bulletin of the
food ethics council

Negotiations

from Hong Kong to the high street

Dispatches from the trade talks
Four critical perspectives

London
Bargaining for a future

Talk to the hand
Are lessons for policy falling on deaf ears?

Supermarkets and stakeholders
Beyond the stalemate

CAPITALCONCERNS
An introduction to the City

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The Bulletin of the Food Ethics Council is intended to promote debate on key issues and developments in food and farming. Distributed quarterly to subscribers, it features commentary, news and a diary of upcoming events.

The Food Ethics Council is an independent research and advocacy group that aims to make the food system fairer and healthier from farm to fork. The views of contributors to this bulletin are not necessarily those of the Food Ethics Council or its members.

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From the editor

If you are already familiar with the Food Ethics Council, you will know that we try to stimulate debate and ask questions that matter - we don't pretend to have all the answers.

This new bulletin extends that tradition. It seeks to air dissenting views, challenge accepted opinion and provoke fruitful discussion about key developments in food and farming.

Comment and analysis account for the lion's share of the bulletin, with regular contributors bringing a wide range of perspectives to bear on current issues and events. We are immensely grateful to the contributors, many of whom have offered advice and assistance to help us get this bulletin off the ground. Sometimes we may agree with what they write. Sometimes we may not. We hope that you will also detect a diversity of opinion within these pages.

Each issue has a theme. This time it is 'Negotiations'. In practice, decisions about food and farming are rarely made unilaterally – rather, they're haggled over, bargained for and brokered, whether in the international diplomacy of December's world trade talks in Hong Kong, or in a supermarket chain's new convenience store somewhere on a UK high street.

The Food Ethics Council aims to put ethics at the centre of decisions about food and farming. But if decision-making is a game of trade-offs, not a simple act of rationality, then we face new questions. How are policies actually made? Are international rules set fairly? Who can get involved in decision-making processes? How important is evidence in affecting the outcome? The articles in this issue touch on some of those questions.

Contributors to the bulletin do not have to follow the theme. So, in this issue, as well as articles about negotiation, we can read about climate change, organic fish farming, animal welfare, responsible investment and the challenges facing supermarkets.

After the comment pieces you will find three short, regular sections: news about the Food Ethics Council; a short list of new books; and a calendar of upcoming events.

We hope to add a letters page to future issues. If you would like to respond to any of the articles you can write to me at the address on the left. We would also welcome your comments on this launch issue. How can we improve the bulletin? How can we make it more interesting, useful and relevant to you? Please do let us know.

Tom MacMillan

Dispatches from Hong Kong

Geoff Tansey, Devinder Sharma, Patrick Mulvany and John Turner provide critical views on the recent world trade talks.

Geoff Tansey asks who sets the rules and how

The sixth World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial in December 2005 was my second. I went to the negotiations in Hong Kong because they affect intellectual property (IP) rules. Since these IP rules were put within the scope of the WTO they have spread globally and been introduced into agriculture for the first time in many countries.

So, what has intellectual property got to do with food? Well, the rules on IP are increasingly important in shaping the food system. If you think of any major fast food, soft drink, breakfast cereal or baked bean maker, or supermarket, you are probably thinking of a brand, which is based on Trademark rules – that is just one form of intellectual property. Regional specialities such as Parma ham and champagne are linked to another form of IP – geographical indications, in WTO speak. The rapid commercialisation of genetically engineered plants and animals, the way they are being developed and the agro-industrial restructuring that is happening around them, is underpinned by the rules on patents and plant variety protection, yet another form of IP. So IP is intimately connected with the way today's food system operates – yet it gets little attention compared to most other aspects of the system.

All these forms of IP developed piecemeal in today's rich, industrialised countries. They were adopted or not, and made more or less strict, according to each country's economic interests. Today, those flexibilities do not exist for developing countries signed up to the WTO, which now has 150 members and almost 30 more countries wanting to join.

Poorer countries start with a serious disadvantage

As far back as 1972, US industry - in particular the pharmaceutical industry and the then CEO of Pfizer, later backed by the film, music and software industries – decided that, with global markets, their businesses needed global IP rules. They saw they were not going to get them through the existing international forum for discussing IP, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), which became a UN agency in 1974. Their problem with WIPO was that countries could sign up to agreements as and when it suited them – in the WTO, by contrast, minimum standards on IP rules became a legal requirement for every member.

Developing countries did not want IP introduced into the WTO at all. Once it had been, their negotiators were ill-prepared to deal with a major review of the rules on patenting plants and animals that happened in 1999. Since then, I have been involved with the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva, in projects supporting the capacity of such negotiators to deal with IP in an informed way. In effect, we have been trying to even up, albeit slightly, the balance in the way these rules of the world end up being made.

The QUNO projects have involved many informal dialogues, producing a considerable range of briefing materials and making scarce legal and other expertise available to negotiators. Equity is the issue here, since smaller or poorer countries start with a serious disadvantage when the rules are being brokered. Indeed some of the smaller least developed countries are absent from the negotiations altogether because they cannot afford to send delegates.

Working with negotiators has brought home to me the ethical problems with the way we make the rules of the world today – rules which affect expanding portions of our lives. It raises serious questions about who fixes which rules in whose interests, who wins and loses, whose ability to choose the policies they follow is curtailed – about both the fairness of the process and the fairness of the outcomes. These questions are relevant to negotiations across the board, local and global. We need ways of setting the rules so that smaller and weaker parties are not seriously disadvantaged. This is absolutely crucial when those rules shape the food system, impinging on food security, livelihoods and people's basic needs.

The grand promises of bodies like the WTO – to deliver justice, development and peace – will only begin to ring true once the rules they enforce have been negotiated fairly.

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Devinder Sharma sees the majority losing

The big boys have done it again. US Trade Representative Rob Portman and the EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson certainly return home satisfied. Pitted against a grand coalition of the developing countries (the G-110) at the sixth WTO Ministerial, they still managed to play hoax before the 149-country theatre.

By promising to eliminate their agricultural export subsidies by 2013 while reducing them substantially by 2010, they managed to dupe the grand coalition into submission. For the developing countries – led by India and Brazil – the ultimate phase-out in 2013 is the key achievement in Hong Kong. In reality, the commitment to reduce export subsidies is like throwing peanuts before monkeys.

The 30 rich countries that make up the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) provide US $350 billion per year – or $1 billion each day – in agricultural subsidies. By offering to phase out only export subsidies – and that too over the next eight years – these countries have managed to protect the monumental support they provide to agriculture, which in turn distorts the global market.

Export subsidies have been steadily on the decline, falling from $7.5 billion in 1995 to $3 billion in 2001. In real terms, what the Hong Kong Ministerial effectively translates into is a commitment by the developed countries to phase out $3 billion, which is less than one percent of the total subsidies, over a period of eight years. In any case, export subsidies being provided by the EU would go by the year 2013 under the latest reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Nearly 90 percent of the export subsidies are used by the European Union. Of the remaining 10 percent, Switzerland consumes approximately 5.4 percent and the US uses only 1.4 percent of it. By agreeing to phase out export subsidies, the US is only expected to cut by $30 million. Considering that the quantum of subsidies in the US hovers around $75 billion, a cut by $30 million is not even a drop in the ocean.

