadebridge

Carley's Organic Foods

34-36 St. Austell Street
Truro

Cornish Organics

Pencoys
Redruth

Gear Farm Shop

St. Martin
Helston

Widdicombe Fare

4 West Street
nr. Torpoint

**BOX SCHEMES/
HOME DELIVERY**

Keveral Farmers Ltd

St Martins-by-Looe
01503 250135

Nice Organics

Penzance
01736 810033

Tree Of Life Organics

St Agnes
01872 552 661

FARMER'S MARKETS

Callington

Town Hall
01503 264636

Redruth

Market Way Shopping Centre
01209 821408

Hayle

Phillack Village Hall
01209 821408

Liskeard

Keep Fit Hall, Cattle Market
car park
01579 344473

Lostwithiel

Community Centre, Pleyber
Christ Road
01840 250586

Stoke Climsland

The Old School
01579 370493

Saltash

Fore Street
01752 844846

DEVON

ORGANIC BREAD

Seeds Bakery & Health Store

19 High St, Exmouth

ORGANIC MEAT

Fishleigh Estate

Fishleigh House

Heal Farm Meats

Kings Nympton
Umberleigh

Little Comfort Farm

Braunton

Meat Joint, The

Loxhore
Barnstable

Organic Farmer's Market, The

Clyst St George
Exeter

Providence Farm Organic Meats

Providence Farm
Holsworthy

Well Hung Meat

Holbeton
Plymouth

HOME DELIVERY - MEAT

Fountain Violet Farm

Kingswear
01803 752363

Providence Farm Organic Meats

Holsworthy
01409 254421

Farm Shop

Moorlands Farm Shop
Wido Down
Oakhampton

**ORGANIC/
WHOLEFOOD SHOPS**

Ark Wholefoods Shop, The

38 East Street
Ashburton

Dairy, The

Fore Street
Chumleigh

Dartmoor Direct Co-Operative

Mitchelcombe Farm
NewtonAbbot

Great Cummins Farm

Tedburn St. Mary
Exeter

Griffin's Yard

North Rd.
South Molton

In Other Words

64 Mutley Plain
Plymouth

Kilworthy Kapers

11 King Street
Tavistock

Marshford Organic Produce

Crowshill Way
Nr. Bisiford

Middle Campscott Farm

Ilfracombe

Natural Way

28 Hyde Road
Paihnton

Nicholsons Wholefood & Health Shop Ltd.

