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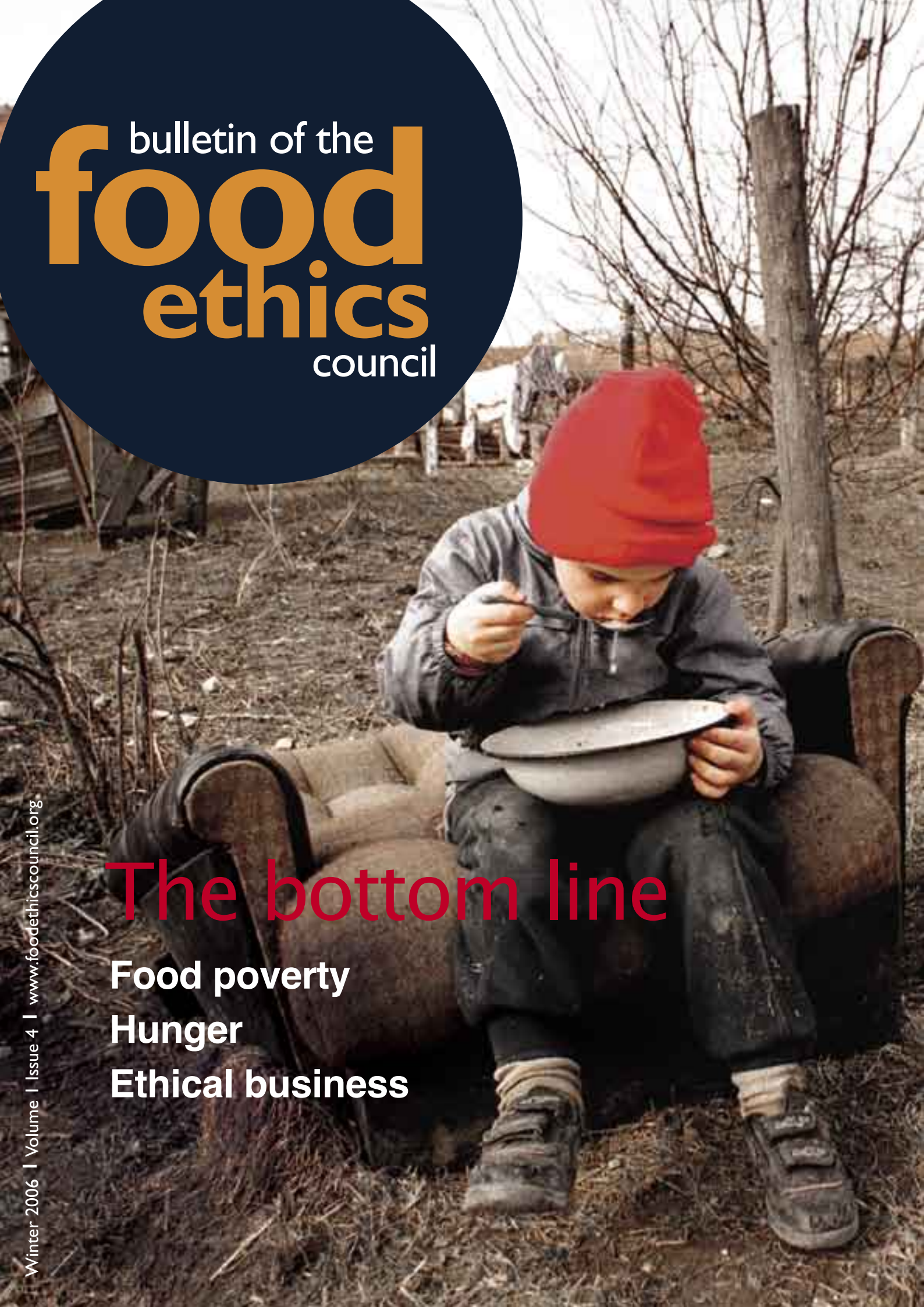

The bottom line

Food poverty
Hunger
Ethical business

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Contents

The Bulletin of the Food Ethics Council seeks to challenge accepted opinion and spark fruitful debate about key issues and developments in food and farming. Distributed quarterly to subscribers, each issue features news and analysis from people actively involved in producing food and shaping policy.