Even in the case of cotton subsidies, the US has emerged unscathed. For the 20,000 cotton growers in America, who collectively get a subsidy of $10.1 million every day, it will be business as usual. Export subsidies in cotton, which the US has said it will reduce, amount to less than one percent of the $4.7 billion that it doles out as federal support to the cotton growers.

It is essentially because of these subsidies that, in many rich countries, the mean farm household income is higher than the national average. In the Netherlands, for instance, the average farm family income is almost 275 percent of average household income, 175 percent in Denmark, 160 percent in France, and 110 percent in the United States and Japan. In India, agriculture continues to be negatively taxed and therefore more than 40 percent of the farming population appears keen to abandon agriculture in search of menial jobs in urban centres. Farmers occupy the lowest rung in the national income chart, only to be outdone by the landless agricultural workers.

Like in India, where the bulk of the farm subsidies (all in the form of cheaper inputs) are cornered by big farmers, small farmers do not benefit from the huge agricultural support – equivalent to $1 billion a day – the industrialised countries provide. In Europe, only 2,000 big farmers receive a subsidy amount that exceeds $60,000 a year. These big farmers only constitute 0.4 percent of the farming population. And yet, when the European Commission proposed to cap the maximum limit of direct payments at a figure that is still six times higher – $360,000 a year – in what is called as single farm payments, it was met with such a stiff resistance that the proposal had to be withdrawn.

Selling a utopian dream, the WTO Agreement on Agriculture seduces farmers in developing countries by promising an opportunity to be like an American or European farmer once they open up their markets. But if the impact the developing countries have felt from the free trade liberalisation imposed under the WTO agreements since January 1995 is any indication, farmers in developing countries have suffered to the tune of $24 billion a year from the agricultural subsidies and protectionism of rich countries. Millions of farmers have lost their livelihoods as a result of cheaper imports.

Devinder Sharma is a New Delhi-based food and trade policy analyst. Among his recent works include two books: 'GATT to WTO – Seeds of Despair' and 'In the Famine Trap'. www.dsharma.org

Reaping royalties

CAP support to major landowners unaffected by Hong Kong:
Queen Elizabeth II - £155,000
Duke of Marlborough - £198,500
Duke of Westminster - £174,000
Duke of Bedford - £142,000
Prince of Wales - £89,000
Prince Albert II (Monaco) - £200,000
Cees Veerman (Agriculture Minister, Netherlands) - £112,500

Source: The Times 14.12.05

Patrick Mulvany makes the case for food sovereignty

People who produce wholesome food, in particular small-scale producers who protect landscapes and ecosystems at the same time, are increasingly being threatened by sectional, short-term interests that are buttressed by global institutions. Two recent events illustrate this problem.

At the Hong Kong Ministerial meeting of the WTO last December nothing new came out of the agriculture negotiations except an agreement not to disagree about outstanding problems. The US, EU and Japan used 'smoke and mirrors' to concoct the final text.

It is an empty agreement and, according to Walden Bello from Focus on the Global South, a recipe for disaster. "Many developing countries will not be able to convince people back home that they have come back with a good deal," he reports.

Had delegates listened to the 1,100 farmers arrested outside the convention centre by the Hong Kong police, they would have heard how the "WTO kills Farmers", as the placards had it, why the governance of food and agriculture should be removed from the WTO and how an alternative policy framework based on principles of 'food sovereignty' would provide hope and security for the majority.

In April, the WTO will try to seal this deal, step around the blockage caused by agriculture and move on to negotiate the Singapore issues that could be highly lucrative for rich corporations.

In Granada, Spain, in January it was Australia's turn to launch an attack on farmers. Together with New Zealand and Canada, they began dismantling a global moratorium on the testing and commercialisation of Terminator

technology, agreed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

This overwhelmingly discredited technology genetically modifies plants so that most, but not all, of seeds harvested on farms are sterile. It is designed to force farmers and gardeners to buy new seed each season, strengthening the monopoly control of seeds by biotechnology companies.

The technology has been patented in the USA, Canada and Europe by the US government and a seed corporation. The European patent was granted last October.

In Spain, the Australians and others succeeded in undermining the global moratorium by forcing through recommendations that risk assessment should be made on a case by case basis. This sounds innocent enough. However, it masks a strategy that will facilitate field testing and commercialisation in compliant countries. If adopted by the next key meeting of the CBD in April, in Brazil, the moratorium will effectively be dead.

Amidst this gloom a ray of light. Groups representing farmers, fisherfolk and other small-scale food producers came together in the margins of the African polycentric World Social Forum, in Bamako, to organise a major meeting on food sovereignty that will take place in Mali in 2007. This will take the campaign for the global adoption of the food sovereignty policy framework to a new level.

The framework gives priority to the needs of food producers and consumers, not corporations. It ensures the right to food. It prioritises local markets and preventing the 'dumping' of food in markets elsewhere. It guarantees small-scale producers' rights of access to land, water and genetic resources. At the core of food sovereignty are agroecological models of production and responsible fisheries practices. Adopting the food sovereignty policy framwork will increase democracy in localised food systems: it will block increased corporate control.

Food sovereignty

Food sovereignty has been defined as "a right of countries and peoples to define their own agricultural, pastoral, fishery and food policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate." According to Via Campesina, the international peasant movement that coined the concept, "food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production".

Source: FAO (2005) State of food and agriculture. FAO, Rome: pp. 108-9.

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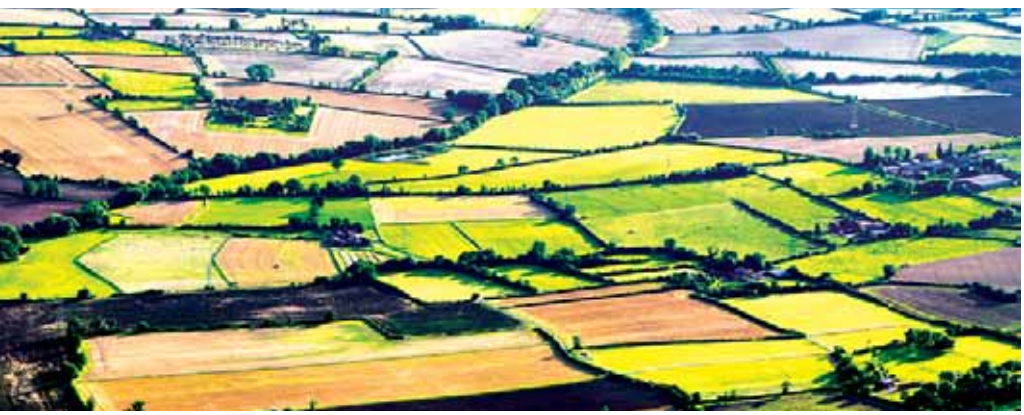
John Turner
thinks outside the boxes

Change is afoot in the villages close to our farm. Most small and medium farms have sold their machinery and now rely on contractors. Those who previously kept livestock, but chose not to intensify production, no longer have animals. Wheat and oilseed rape increasingly dominate our countryside, not only because they are amongst the few profitable crops, but also because a reliance on contractors makes simplicity essential. This means that large areas, sometimes entire farms, are 'blocked' together so that they can be cultivated, sown, sprayed and harvested as easily as possible. Dotted between these blocks are increasing areas of land kept out of production – although this 'set aside' could benefit wildlife, more often than not it gets treated with a broad-spectrum weed killer at the earliest opportunity, leaving a scorched orange desert.