12 Fore Street
Kingsbridge

Orchard Wholefoods

16 High Street
Budleigh Salterton

Reapers

18 Bampton Street
Tiverton

Richard's

64 Fore St.
Exeter

Sacks

80 High Street
Totnes

West Country Organics

Natson Farm
Exeter

**BOX SCHEMES/
HOME DELIVERY**

Ceridwen Herbs

Pyworthy
01409 254450

Dartmoor Direct Co-Operative

Newton Abbot
01364 631528

Fishleigh Estate

Okehampton
01837 810124

Great Cummins Farm

Exeter
01647 61278

Holsworthy Organics

Beaworthy
01409 221417

Linscombe Farm

Crediton
01363 84291

Lugg Smallholding

Barnstaple
01598 710558

Marshford Organic Produce

Bideford
01271 322855

Riverford Organic Vegetables

Buckfastleigh
0845 600 2311

RodandBens

Exeter
01392 833833

Shilingford Organics

Exeter
01392832729

West Hill Farm

Ilfracombe
01271 815477

Woodland Organics

Newton Abbot
01803 813760

FARMER'S MARKETS

Crediton

Market Square
01363 775928

Tiverton

Pannier Market
01884 243351

Exeter

Princesshay, adjacent to High Street, opposite Boots
01392 665480

Newton Abbot

Newton Abbot Market,
Courtenay St
01626 353567

Plymouth

Sundial, Armada Way, City Centre
01752 306552

South Molton

part of the Pannier Market
01769 572252

Tavistock

Bedford Square
01822 820515

Buckfastleigh

Town Centre
01803 762674

Cullompton

Station Rd Car Park
01404 841672

Holsworthy

The Square
01409 253312

Okehampton

Town Hall, Market Street
01647 231666

Ottery St Mary

Hind Street car park
01404 45576

Kingsbridge

Town square
01803 861267

Totnes

Inside Civic Centre
01803 861267

Ivybridge

Harford Road Car Park
01803 861267

Torquay

Union St
01803 208830

DORSET

DAIRY/ CHEESE

Manor Farm Organic Milk Ltd
Manor Farm
Dorchester

Woodlands Park Dairy
Woodlands
Wimborne

ORGANIC BREAD

Long Crichel Bakery
Long Crichel
Wimborne

ORGANIC MEAT

Becklands Farm
Whitchurch
Bridport

Childhay Manor Organics
Blackdown
Beaminster

Dorset Farms
Littlewindsor
Beaminster

Heritage Prime
Shedbusch Farm
Muddy Ford Lane

Modbury Farm
Burton Bradstock
Bridport

HOME DELIVERY – MEAT

Childhay Manor Organics
Beaminster
01308 868709

Farm Shop
Modbury Farm
Burton Bradstock
Bridport
01308 897193

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Cannings Court Organic Farm
Cannings Court
Pulham

Gold Hill Organic Farm
Child Okeford
Nr. Blandford Forum

Green Valley Farm Shop
Longmeadow Green Valley
Godmanstone

Health Ministry, The
16 High Street
Christchurch

Tamarisk Farm
West Bexington
Dorchester

BOX SCHEMES/ HOME DELIVERY

Bothen Hill Produce
Bridport
01308 424271

Bourne Organic
Bournemouth
01202 778516

Cannings Court Organic Farm
Dorchester
01258 818035

Gold Hill Organic Farm
Nr. Blandford Forum
01258 861413

Longmeadow Organic Vegetables
Dorchester
01300 341779

Sturts Farm Community
WestMoors, Ferndown
01202 870572

FARMER'S MARKETS

Blandford Forum
The Corn Exchange
01305 848107

Wimborne
Corn Market
01305 848107

Bridport
Arts Centre
01305 848107

Dorchester
Poundbury
01305 848107

Gillingham
The Methodist Chapel
01305 848107

Shaftesbury
Town Hall
01305 848107

Sherborne
Cheap Street
01305 848107

Sturminster Newton
Market Place
01305 848107

Wareham
Town Hall
01305 848107

Christchurch
Saxon Square
01305 848107

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

ORGANIC BREAD

Authentic Bread Co., The
Strawberry Hill Farm
Newent

Hobbs House Bakery
39 High Street
Chipping Sodbury

ORGANIC FLOUR

Shipton Mill Ltd.
Long Newnton
Tetbury

ORGANIC MEAT

Allen Hale
New House
Painswick

HOME DELIVERY – MEAT

Adeys Farm Organic Meats
Berkeley
01453 511218

ORGANIC/ WHOLEFOOD SHOPS

Better For Organics
36 Silver Street
Dursley

Daylesford Organic Farmshop
Daylesford
Moreton In Marsh

Green Shop
Cheltenham Road
Bisley

Health-Wise
27 North Walk
Yate

Mother Nature
2 Bedford Street
Stroud

Natural Grocery Store
142 Bath Road
Cheltenham

Organic Farm Shop, The
Abbey Home Farm
Cirencester

Rendezvous
16 Portland Street
Cheltenham

Tauruscentre
Taurus Crafts
Lydney

Better For Organics
Dursley
01453 545090

La Bodega
Lydney
01594 844841

Slipstream Organics
Cheltenham
01242 227273

Thornbury Organic Co-op
Thornbury
01454 415345

FARMER'S MARKETS

Chipping Sodbury
High Street each side of
clock, winter markets inside
Town Hall tower
01454 321010

Stroud
Cornhill Market Place
01453 758060

Thornbury
St Mary Centre
01454 888822

Stow on the Wold
The Square
01453 758060

Gloucester
The Cross & Southgate Street
01453 758060

Forest of Dean
generally in the town centre
01989 564504

Tetbury
Town House
01666 825267

Tewkesbury
Tewkesbury Abbey car park
01684 272068

The Natural Grocery Store

**Specialists in organic and natural foods,
groceries and provisions,
household cleaning materials,
personal-care products**

**Now trading from 2,500 square feet of brand new premises at
150–156 Bath Road, Cheltenham
Open 8am–10pm, seven days a week**

**Telephone 01242-243737 Fax 01242-238872
E mail triple8.trading@virgin.net**

SOMERSET

DAIRY/ CHEESE

Alhamwood Cheeses

Higher Alham Farm
Shepton Mallet

Yeo Valley

Cannington Creamery
Nr Bridgewater

ORGANIC MEAT

Brown Cow Organics

Pilton
Shepton Mallet

Burdge, JC

Says Lane
Langford, Nr. Bristol

Hindon Organic Farm

Exmoor

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Timsbury
Bath

Somerset Organics

Gilcombe Farm
Bruton

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Good Earth, The

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Wells

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Bruton

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Taunton

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Nr. Bath

Organica

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Cheddar

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St John's Car Park
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Wincanton

Memorial Hall, High Street
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Market Place
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The Pound, High St
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from the pulpit

We interrupt our regular programming for a moral advisory...