The Food Ethics Council challenges government, business and the public to tackle ethical issues in food and farming, providing research, analysis and tools to help. The views of contributors to this bulletin are not necessarily those of the Food Ethics Council or its members.

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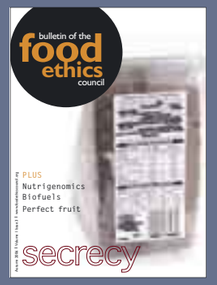
LETTERS

Pet food for people



Sir; Helen Wallace's article on personalised nutrition (Autumn '06) came to mind when I went to a pet food superstore. Proliferating products claim to address health problems like overweight, diabetes and arthritis that now afflict many pets. Products mimic human eating habits like starters, desserts, snacks, treats, functional foods and supplements with ingredients that would not feature in the animals' natural diets.

The pet food sector is pioneering market segmentation with products for different breeds, lifestages and 'lifestyles' such as 'not getting out much' or 'active'. It is hugely medicalised and the 'functionality' of these tailored foods is often from the human perspective. So if your adolescent, long-haired ferret is of a nervous disposition and is being entered in a show, you can get products that specific.

The pet food sector is leading trends for market segmentation and medicalisation, ahead of companies targeting similar products at people. Not only is this treating pets like people, but perhaps it means we're eating pet food too.

Rose Bridger, Food System Consultant
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Consulting on co-existence

Sir; Peter Riley (Autumn '06, Letters) is concerned about Defra's coexistence proposals for GM and non-GM crops to be grown in the UK, on the grounds that a threshold of 0.9 percent will lead to 'contamination' of organic and non-GM crops.

He overlooks two key points. First, the co-existence proposals are based upon 0.9 percent because this is the EU labelling threshold for GM material. If the Soil Association, or other organic standards organisations, choose to set their thresholds below 0.9 percent, that is a commercial issue for them, not a regulatory issue.

Second, Britain's farmers have successfully grown different types of crops together, to meet the demands of a range of customers and markets, for years. Furthermore, GM and non-GM crops have been co-existing in 21 countries around the world without problems for the last decade.

It seems strange that Mr Riley rejects the co-existence proposals when they are based upon sound science and promote choice for farmers and consumers – perhaps he has other reasons to dislike the application of this technology?

Defra's consultation paper includes options for practical and sensible guidelines for coexistence to ensure that those UK farmers who wish to can also grow GM crops without cause for concern – just like their 8.5 million colleagues around the world.

Tony Combes
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From the editor

Tony Blair has said October's Stern Review on the economics of climate change is the most important report about the future published since he became PM. He may well be right. It also shows that it's the way you tell 'em that really matters.

The headline Blair took from the report – that unabated climate change would have disastrous, irreversible consequences for the planet within our lifetimes – is hardly new. The difference Stern made was to show it is cost-effective to save our own skins. I'm glad he's done this but ashamed that he needed to. If Stern had found it wasn't cost-effective to prevent global devastation, wouldn't that say more about the way we do economics than about the case for action on climate change?

This issue of the bulletin is about how we do economics when it comes to our food. Where and how do we draw 'bottom lines' for our decisions about food, as businesses, policy makers and families?

Charlie Clutterbuck, Matt Loose and Jean-Philippe Renaut ask how food businesses can take on board social and environmental issues such as climate change in their decision-making, alongside economic issues, exploring the notion of a 'triple bottom line'. John Turner describes his own struggle, as a farmer, to make doing the right thing pay.

James MacGregor and Bill Vorley discuss how to make trade-offs between competing environmental, social and economic objectives. They ask whether efforts to reduce airfreighted food miles, which contribute to climate change, will deny vital economic opportunities to poor people in rural Africa.