Every one of these changes can be traced directly to policy and payment structures. They hinge on economic analyses and political horse-trading, both at home and abroad. December saw the latest phase of these negotiations, in a paper setting out the UK government's latest pitch and in the world trade talks in Hong Kong. Our landscape of blocks and orange blots reflects, on the ground, 'boxes' that set the framework for these discussions.

In general, the World Trade Organisation uses a traffic-light system to distinguish different kinds of subsidy and support – 'red box' support is forbidden under international trade rules, 'amber box' is marked for reform and 'green box' is permitted. In agriculture, things are more complicated: there's an extra 'blue box', covering farm support that would usually be amber, but that is deemed less 'trade distorting' because it is tied to measures that limit overproduction.



The upshot in practice is a bizarre mirror image of the negotiator's colour scheme. Green box support goes to land kept out production – all too often sprayed, lifeless and orange. Meanwhile farmland, depending on the season, forms swathes of monochrome green – industrial monocultures that reflect the scale of the mammoth companies that control the input supplies and commodity markets dominating today's farming business. Even targeted 'green box' environmental schemes have only limited benefits, at best only offsetting the continuing damage resulting from the market's preoccupation with lowering costs and boosting volumes of production.

This is a far cry from the diversity of crops and sustainable farming that doing away with production-related subsidies was supposed to herald. And the irony is that it doesn't even benefit farmers in developing countries – the people meant to win from agricultural 'free trade' – according to groups like Via Campesina that actually represent them.

Whilst environmental schemes are assessed purely by the diversity of wildlife (and only a few indicator species at that), their lack of productivity or contribution to the economy is conveniently ignored. Conversely, there is a continuing reluctance to acknowledge the social and environmental costs associated with the market-driven trend towards intensification whilst applauding its "efficiency". The contrast in how the benefits and costs of each are measured is as clearly defined as the land use that results – production and environment sit in two very distinct and unconnected boxes.

If we are to define a future for farming in this country that is genuinely sustainable, the priority must be to reconcile the conflicting objectives of trade and efficiency on one hand and the wider social and environmental objectives on the other. We need viable farming to be characterised by good husbandry and a diverse landscape, not a dysfunctional mismatch of intensification and bolt-on environmental remedies. To do this, negotiators need to ditch their blue and green boxes in favour of something far more integrated – turquoise perhaps – that tackles the constraints that have hitherto treated farming as a production line rather than a complex, balanced system.

John Turner is a farmer from near Stamford in Lincolnshire, where he runs a 100 hectare mixed farm together with his brother and parents. He was a founding member of FARM. john.turner@farm.org.uk

Trade, aid and advertising

During the Hong Kong talks the Financial Times carried an advertisement by the UN World Food Programme and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. Under a picture of four children eating, it asked "Will WTO's trade negotiators take the food out of their mouths? Trade reform is good, but restrictions on donations of food to the United Nations could leave these children hungry".

This elicited an angry response from the EU, in the shape of a letter to the FT from Commissioners Peter Mandelson and Mariann Fischer Boel, who called the ad a "cynical insult to all WTO members". They saw it supporting the US practice of dumping surplus commodities in the guise of food aid.

Since then, rumour has it, the Commission has sent a succession of heavies round the WFP to reiterate their dissatisfaction. It is unprecedented for a UN agency to try and influence WTO talks by running an ad. This time the tactic seems ill-judged. But what was behind it? Cynics might imagine the WFP trying to protect its turf by pushing the US line, but hardly the Special Rapporteur, who has been an outspoken US policies on agriculture.

Bargaining for a future

Jenny Jones takes some tips from London's Sustainable Food Strategy

As well as being one of the world's greatest cities, London is also one of the greediest, sucking in more than its fair share of resources and spitting out vast amounts of waste. The city imports 80 percent of its food, and food accounts for 40 percent of London's ecological footprint, 40 percent of the lorries on its roads, and 40 percent of domestic waste.

London's new food strategy tries to tackle these problems and more besides, shortening supply chains, reducing waste, celebrating culinary diversity and reducing the appalling food poverty that leaves many Londoners struggling, and often failing, to find fresh, affordable food. The strategy will be launched in May. Behind it lie months of negotiations between a host of agencies, companies and other organisations. Looking back, we seemed to start with a recipe for disaster – lots of partners, lots of stakeholders and an enormous agenda – but the process ran remarkably smoothly. What kept the negotiations on track?

First we had political backing. Ken Livingstone, the Mayor London, put his weight behind the strategy. So did Sir Don Curry, Chair of the Sustainable Farming and Food Implementation Group at Defra.

Second, there was a great deal of commitment across the public sector in London, for example schools and hospitals, to use the way our food sector works to help make people healthier and for that to be done in a sustainable way. In the UK, the public sector spends £2 billion a year on food – much of it in London – and this money talks when it comes to negotiation.

Support from NGOs was a third factor. The work they had already done on the economic, social and environmental benefits of local sourcing meant that we were not feeling our way in the dark, and it was often just a matter of drawing together research findings and practical initiatives that were already out there. We were negotiating around concrete examples and work in progress, not around some abstract idea.

Finally, vitally important but hard to pin down, was a shared belief in the need to change, radically and soon. In a world where some are starving and others are obese – where a full spectrum of malnutrition can be found side by side – it has become impossible to ignore the problems with food and farming and our obligation to address them.

What can we take from this? As a Londoner, I take some hope. As a politician, a lesson – that the growing strength feeling something is wrong with our food is weighty bargaining chip. If we want to improve the food system then we need to act now, while we still have that on our side.

Jenny Jones chairs London Food. She is a Green Party member of the London Assembly. jenny.jones@london.gov.uk

Talk to the hand?

Laura Davis worries practical lessons for policy makers are falling deaf ears

Across the country, policy makers and people at the front line of public health and food-related projects are negotiating and bidding for the rollout of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) 2006-8. In some areas, the funding has already been allocated, leaving little time to reflect or learn from practice; in others, significant decisions about 'joining' up NRF with Local Area Agreements, the 'new 10 year vision for local government', are delaying project development and bidding timetables by several months.

According to *The future of local government: developing a 10 year vision,* the Government's aim is to "put people at the centre of public services". "Local government," it continues, "at the heart of the community, with a knowledge about local needs and in the front line of delivery, is in a pivotal position to ensure that public services are designed around the needs and preferences of local people and communities" (www.odpm.gov.uk).

The reality on the ground is different from the vision. Among practitioners there is a palpable sense of disempowerment and frustration about the gap between policy and practice, and how they do not 'talk' to one another. Because there is no serious dialogue between policy makers and practitioners in food- and health-related work, policy neither promotes good practice nor learns from it in any systematic way.

Even where some degree of real dialogue exists locally, and where previous work has been thoroughly evaluated, it is often unclear who makes policies or takes decisions. Moreover, the timing and processes of negotiations, project development and bidding are opaque. The exact link between local and national policy and delivery is anyone's guess, though the suspicion is top-level targets and the need for quick wins will drive the relationship.