I'm the Reverend Billy



In the States we are now between the two national political party conventions, each in a sports arena, a big box in the centre of the city, which is then surrounded by the militarised police and deserted streets, as we sit far away with the grinning teeth of the candidates flickering from the big boxes in our homes. Never before has life itself so closely resembled a WAL-MART TWO-DAY SALE.

Now this large mall-box used by the Democrats, the Fleet Center in Boston, was financed by and named in honour of the Fleet Bank of Boston, which was at the centre of a big insider mutual-fund scandal in the US: the penalty settlement with Fleet's fellow well-dressed thieves at Bank of America was \$675m. Children you SINNED! The traders would engineer rapid-fire buys and sells in the seconds between the closing time for the ordinary investor-dupes and the real end of the day for the elite – that is the fetid sinners IN THE KNOW. In those few seconds the Fleet people would buy and sell cities, send armies in another direction, arrange to pulverise mountains, and God knows what.

The Democrats spent the spotlight-time imitating, oh, Tony Blair and George Bush, but at the same moment castigated them as unseemly wretches. They are operating in the unseeable moment between the edge of the Supermall and the complex continent of human beings beyond. There's a seam in there that they open up and suddenly the same old smoky back room is full of these Tonys and Georges and Johns, sweatily working the flippers on the video game called LIFE ON EARTH. They rapid-invest, they laugh at countries, they micro-manage cancers and extinctions, they scare the BBC, they send Rupert Murdoch and Mickey Mouse their monthly bribes, and in general keep the trembling hologram called Representative Democracy continuing its babbling mirage. And, of course, the Conspiracy of Boxes never mentions Fleet Bank's thieving history. Will somebody help me now?

In a recent study conducted at the Stop Shopping School of Divinity, scholars established that there is a causal relationship between the architecture of the Big Box, the intrusion of cosmetic dentistry, and the general acceptance of OFFICIAL ABSURDITY. We are so dazzled by the product placement of The Teeth and Hair Party, John Kerry and John Edwards and their handsome, rich kiddies – how could we possibly come out with our citizenship

intact? All the language has slipped toward George Bush's mouth, despite Stephen Hawking's admission that information can escape the gravity of a black hole. 'Sweatshops' is a word that has now vanished, replaced by the more Republican 'out-sourcing'. The Environment is mentioned in passing – like a terrarium that fell off of the edge of the movie set.

Recently the California courts determined that your pastor had sexually assaulted a Starbucks cash register. Our lawyers have re-read the injunction many times and have tried to contact the court for clarification. The Members of the Church of Stop Shopping are enjoined from coming within 250 yards of 'all the Starbucks in California'. We are thus arranging with a crane company to suspend our believers high ABOVE the transnational chain stores, in an effort to rain down information on the latte sippers about coffee monoculture/herbicide/pesticide devastation. They have constructed, you see, a legal Big Box. But our faith will set us free.



Recently the California courts determined that your pastor had sexually assaulted a Starbucks cash register

Don't, congregation, for superstitious hygienic reasons, drift back into glorying a GAP with their miles of smooth capped-teeth-like surfaces. This really is the DUMBING DOWN AND FUCKING UP OF OUR SOULS. The great language schemes, the politics-simple slogans that banner over the Big Boxes are all the same: swooning talking points about HAPPINESS,

CONVENIENCE, ETERNAL LIFE IN THE MIDDLE CLASSES. And you say, 'If we listen to something outside of the boxes, what would that be?' Well, there is a message screaming at us, but it doesn't get through the walls of the big box of Consumerworld. The agony of animals, the droughts and rising waters, the burned children of our technological, colonial wars... If our Big Box had a retractable roof, and we put a microphone through to the sky, we would hear articulate deathbed speeches, pleas to us, lost in our box.

We will respond, with our good works and our faith, won't we? For starters, don't let a big box store come into your neighbourhood. The smiles that proliferate in such places... It's a sin. Get up in front of the city council and say, 'WE AIN'T SMILING!'

Bill Talen's book *What Should I do if Reverend Billy is in my Store?* (New Press) is available in independent bookshops (if you see it in a transnational chain store, steal it). Visit www.revilly.com





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