Extreme poverty and hunger are the focus of contributions from Patrick Mulvany and Devinder Sharma, who question how such profound economic injustice can remain so marginal in multilateral politics. Mulvany's call to give small-scale producers the autonomy to implement solutions of their own is echoed by Jo Murphy-Lawless, who argues that agricultural skills and innovation are undervalued. Laura Davis's feature describes how a patchwork of rural poverty and wealth meets global fast food in China's changing economy.

The opening articles, by Liz Dowler, Sue Haddleton and Michele Field, offer three perspectives on food poverty in the UK. They explore its causes, how government and the food sector might tackle them, and how the stacked bottom lines that add up to food poverty profoundly compromise people's autonomy to 'choose' food. Mike Rayner further explores personal decision-making, and the ethics of influencing it, in an article about food advertising and public health promotion.

When it comes to food, the bottom lines are stark and acute for many households and small-scale producers in the UK and internationally – sharper, arguably, than the bottom lines for big business. Yet the decisions citizens make around those stark lines often seem more complex – more culturally, socially and ethically aware – than the narrow cost-benefit mindset makes the Stern Review so crucial. What tools and policies can help make ethics the norm for all of us, while ensuring our decisions are no less rational for gaining greater breadth?

Tom MacMillan
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If you want to respond to any of the articles in this issue or raise a different point please write us a letter. We also publish full-length articles 'in response'. We can only publish a limited number of articles, so please get in touch before putting pen to paper. Our contact details are on the contents page.

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Analysis: food poverty

Social justice depends on dignity and decent incomes

Environmentalists bemoan NIMBY-ism – the 'not-in-my-back-yard' mentality that makes the big issues seem distant and defeats projects like wind power generation. When it comes to poverty we face the opposite problem – with campaigns to 'make poverty history' and growing demand for fair trade, we seem more alert in the UK to global poverty than to deprivation, indignity and injustice on our doorsteps.

New Labour has reduced child poverty, largely through new tax, benefit and employment policies to lift families out of the cycle of deprivation. Yet, this autumn sees the launch of yet another campaign by the End Child Poverty coalition, and the Harker report published on 1st November underlines how people simply don't believe poverty exists in a rich country with a long-standing welfare state.[1]

True, specific groups such as asylum seekers or rough sleepers apart, we have a welfare system which is supposed to prevent destitution. That it fails to enable people to live with dignity and decency is partly down to decades of benefit cuts – in cash and in kind – and relentlessly inflexible systems which cannot deal with the peculiarities of real life. But it is also due to a minimalist approach: governments are always trying to cut public expenditure and maintain voter favour, and so take a 'least-cost-living' approach to setting levels of social assistance or minimum wages. Food and nutrition readily lend themselves to social policy reductionism: scientific notions of minimum diets for health, sparingly costed and using average proportions of income spent on food, set the foundation for poverty definitions which, while distinguishing those whose incomes are lower than could possibly maintain sufficiency, all too readily become the level at which people could live, if only they budgeted properly.

This is what has happened in the UK over the last century. The 'shock' minimal living needs that Seebohm Rowntree used in his famous York survey of poverty eventually translated into the cash level for the National Assistance rates used by Beveridge in setting up the welfare state.[2] With grudging uprating for inflation, the levels of income support, benefits and pensions, as well as the minimum wage, still reflect this parsimonious model. In reality, of course, those living for more than a few months on such benefits – the time Beveridge envisaged – are unable to buy the basics they need. This is because rent, fuel and other utility bills, and the price of food where poorer people live, are often higher than average or increase faster than prices on which uprating is based. People have to drop their spending and the food budget is squeezed – defaulting on food doesn't earn a fine or prison sentence – or they become increasingly indebted to the state, privatised utilities or private moneylenders with their crippling interest rates.