If that does happen it will leave practitioners like myself in a tight sport, and service users off the radar. We have useful evidence about what works and why (and what doesn't), but no sense of how to communicate this, to whom. Nor do we know whether our current efforts to re-design effective programmes based on this experience will 'fit' the several funding channels likely to come 'on stream' in the next year or three. If key strategic decisions about how funding is used are not made by those in power for three or even six months into the 2006-8 NRF cycle, as in some cases seems likely, how can we ensure services are designed to meet the needs of local people?

As if this were not enough to drive practitioners to despair, there is still the assumption that individual behaviour change – choosing health – will tackle widespread and systematic health inequalities, producing better health among the most disadvantaged populations in the absence of wider structural and systemic changes. Disadvantaged communities (in other words, poor people clustered together) often cannot make healthier choices about diet and lifestyle because of systemic failures in access to, availability and affordability of, and life skills relating to the basic ingredients of a nutritious diet. Children are exposed to cheap door-to-door takeaways offering unhealthy choices, clustered around secondary schools, almost daily, yet we expect them to 'choose health' on the basis of a poorly funded, short term health education campaign.

Through my work with some of the most disadvantaged groups in some of the country's most deprived areas, I am becoming more convinced that new forms of malnutrition such as obesity, together with other 'wider determinants' of health such as poor housing and low income, are producing unwell children with problems, who become unwell adolescents with bigger problems. As adults they have life-limiting illnesses and many die before their time.

As practitioners, all we can do is try to apply what we have learned from our experience when we are designing our NRF rollout, to resist pressures from above to aim for unrealistic targets or produce quick wins, and to try to communicate what works to the policy makers, whoever they are, without knowing if anyone is listening.

Laura Davis works for the NRF Staying Alive project in Islington and is independent evaluator to the NRF Eatwell project in Sandwell. She is studying for a PhD at Warwick University. ladybird.athome@phonecoop.coop

Pooling forces

Bill Vorley thinks beyond a stalemate in supermarket-stakeholder negotiations

The relationship between supermarkets and civil society has evolved in the UK into a kind of grudging mutual dependency. Civil society organisations are alarmed at supermarkets' power to shape the structure of food and agriculture. But they have nevertheless tried to exploit the retailers' position as gatekeepers to the agrifood system, and their obsession with customer loyalty. These groups know that if they can influence the practices of just a handful of supermarket chains, they may drive changes – whether in support of more wildlife, greener transport, better animal welfare, public health, or higher labour standards – much more efficiently than any number of new regulations.

Over on the other side of the fence, some supermarkets have learned to sit down with civil society, knowing that action on some ethical and 'sustainability' concerns is at least an insurance against being named and shamed, and at best a contribution to brand value.

But alarm bells are ringing about the nature of this relationship. The first is about control of the agenda. While many supermarkets are comfortable to pick and choose from civil society's basket of single issues, there are powerful elements in the industry that resist any loss of control over the wider 'sustainability' agenda. This is the experience of civil society's 'Race to the Top' initiative (www.racetothetop.org), and may also be a lesson from Defra's long-awaited 'Food Industry Sustainability Strategy' (FISS). It is a fundamental barrier to building an integrated measure of performance across the supermarket sector. And, with such a low government appetite for regulation, companies who choose inaction over action do so with very little risk of regulatory sanction.

The second alarm bell is around who pays for supermarkets' 'sustainability'. At a recent seminar, a representative of a major European supermarket chain complained that his customers "have outsourced responsibility to retailers rather than taking their own initiative by purchasing ethically labeled goods," but were unwilling to pay a cent to cover the extra costs of that 'responsibility'. What he did not mention was that supermarkets have therefore outsourced responsibility, and all its associated costs, to their suppliers. Civil society has been slow to wake up to the fact that sustainability is now very much part of the cost-price squeeze on suppliers and primary producers in supermarkets' supply chains.

The third is the fact that some supermarkets are conflating the notions of 'customer' and 'citizen'; likewise, 'public good' and 'customer value'. Negotiating on those issues that are not automatically in line with supermarkets' perceptions of consumer value thus becomes increasingly challenging. As one of the Race to the Top partners noted, "The consumer and the citizen are generally not the same person, and supermarket companies listen to the former first and the latter a long way second."

Where does the relationship with civil society go from here? Well, what we have is a governance gap. There is little business case for supermarkets to take a lead on many sustainability issues, and little risk of regulatory sanction for companies that do not act. What did the supermarket sector do when it saw its own governance gap in another issue – that of food safety? Under these circumstances, it pooled its forces, and built a non-competitive framework to raise food standards.

I believe that to fill the governance gap around sustainability in the supermarket sector, civil society must do likewise: pool its forces, and build a framework to evaluate company performance and raise sustainability standards across the sector. Learning from Race to the Top, any framework must be built on independently gathered data, so that no party has the power of veto. Also, the welfare of suppliers and fairness in trading must be components of any integrated measure of supermarket performance.

Without this concerted approach to sustainability in the supermarket sector, civil society engagement with supermarkets will be confined to the most innovative players, or amount to little more than providing a menu of single-issue items.

Bill Vorley leads the Sustainable Markets Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development, where he worked on the Race to the Top. bill.vorley@iied.org

Supermarket sweepstake

Tough negotiation is par for the course, argues **Sue Haddleton**

If you don't like supermarkets – which seems fashionable these days – the past few months must have been an emotional rollercoaster. You will have found Tesco frustratingly ubiquitous, on the high street and in the news. But you will also have seen it get a bit of a hammering – from a committee of MPs concerned that the company is expanding in town centres with 45 new 'convenience stores' and from the Tescopoly campaign, a coalition of groups accusing the chain of harmful trading practices.

At the heart of heart of many people's concerns about supermarkets, and central to Tescopoly, is the view that supermarkets are bullies – excessively tough negotiators who use their size to get one over their suppliers and smaller competitors.

I have some concerns about supermarkets, but not because of the way they negotiate. Before signing up last year to study for an MSc Food Policy I spent my career in food purchasing, supplying the major multiples. Professional negotiation training was part of the job, because there were sharp negotiators all around you – not just 'downstream' with the supermarkets but 'upstream' as well.

I found this as a juice trader for a large drinks company, buying from Sicily, South Africa, Jamaica and Israel. Although everyone had their own negotiating style, toughness was the norm rather than the exception, whether you were a grower, processor or freight company. In a volatile and competitive market, dealing with large volumes and big risks, the stakes were high and you had to be tough to stay in the game.

Later, I worked for a firm that supplied ready meals to the supermarkets. They were impressive negotiators but they did not bully us. Indeed, their success depended on their suppliers – if they negotiated everyone into the ground they wouldn't have a business themselves. There was also a limit to how far they could play suppliers off against each other because this caused them disruption and came at a cost. We had the added advantage of offering a complex product that they wanted to buy but could not easily find from elsewhere. In short, size wasn't everything – we had some advantages over the supermarkets, and much of the power that they did have came from factors apart from their market share, such as being well-organised, knowing their customers and employing talented people.

By focusing on how supermarkets negotiate, we miss the point. If we need to tackle abusive negotiation then we should do so across the board. That includes the catering sector, which now sells almost as much food to consumers as do retailers, amounting to £71 billion and £76 billion worth of annual UK household expenditure respectively.