This is one explanation for the monotonous, cheap diets that people living on state benefits or at the minimum wage are usually observed to consume. The solution is not cookery classes or food co-operatives – though these might be welcomed as providing skills or short-term solutions – but decent levels of income. How should such levels be set? The level at which people who are 'poor' are differentiated from those who are not is crucial both the allocation and the public acceptability of social expenditure. Recent efforts by the GLA and companies in Canary Wharf to set a living wage draw on a modified budget standards approach, and new work funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation will use a mixture of 'expert' and consensual approaches.[3] Thus, crucially, those who live on low incomes are involved in estimating 'needs' and costing them realistically, to calculate how much money households of different types, and in various circumstances, require as a base for decent living.

> Defaulting on food doesn't earn a fine or prison sentence

A key principle of food security is that people should be free from fear and anxiety about being able to eat healthily, or even eat at all. Society generally expects those who have little money to budget with care to meet essential needs. But, until recently, members of households with low incomes have in effect borne all the responsibilities: no say in how much money they earn or can claim, under what conditions, and also what happens to the local shops, what prices they have to pay, or how they get to cheaper shops. They also carry the consequences in poorer health, reduced wellbeing and shorter lives. A truly inclusive approach to defining and tackling poverty – fit for a just society – will help to change this.

[1] Lisa Harker (2006) *Delivering on child poverty.* www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2006/harker/
[2] Dowler and Jones Finer (eds.) (2003) *The welfare of food.* Blackwell.
[3] GLA (2006) *A fairer London.* www.london.gov.uk/mayor/economic_unit/docs/living-wage-may06.pdf

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Analysis: food poverty

Can companies help to deliver solutions to food povety?

A lot has been said about food poverty since Tim Lang it called "the Cinderella subject within food policy" in 1999 – the wealth of knowledge gathered by people like Liz Dowler and Martin Caraher goes a long way to explaining what food poverty is, why it exists and what policies could eradicate it.[1] The problem is that government has dragged its feet despite all this research so, as obesity rates soar, food poverty remains as pronounced as ever. Is it time to look elsewhere for solutions – to things that companies could do, cheaply and in the name of corporate responsibility, to make it easier for families on low incomes to eat well?

The research shows there is little to teach families on low income about budgeting – most are very skilled at it. The problems lie in other areas, such as the levels set for benefit payments and, crucially, with people's access to shops selling affordable and nutritious food. I saw something of this when I was on the Parents Jury at the Food Commission and went shopping for junk food: it was depressingly clear that the biggest selections could be found in the poorest parts of town. This problem is compounded by junk food advertising that targets children, as kids emerge as major decision makers about food or, as Jane Dixon and Cathy Banwell have put it, as "heads of the table".[2]

Having spent long periods of my childhood in a low-income household, due to my father's ill-health, the research rings true. But the point about access really came home to me while researching this article, when I did my family shopping on foot at Asda, Somerfields and my local down-at-heel Sainsbury's. It was an exhausting and depressing experience – and that was leaving my children at home! Asda was the most pleasant and had good facilities, but the store was huge and out of the way – the last thing I felt like after walking all around it looking for the things on my shopping list, then traipsing home with all the bags, was cooking a family meal from scratch. Yet, in contrast to many people living on low incomes, I'm lucky enough to have good cooking facilities and enjoy good health. I'm also no sloth and, as the research shows, in contrast to reports in the media, food poverty is not caused by people being lazy.

So, how could companies make a difference? Well, I'd suggest that having groceries delivered would make a difference to the quality of life of many low-income families. The big chains already offer free delivery services, but at the moment only if you spend around £70. How about lowering that to £25? Home delivery is now mainly arranged through the internet, but Sainsbury's accept orders by telephone. Why don't others follow Sainsbury's lead? Paying for deliveries with cash makes ordering trickier. Until a better solution can be found, how about accepting cash payment in store, which at least saves families the exhausting task of getting their purchases home? If families live in a high-rise block, how about a delivery to the ground floor?

The multiples are brilliant at logistics, so the details are unlikely to present much problem if the finance and commitment was there. After all, if a local pizza takeaway can manage it then surely some of the world's most powerful companies can too. The point isn't to take business away from local shops, but to give people heavily burdened by poverty access to a service that only the affluent can currently afford. I see a lot of elderly people buying food in M&S, for instance, and it would be great to see the company offer home delivery at the level those customers spend. Indeed, I'd much rather see supermarkets doing this than making charitable donations or sponsoring NGO conferences to fulfil their social responsibilities. It is not as if they wouldn't make a profit – it might just be that little bit smaller.

[1] Dowler et al. (2001) *Poverty bites*. CPAG.
[2] Dixon and Banwell (2004) Heading the table: parenting and the junior consumer. *British Food Journal* 6 (3): 181-193.

Michele Field

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Analysis: food poverty

If only we had a classless food culture

The question of who can afford what in their food purchases has been reduced to a slanging match between phrases like 'junk food' and 'Slow Food'. The research suggests that in Western food cultures, people first move to cheaper products for their energy potential (sugars and starches), *then* develop a taste along those lines – instead of a taste for so-called sophisticated foods with bitter, musky, earthy, or complicated 'marinated' flavours.

Some food policy problems are rarely addressed because questions about personal palates are so riven with prejudice. In my experience, at any business lunch in London it is only the CEO who has the panache to order battered cod and chips and a nursery-food pudding; the managers who rank below him will make a point of going up the social scale to show more 'accomplished' tastebuds. That is a metaphor for what is happening overall in food spending, I think.

During October, the CBI reported a net drop in overall retail sales of 4 percent. What was startling was that for so-called specialist food, the drop was far greater – it was the biggest drop in trading conditions since December 2002. It is not that people now have suddenly lost a taste for real ales and Colchester oysters. The reason lies in the difference between incomes and the retail prices at which these food are sold.

Part of the argument on Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's current TV series 'The River Cottage Treatment' is that once eaters who buy ready-meals learn that it costs no more to prepare the same dishes from raw ingredients, they will cook for themselves. That addresses a major food-cost shibboleth. After all, as Tesco says, "For plenty of people, money runs out at the end of the week. Anyone who thinks that price is not an important factor (in food purchases) is very much mistaken."

> People do not eat what they want to eat, but simply what they can afford

A group of chefs who think along this line have emerged in Normandy, in a region with a 17 percent unemployment rate after factories closed. A network of well-known French chefs was assembled by a food critic, Marc de Champerard, and a philosopher, Michel Onfray, with a programme of visits to the small town of Argentan to show audiences (at no cost to them) how to best prepare the most uninspiring of local vegetables and other food. The famous chefs see it as getting out of their luxury and back into real life economics. Perhaps like the French, Britain could spend more on fixing the 'gastronomic fracture' that splits our social classes, rather than colour-coding it red for downmarket and green for aspirational.

To grasp the impact that cost has on our food choices, imagine what we'd do if food was free. Now that we can read free books online, read free city tabloids, take free carrier bags from shops, get free DVDs with our weekend papers, and download free musical recordings, a 'think piece' by Madsen Pirie for the Sunday Business newspaper mentiones the advent of 'free food'. Of course it is not really 'free', anymore than a two-for-the-price-of-one purchase gives you a free item. But, Pirie says, "It is quite conceivable that baked beans and other foods could be supplied free to customers, with the profits being generated elsewhere in the economic chain." I am all for this new dawn if the free food is of a quality that raises the stakes for that type of food in general.

But as Pirie points out, in Star Trek the food is both good and free. The food is created by replicators and involves only a small energy cost. When that day comes in our own lives, we can exercise our taste for caviar instead of 'crab'-sticks. Then perhaps food choices will become really about palates and not social class. For the moment, however, we are stuck in an era where people do not eat what they want to eat, but simply what they can afford – and the affordability brings bad compromises and, eventually, higher social costs.

Mike Rayner

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Analysis: food advertising

Is advertising any good?