We also get distracted from real challenges that the supermarkets – and they alone – actually do pose. The problem with large multiples buying town centre 'convenience stores' has little to do simply with size and market share, for example. One just opened near where I live – instead of supplying the fresh food ingredients that the neighbourhood needs, which are in demand and in short supply, it sells a staggering range of the fizzy drinks, sweets and alcohol already available from local newsagents. So rather than eradicating a food desert it exacerbates one, forcing people into their cars to out-of-town stores.

Supermarkets are tough negotiators and they are big, but neither, in itself, is unique to them or necessarily a bad thing. They aren't perfect but they are here to stay. If we want supermarkets to work for us, selling safe, healthy food, benefiting our neighbourhoods instead of blighting them, and sourcing products responsibly, we need to tackle the problems that are most serious not the ones that are most visible.

Sue Haddleton studies Food Policy at City University. She previously worked as a buyer in the food sector. s.haddleton@dsl.pipex.com

Values for money

Dino Adriano asks whether supermarkets can respond better to consumer desires

Supermarkets have been with us for well over 40 years and they are here to stay. They now account for almost 80 percent of food sales with the market leader, Tesco, selling over 30 percent. Supermarkets have risen inexorably because the vast majority of consumers like them, trust them and yearn for one nearby. They are popular for two key factors – wide ranges and low prices – that combine to make one-stop shopping an attractive proposition.

So, supermarkets offer choice. The larger out- or edge-of-town superstores have seen the greatest widening of product ranges, providing strong competition to the high street. The growth in fresh ranges has been spectacular over the last 20 years, with completely new food products being introduced. Fresher food means more frequent shopping trips, broadening the concept of convenience to include smaller outlets that offer fresh food for quick consumption. Hence city-centre stores have been reborn.

Alongside choice, low prices have become seen as synonymous with supermarkets. Whilst low prices are undeniably important to many consumers, the concept of 'value for money' has been a casualty of this trend.

Despite offering choice and cheap food supermarkets find themselves increasingly under the spotlight. Why? Because consumers have concerns, and other values, which they express in two distinctive ways: firstly as shoppers and secondly as citizens.

As shoppers their concerns include a clear desire for more organic, ethically traded and locally produced food and evidence of the provenance of food. Whilst supermarkets respond to these issues more needs to be done. The growth of farmers' markets in the UK provides testimony to this.

Supermarket operators have an opportunity to respond. Just as they responded to discounters on price and generally respond well to new developments, supermarkets will need to do so more actively on locally produced products. This is potentially difficult as it runs counter to the economies of scale they have so avidly sought and achieved. But they will need to come to address this challenge and adjust their operating models accordingly, as their French counterparts have done.

To date, the government has relied on supermarkets to represent the views and desires of consumers when it comes to food. But some elements of civil society are questioning this view. They believe that growing supermarket penetration has brought some serious disadvantages that can only be detected and addressed by treating consumers as citizens, not just as shoppers.

When it comes to big issues that touch on policy at a national level, they consider it a mistake to glean consumer desires from expenditure patterns at supermarkets and consumer views from research undertaken by retailers, because that puts supermarkets in the position of poacher and gamekeeper. What is more, supermarkets could not respond alone to such issues in any case. Citizens, it is argued, should take a direct interest in the way that food is produced and sold, and if government will not take the lead then civil society should encourage it to do so.

One specific concern is that, as a nation, the nutritional standard of our diet is poor. Putting low prices ahead of good value for money has contributed to this problem because cheaper, poorer quality food is often less nutritious. The authorities foster this attitude to the price and value of food. The Office of Fair Trading sees effective price competition as sufficient evidence that the food retail market is healthy and operating

effectively for consumers, as we saw when Somerfield's acquired Safeway stores as fallout from the Morrison deal.

Should judgments made at the highest level on market effectiveness continue to be based on such a one-dimensional view? If price remains sovereign, not quality or value for money, will we all come to depend on food supplements to meet our nutritional needs?

More and more people care about such issues, but where are the mechanisms to deal with them? We have a Food Standards Agency but it is only mandated to deal with issues of safety. And although supermarket operators can play a real part in promoting nutrition it is difficult for the industry to raise the bar alone.

So what should be done? A new review of supermarket dominance is expected. However, barriers to entry for new players are so high that is unlikely much could be done to reduce the dominance of the major chains. Better, then, to concentrate on raising the bar of what matters about the food we eat, its inherent quality and nutritional content – focusing on value for money, rather than simply on price. Ultimately consumers have the power to achieve this, not just as shoppers but also as citizens.

Dino Adriano has held executive roles at Sainsbury's plc and Homebase. He is a trustee of Oxfam.

It is difficult for industry to raise the bar alone

Fish farming's ethical hitches

Michele Field reports from the Soil Association conference

Environmentally sustainable crops, well-treated cattle, free-ranging birds – those already carry an ethical agenda that humble fish do not. During the Soil Association's (SA) conference in London in January, the environment editor of the Daily Telegraph and the author of *The end of the line*, Charles Clover, stood up at the back of the full assembly and challenged the SA on its criteria for 'organic' farmed salmon. It was a boat waiting to be rocked.

Charles Clover's mother was a founder-member of the Soil Association but, as he says, he is a journalist and when things need "taking a look at" he points a finger. He sees two big problems with raising "carnivorous fish, because it's as if farmers were raising tigers, not lambs". First is the enormous amount of fish that is being pulped into meal to be fed to other fish. "We have virtually destroyed the stocks of the sand-eel in the North Sea." He urges that fish-farmers themselves clamour to the government for sustainable quotas on fish like the blue whiting which is a fish-to-feed-fish source. "It's not a matter for the organic movement on its own; the whole industry should be up in arms."

Hugh Raven, of the Sustainable Development Commission, is deeply involved in the fish-farming issues and protests to Clover that all the meal fed to SA accredited farmed fish derives from fish waste products. What's more, the waste mostly comes from certifiably sustainable fish from the seas around Aberdeen, which Raven knows well; though, this second-level certification is not yet done for all SA accredited fish.

Clover's second big issue is that fish oil must be added to the feed of farmed fish – you have to put oil back into the pulp. He says, "The world is due to run out of fish oil by the end of the decade and they are cheerfully draining fish oil from wholly unsustainable stocks (at least the ones in our seas are; maybe the Chilean ones are better). What is the virtue in doing that? I personally don't see the virtue in buying organic salmon at all."

Clover's radical and laudable idea is to stop farming carnivorous fish entirely and to farm only vegetarian fish – only 'lambs', in his metaphor. Another great critic of the SA's farmed-fish standards is the organic meat and poultry farmer Peter Kindersley, of Sheepdrove Organic Farm, who does exactly this. Alongside his SA-certified meat he raises carp in a lake. He says that salmon fisheries are like the beef feed lots in the USA. They allow the farmer to pour food in the top of the fish cage "and let the waste, including uneaten food, out the bottom, with no attempt to recycle it as we do in poultry farming and as is required by the standards. The salmon get no food from their habitat – in fact, there is not a varied habitat, as we try and give our farm animals and the carp."

Kindersley is disturbed by the way the Soil Association is now going to certify cod that need constant, 24-hour artificial lighting for 16 months, without which the fish become fertile and useless. He says that the SA is being deeply compromised, misleading the public who think they can trust its certifications.

Fish are now the SA's Achilles' heel. "The SA has been the voice of virtue that has brought the farming industry into line about the environment," says Clover. "Now its role should be to make the fish industry worry about the environment." And, Kindersley would add, about the comfort and welfare of the fish.

Michele Field is a freelance writer and journalist based in London. She is writing a book about edible foods that some people find repugnant. michelefield@blueyonder.co.uk

Organic chemistry

Craig Sams compares the carbon costs of different forms of agriculture

As the Department for Trade and Industry argues that Britain can't fulfill its Kyoto targets and Defra argues that 'vigourous action' can still make it happen, it's worth looking at the impact of farming and food on climate.

Organic farming has half the fossil fuel use of agrichemical farming, per calorie of food produced. By not using nitrates, it emits far less nitrous oxide than agrichemical farming (a greenhouse gas 300 times more warming than carbon dioxide). What's more, it sequesters up to one tonne of carbon per hectare into the soil every year.

Combine all of these and you have an annual global saving equivalent to two gigatonnes of carbon. To bring global greenhouse gas emissions back to a stable level requires an annual reduction of six gigatonnes of carbon. Were we to adopt organic farming practices worldwide we could be a third of the way towards stabilising climate.

What does agrichemical farming offer? Well, every tonne of nitrogen fertilizer costs one tonne of carbon to manufacture and transport. Nitrogen fertiliser drives soil carbon into the atmosphere, then runs off into water and becomes nitrous oxide. Cheap subsidised feed produces a proliferation of methane-emitting meat animals. Methane is 20 times more warming than carbon dioxide. The combined weight of cattle on the planet exceeds that of human beings, and they let off a lot of gas.

I was born in Nebraska, a prairie state. The pioneers built their houses from prairie sod and many proudly preserved a few acres of virgin prairie so their grandchildren could see how challenging the land was before it went under the plough. Those bits of untilled prairie now stand as much as six feet higher than the surrounding farmland – Nebraska's shame. Deeper ploughing as a result of introducing tractors in the 1920s, along with heavy post-War fertilisation with subsidised nitrates, have turned 90 percent of that rich organic matter into dust, sand and a hell of a lot of carbon dioxide.

In the UK, the National Soil Resource Institute estimates that 13 million tonnes of carbon have been lost each year since 1978.

The price of oil is going up. It was US $12 a barrel before George Bush Junior came to power in 2000. It has reached a plateau of $65 barrel and is testing higher levels. It competes with and is substitutable for natural gas or coal. The increase in the price of natural gas has already led to the closure of half of North America's nitrate fertiliser manufacturing capacity in the past four years.

Demand for diminishing reserves of natural gas for heating and cooking will ensure that natural gas, which generates tax income, will always be used first in applications where it can bear the extra cost of being taxed. This does not include fertiliser manufacture, where, untaxed, it is already too expensive. People are prepared to pay a 300 percent tax on fuel for their cars, representing the real value of personal transportation to consumers. When similar taxes are imposed on bunker oil, aviation fuel, heating oil, natural gas and power generation people's subsequent choices will reflect the real cost of fossil fuels to climate change.

When the oil price reaches $80-90 per barrel farmers will no longer be able to justify the use of inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides. On a global scale, the farmer who is virtuous in carbon use is due for big rewards. By 2008, organic farmers should also benefit from tradeable carbon credits that non-organic farmers would have to purchase – organic food could end up costing less than non-organic once the real cost of 'cheap' food is quantified and paid.

Craig Sams founded Green & Black's Organic Chocolate. He is President of Green & Black's Ltd. and Chair of the Soil Association.
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Accidental lesson

After a lorry crashes **Jo Murphy-Lawless** extracts a message from the mess

Early one morning in December, the citizenry of Ireland woke up to a report on our national news programme on RTE, the Irish equivalent of the BBC, about a lorry overturning in County Cavan as its driver was taking 6,500 hens to a chicken factory in County Roscommon. The report centred on the confusion and traffic chaos that resulted when the 70 percent of the hens who had survived the crash scattered across the road and into adjacent fields. The Garda Siochana, our police force, closed off the road, a major conduit to the west of Ireland from Cavan, while efforts were made to round up the hens. The Garda officer overseeing the aftermath of the incident reported that the hens were not flying about but appeared 'confused'. The hens began to drop eggs randomly which added to the traffic hazard as the road surface quickly became slippery. So the chief concern of the Garda was to round up the hens to prevent another accident from occurring. According to one of the subsequent newspaper reports, jokes flew thick and fast amongst locals about chickens 'scrambling' to freedom and Cavan folk 'going to work on an egg'.

The RTE reporter commented on the general puzzlement about the egg-laying activity because, we were informed, these hens at 17 months were considered too old to lay any longer. This is why they were on their way to be turned into processed meat. The reality is more complex than that. My veterinary colleagues tell me that egg production does begin to drop by the time hens are 70 weeks. Under the methods and economies of scale that govern contemporary intensive egg production, hens are culled at that age because they are deemed unprofitable and no longer earn their meagre keep.

I was left wondering if the jokiness of these news reports was not a reaction to cover up the discomfiture that must linger just beneath the surface of our consciousness. As we collect our chickens neatly packed off the shelves of supermarkets, we must sense that the practices that get those products to our shelves are completely unacceptable. Yet a discussion of animal welfare and the optimum conditions or otherwise for the transport of chickens did not ensue across the airwaves and national press in the wake of the Cavan incident. There was no mention of the EU directive on live animal transport. Indeed although such legislation is pending, chickens and other poultry are not even covered by the current directive.

Even 30 years ago, chickens were raised in Ireland on a different scale and by different values. Back then, for example, it was commonplace to buy preserved eggs during the winter-time, even in the open market in Dublin's city centre. Thrifty women rearing their families needed eggs for baking but would not pay higher prices when hens were off their egg-laying. In other words, egg production was part of traditional small-scale farming. Hens could live for years and keep happily laying, scratching about and contributing to a local eco-system.

The knowledge of excellent husbandry has largely evaporated from farming, taking with it that sense of rhythm from our lives. One of my friends who grew up with these older rhythms and who still keeps her chickens tells me that the egg-laying on the road in Cavan was a fear-laden response from the hens to the distress of being transported and then suffering the accident: "When a hen drops a single egg in the field or somewhere distant from the laying coop, you'd wonder what has frightened her. The egg may not even have a shell and may not be completely formed and you would know something is badly wrong". If more of us understood the way hens react to horrible shocks, we would not need to ask why the hens were laying so frantically. But as we have become almost exclusively consumers of food, we have lost those threads of meaning.

The German critic, Walter Benjamin, in his famous essay on the nineteenth century classic, Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, admires how Proust lays bare a narrow social world in which the French upper classes can banish 'nature's productive forces' entirely from their lives. They become 'polished professionals of consumption' and in that sense also become purely 'exploitative' as 'pure consumers'.

We have all been recast as 'pure consumers' under the regime of global agri-business and where we once had understandings of the natural productive world, we have permitted these to be shattered. The great challenge we face is to re-make those connections with nature's productive forces.

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Meet the money-makers

Nick Robins introduces us to the City

Slowly but surely, City investors are taking a fresh look at food. Obesity, in particular, is seen to be "reshaping the food industry" in the words of investment bank, JP Morgan. This growing interest from the financial sector brings a new dimension to the well-established food and farming agenda.