The recent debate about the advertising of unhealthy foods to children has moved on. There is now a general consensus that the advertising of unhealthy foods to children is a bad thing and that something needs to be done about it. A recent opinion poll commissioned by the British Heart Foundation found that more than two thirds of parents are in favour of a pre-watershed ban. But now there are two more questions on the horizon: should you advertise anything to children – even good things like apples; and, should you advertise unhealthy foods to adults?

Advertising has two basic properties: it is informative and it is manipulative. Of course it can have other properties as well: it can be enjoyable, exciting, shocking, offensive and so on, but these are secondary to its main properties. If I stand in a farmers' market and shout: 'Get your organic, locally produced, apples here!' I am advertising. I am informing the listeners something about the quality of the product I am selling and where to obtain it.

However, very little advertising is actually informative because it's mostly for products that consumers are already informed about. As Vance Packard pointed out in *The hidden persuaders*, published almost exactly 50 years ago, advertising generally seeks to persuade rather than to inform and it is most effective when it persuades in a way that it is hidden from its target audience – in other words, when it is manipulative.

It is because advertising manipulates that there have always been concerns about its effects on children. All codes of advertising practice have a section on children. One of the major concerns of the writers of such codes has been children's inability to understand the advertisers' stratagems.

The main stratagem of advertising is to present us with one or more seductive, but more or less dubious propositions, about the product and to avoid telling us anything we might really need to know about it. Take the recent Happiness Factory advert for Coca-Cola.[1] This advert suggests that Coke is made inside vending machines by cute creatures that laugh, dance and cheer and in other ways demonstrate that they are extremely

> The vast majority of adverts - even for good things - are not about the products they are advertising

happy to manufacture the drink. The actor in the advert seems to get a hint of all this when he tastes the Coke. Of course we are not really meant to believe what the advert says about the production of Coke but we are supposed to come away with the view that drinking a Coke would make us a tiny bit happier.

The vast majority of adverts adopt this sort of strategy: they are not about the product they are advertising in any real sense, instead they aim to associate the product with aspirations we all share: happiness, fun, friendship, sex, etc. Even advertising that seeks to sell us 'good things' generally does this. Take one recent advert from the Department of Health, aimed at persuading smokers to quit.[2] In this advert a girl and a boy in a bar catch one another's eyes. He approaches her, whispers something in her ear but then leaves: the implication being that smokers smell so disgusting that they cannot attract the opposite sex. Yet famous smokers such as Ingrid Bergman and Audrey Hepburn presumably didn't have that problem – as in the Coke advert, we are not being told the whole truth. Just as the Coke advert tells us little about Coke, the anti-smoking advert tells us little about the true dangers of cigarette smoking and instead seeks to associate smoking with something that teenagers will be concerned about – their sex lives. Now there is surely no evidence that smoking will lead to less sex just as there is no evidence that drinking Coke leads to more happiness.

I believe in telling people the truth and I do not think that truth should be sacrificed when selling things. This leads me to leads me to think that producers of unhealthy products like cigarettes and Coke should not be allowed to advertise their products when this involves manipulative stratagems that are effectively duplicitous. It also raises questions about the advertising of healthy products like apples or healthy behaviours like not smoking. If the aim of such advertising is good – promoting public health – does this justify any means and, in particular, does it justify the same sort of manipulative stratagems employed by the advertisers of unhealthy products?

Should there be greater restrictions on advertising to children and adults?

Please tell us your views to include next issue. Our contact details are on the contents page.

[1] isadn no. 3037677
[2] isadn no. 3036623, www.visit4info.com.

The other knowledge economy

When did we forget that farming takes skill?

SECOND THOUGHT

Jo Murphy-Lawless

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At the time of independence in the early 20th century, Ireland struggled mightily with what we now call food security. The country had endured famine and emigration in equal measure in its history, and ensuring the emergence of a new class of small independent landowners was seen as a critical political undertaking in securing a future for a stable rural life. This was to be the repository of important social values of belonging and community, but would also provide basic foodstuffs for the Irish people.