To date, investors have been absent but powerful figures in food. As they provide capital for the major processors and retailers, investors are first in line to receive the financial rewards from today's food system. Accelerating globalisation and market concentration, along with environmental and health concerns, has prompted efforts to ensure the accountability of corporations in the food chain. But policy makers and civil society have given much less attention to the contributions we should expect from investors in achieving food justice and sustainability. As a result, investors have been the 'missing stakeholder' – something set to change in the years ahead. In this, the first of a series of articles, I'll seek to explore the intersection between finance and food, highlighting the hidden potential for change.

> Investors have been the 'missing stakeholders'

For the last 25 years, a small and rapidly growing section of the City has been integrating human values into the search for financial value. This ethical or socially responsible investment (SRI) movement accounts for perhaps a few percent of overall funds. At Henderson, we have over £1 billion invested in this way, with a special focus on companies providing sustainability solutions, such as renewable energy, social housing, and water treatment.

Investing in the food sector presents us with a host of challenges, not least corporate concentration, which reduces choice and sets in train a whole series of dynamics that make responsible business practice increasingly difficult to achieve. Then there is a blizzard of issues to take into account ranging from factory farming and genetic modification through nutrition and labour standards and on to climate change.

Just as fair trade coffee needs to taste great if it is to be successful, so SRI funds have to perform well against their conventional peers. Although many household names are usually screened out of SRI funds, the evidence suggests that SRI funds can match and out-strip conventional portfolios. As an example – not a plug - our Global Care Income fund has increased in value by 146 percent in the 10 years since its launch in 1995, compared with the overall stock market which rose 114 percent over the same period; in 2005, by contrast, the fund grew by 18.2 percent compared with 22 percent for the market as a whole.

Such returns have prompted action among a second group of investors, the so-called 'responsible investors', who make up perhaps another five to 10 percent of the market. New regulatory requirements as part of the 2000 Pension Act require all public and private sector pension funds to state what account they take of social, ethical and environmental factors in their investment strategy – essentially a 'duty to consider' rather than a 'duty to act'. Pension funds are naturally cautious, and so few have elected to change the way they choose investments as SRI does. Instead, the emphasis has been on engagement – using their position as owners of companies to encourage changes that reduce risks and improve reputation. Broad-based alliances of investors, pooling sometimes trillions of pounds, have formed to press for better practice on issues such as climate change and access to medicines. But none has as yet formed on food. And beyond this lies the so-called investment mainstream, who will generally only take account of social factors if they are likely to move the share price.

If we look at the scale of the crisis facing the global food system – over- and under-consumption, widespread ecological disruption and the unjust distribution of value along the supply chain – then it becomes clear that the investment community has to become part of the solution. Investors will have to allocate and govern capital differently, if the drive for maximum financial return is not to defeat today's promising initiatives.

This calls for dialogue between the food community and financiers. One promising step, I hope, was a seminar Henderson hosted in January bringing together members of the UK Social Investment Forum and the UK Food Group to discuss food retail. We need more such exchanges, not just to swap views and information, but to see whether investor influence can be deployed to encourage companies to compete on social as well as financial factors. Overlooked until now, the City potentially holds a key to change. For if you want a better food system in today's capitalist economy, then you might as well start with capital.

Nick Robins is Head of SRI Funds at Henderson Global Investors.
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NEWS

Defra's science strategy

Defra's new science strategy has been out for consultation. On the whole, we think it is quite good. We did notice one serious and revealing problem, though, which we picked up in our response.

The government is increasingly keen to promote public dialogue around science and technology – with good reason we argue in our 2004 report *Just knowledge?*. On the face of it, Defra's science strategy says all the right things on this count. The foreword, by the department's chief scientist Professor Howard Dalton, even cites new government guidance on involving the public.

Yet the strategy as whole is peppered with the same outdated assumptions that government guidance intended to leave behind. It paints a picture, at times, of a one-way conversation – where science tells us the facts and that's that, or where the public is consulted on plans that are already well-formed – rather than the 'constructive dialogue' to which the government aspires.

For the time being, unfortunately, the more open vision of science set out in the new guidelines and championed by some within the Office of Science and Technology remains a niche product, attractive only to a minority of its Whitehall-wide target market. Whether it reaches the mainstream and becomes the norm for science in departments like Defra is not only a matter of time, but also investment, staff training and cross-departmental debate.

Getting personal

Public health is getting personal. The looming costs of diet-related disease have prompted policy makers to look for ways of changing people's eating habits on an epic scale. Government believes the key lies in making people more responsible for their own health.

This 'personalisation' is not restricted to public health policy. It is one of the big ideas for public service reform. It also echoes trends within the food industry and nutritional science towards single-serve, health-focused marketing and genetically targeted dietary advice.

But how will this policy approach, developed to improve public services, work in the market context of the food sector? Will it change people's behaviour and improve public health, and if so at what cost? Will it save the Treasury money? Will it empower people?

Our latest report, called *Getting personal: shifting responsibilities for dietary health*, tackles these questions. It was launched in December at an event in London, where it prompted a lively debate. The event included speakers from Unilever, Demos, Which?, GeneWatch, the Nutrition Society and the government's new National Social Marketing Strategy.

You can obtain a copy of the report by contacting us or you can find it in the library section of our website. In January we wrote an article for Public Service Review – Health that picked up on some of the issues aired at the launch event.

You can find all our publications at www.foodethicscouncil.org/library

RELU

The Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) programme is joint initiative by three UK research councils to fund interdisciplinary rural research. It started with a budget of £24 million and has already funded a number of major, innovative projects.

The theme for RELU's annual conference in January was 'knowledge transfer'. The programme already seems to have been successful at making researchers from a wide range of disciplines share ideas and information, but how about the links between researchers and stakeholders?

While much of the conference focused on stakeholders in government and in industry, we were invited to run a workshop about public involvement in science. The session was very well attended, introducing some scientists to such ideas for the first time and providing a refresher for others.

Hormonally charged

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate, which regulates drug use in farm animals, has a reputation for secrecy. We were pleasantly surprised, then, when they invited us to speak alongside the Soil Association at the annual stakeholder meeting of their Veterinary Products Committee.

We took this opportunity to call for a raft of measures to improve their capacity as regulators to handle scientific uncertainty. We focused on the example of a recent draft report on the safety of hormone growth promoters in meat production. Our written response to the report had identified problems in the way it discussed uncertainties and scientific ignorance.

Key among our recommendations was the need for further, serious improvements in transparency – changes that go to the heart of the regulatory process, beyond the gestures towards openness that are slowly thawing the agency's glacial relationship with public interest groups.

reading

A Baghdad cookery book
Muhammad b. Al-Hasan, translated by Charles Perry | 2005 | Prospect Books
Can one see the 'ethical' exercise in a new translation of the Iraqis' oldest cookbook? As a very scholarly look at what Iraqi food was once like its translation may draw the Western reader closer to other ethical issues about food and places. MF

Bioethics: an introduction for the biosciences
Ben Mepham | 2005 | OUP
Though aimed at students, this is a comprehensive and readable guide that others would find useful. It includes three chapters on 'bioethics in practice' that contain case studies from food and agriculture. TM

Chicken: the dangerous transformation of America's favorite food
Steve Striffler | 2005
Yale University Press
Anthropologist Steve Striffler reports on the way chickens are raised today and how they are consumed, beginning his account in a poultry processing plant, drawing on his own experiences there as a worker. TM

Collapse
Jared Diamond | 2006 (paperback)
Penguin Books
This Pulitzer Prize-winning author has a lot to say about the damage farming does to fragile enironments. What becomes of the romantic idea of 'local food' when, as in much of Australia, the land is too deprived of nutrients to be farmed without doing more harm to the environment than would be done by planeloads of food arriving from overseas? MF

Ethics, law and society (volume 1)
Jenny Gunning & Sören Holm (eds.)
2005 | Ashgate
Due to be the first in a series to come out of Cardiff's Centre for Ethics, Law and Society, this book contains 33 chapters, of which several concern agriculture, food and the environment. BM

Fighting an old battle in a new world: how IBFAN monitors the baby food market
Annelies Allain | 2005
Development Dialogue
This volume provides an insight into the evolution of the baby milk issue over the past 25 years. TM

The flavour point diet
David Katz | 2006 | Rodale International
The author is a Yale professor who in the past has taken a gentle approach to obese people and their social issues. In this new book he seems to have gone too far – ascribing over-eating to an overly flavourful diet, and arguing that bland food is weight-reducing. Interesting, but its implications put the blame for obesity on adventurous cooks and restaurants. MF

Food, morals and meaning (2nd Edition)
John Coveney | 2006 | Routledge
This updated edition, to be published in April, will explore people's relationships with food and eating, and examine our preoccupation with diet, self-discipline and food guilt. It asks why our appetite makes us feel anxious. TM

Plan B 2.0
Lester R. Brown | 2006 | Norton Books UK and the Earth Policy Institute
The founder of the Earth Policy Institute looks at the spectrum of current ecological threats and, where food is concerned, he focusses on the fact that as soon as oil prices rise more steeply, more agricultural land will be drawn into producing lucrative ethanol (bio-fuel). MF

The potential of nutrition to promote physical and behavioual well-being
Bernard Gesch | 2005 | OUP
This essay is only one, but an important one, in a big volume called *The science of well-being*. It discusses dietary baselines, how they vary, and how we extrapolate 'behaviour' from diet. MF

Science and citizens: globalization and the challenge of engagement
Melissa Leach, Ian Scoones & Brian Wynne (eds.) | 2005 | Zed Books
This collection of essays makes a major contribution to debates about the relationship between science and society – debates that are immediately relevant to a food sector recovering from BSE, Foot and Mouth Disease and the controversy over GM crops. TM

The taste for ethics: an ethic of food consumption
Christian Coff | 2006 | Springer Verlag
Christian Coff argues that ethical concern for 'the good life' should be extended to cover fair food production practices. He explores how we can reflect ethically, or caringly, about living organisms, ecological systems and our human identity. TM

The travels of a T-Shirt in the gobal economy
Pietra Rivoli | 2005 | John Wiley and Sons
This a fine look at a crop analogous in almost every way to manufactured food. The cotton T-shirt is grown in an environmentally disastrous way, it is processed at hidden costs to the labourers and the mill-towns, and it meets trade walls at every turn. MF

The way we eat: why our food choices matter
Peter Singer | 2006 | Rodale Press
Due out in May, this is a new book from Peter Singer, who has a long record of provoking lively ethical debate. TM

Worlds of food: place, power, and provenance in the food chain
Kevin Morgan, Terry Marsden & Jonathan Murdoch | 2005 | OUP
This book explores the geo-politics of the food chain at the World Trade Organisation, in the European Union and in the USA. It includes case studies from Tuscany, Wales and California. TM

upcoming events

bulletin of the food ethics council

2nd March '06	**The Future of Functional Foods** Food Manufacture | www.william-reed.co.uk/functionalfoods | London, UK
13th March '06	**Genes and Gene Patenting: Is it Fair?** ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society | egenis-ero@exeter.ac.uk | Streatham, UK
13th - 17th March '06	**The UK Rural Economy and Land Use Debates** RELU | esrc@vistaevents.co.uk | London, UK
15th - 16th March '06	**Nutrigenomics and Health – from Vision to Food** Centre for Advanced Food Studies | congress@lmc.dk | Frederiksberg, Denmark
16th - 17th March '06	**Markets and Finance for Biofuels and Biomass** Environmental Finance | info@environmental-finance.com | London, UK
17th March '06	**GB Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Conference** WAG, Defra, SE | ahws@keystone-group.co.uk | Leicester, UK
20th - 21st March '06	**National Conference on Obesity and Health** NCOH | ncoh@indexcommunications.com | Manchester, UK
23rd - 24th March '06	**The Future of European Agriculture in a Globalised Market** AgraNet | www.agra-net.com | London, UK
27th - 29th March '06	**British Society of Animal Science (BSAS) Annual Conference** BSAS | bsas@sac.ac.uk | York, UK
4th - 5th April '06	**The Family Farmers Association Conference** The Family Farmers Association | pippafamilyfarmers@uk2.net | London, UK
9th - 12th April '06	**BIO Annual International Convention** Biotechnology Industry Organization | exhibit@bio.org | Chicago, USA
10th April '06	**Ecological Limits to Sustainable Development** British Ecological Society | meetings@BritishEcologicalSociety.org | Edinburgh, UK
26th April '06	**Convergence of the Public Health and Sustainability Agendas** University of the West England | emma2.griffin@uwe.ac.uk | Bristol, UK
27th - 28th April '06	**Mapping the Bioeconomy: The Knowledge-Based Economy and the Biosciences** Institute for Advanced Studies | bron@lancaster.ac.uk | Lancaster, UK
28th April '06	**The Metabolic Syndrome: The Public's Perspective** Lipgene | www.lipgene.tcd.ie | Lisbon, Portugal
27th - 29th April '06	**What is Global Ethics and How to Research it?** Ghent University | wim.vandekerckhove@UGent.be | Ghent, Belgium
3rd - 13th May '06	**Organic Farming and Sustainable Agriculture Delegation to Cuba** ACTAF, MAELA, SOCLA | cuba@desal.org.mx | Havana, Cuba
8th - 12th May '06	**Food Security and HIV/AIDS** Project Concern International | godonnell@projectconcern.org | Lusaka, Zambia
30th - 31st May '06	**Joint Organic Congress 2006 / Organic Farming and European Rural Development** Organic Congress | clausbo.andreasen@agrsci.dk | Odense, Denmark
22nd - 24th June '06	**Eursafe 2006 - Ethics and the Politics of Food** European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics | eursafe2006@etikkom.no | Oslo, Norway
13th - 18th Aug '06	**The World Congress on Genetics Applied to Livestock Production** Brazilian Society of Animal Breeding | secretariat@wcgalp8.org.br | Brazil
20th - 25th Aug '06	**International Plant Breeding Symposium** IPBS | intlplantbreeding@cgiar.org | Mexico City, Mexico
3rd - 7th Sept '06	**Agricultural Engineering for a Better World** CIGR, EurAgEng, VDI-MEG and FAO | info@2006cigr.org | Bonn, Germany