By the mid-1960s, when Ireland had acquired its own television station, the national broadcasting authority was producing weekly programmes encouraging farmers with an average holding of 30 acres on how they could best use that land to sustain their families in meat and potatoes, and also generate an adequate income for additional household needs. Yet this belief in the importance of the small farmer was already disappearing.

The small farmer was increasingly described as backward in economic terms, and as the industrialisation of agriculture intensified, the iconic figure "whose rages are for small wet hills full of stones" as the poet Patrick Kavanagh described him, was marginalised. Under EU regulations, some Irish farmers became very big while many went to the wall, labelled as inefficient producers. Today, the remaining small farmers are mostly part-timers, keeping some stock but working off-farm in towns and cities, often in the services sector.

Internationally, these same notions of unsustainability and inefficiency have played into the enforced relocation of former small-holding agriculturalists, seen as 'unskilled workers' who lose their land rights and must become labourers instead. This approach has been heavily backed by the World Bank and the IMF, seeing the growth of transnational agricultural corporations as a more viable future. Even Joseph Stiglitz, a born-again critic of what he describes as the excesses of many World Bank policies about market liberalisation, speaks of the win-win situation in productively bringing together global capital that is looking for good returns with the millions of people he terms unskilled labourers, many displaced from farming, who are looking for jobs.

But agricultural work remains a significant form of employment across the world. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, fierce critics of the Stiglitz approach to globalisation, observe that while increasing numbers – now over 850 million – are deprived of sufficient food globally, farmers remain as they have always been, deeply skilled workers who share the same characteristics of innovation, creativity and concrete knowledge that we prize in other sectors of the global economy, including the so-called knowledge economy. What small farmers do not possess is any security around the relations of exchange – how their productivity fits into a globalised marketplace.

As millions of small farmers have become landless workers, this important distinction between their economic status as peasants lacking equitable relations of exchange, and their work as skilled agriculturalists who need to find new ways of politicising the issues of land ownership and food security, is seen in movements like the Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST). Since the early 1980s, the MST has confronted fierce opposition from governments and global multinationals, achieving ownership of land tracts three-quarters of the size of Ireland and transforming the lives of displaced rural workers. MST has specifically acknowledged that the struggle for land is but one part of a wider struggle for all those who are economically excluded in both rural and urban settings across the world, and who as a result are condemned to abject poverty.

Hardt and Negri argue that the ideas of peasant farmers as objects of romanticism or as a backward reactionary class have been thrown overboard by new global movements. The key issue is how people can win the right to live and work without exploitation. Like MST, we need to identify the common ground between all forms of work and the connections with social justice as we confront the challenges of growing global poverty.

More about

MST
www.mstbrazil.org

Feeding China

As the economy changes, food systems clash

All our futures depend on the outcome, says ***Laura Davis***

The Chinese, according to travel writer Colin Thubron, have a passionate relationship with food. The importance of food in people's daily lives is one that is hard for outsiders to appreciate, until they realise that memories of hunger and food shortages exist among nearly all Chinese people apart from those born from the 1980s onwards. For many, daily life revolves around growing food, shopping, preparing it, eating and drinking, both in and outside of the home.

I recently had the opportunity to spend time in southern China, as I now find myself related to an enormous Chinese family through the marriage of my son to a young Chinese woman. My travels were not only an opportunity to experience the food culture of an extended Chinese family, but also to travel from east to west across southern China by train and bus, up into the eastern Himalayas near the Tibetan border with members of the family. (It is not uncommon for the whole family to accompany the bride and groom on honeymoon!)

The first and enduring impression of China is that of scale, not only of the size of the country, but also of the continuing transformation of environment, culture and society, and the economy. The sheer extent and density of the cities, the distances between them, the visible transformation of urban food cultures and transport infrastructures, and the relationships between these and the peri-urban and rural bases of food production suggest that China's food systems are at a crossroads, with at least two food systems contesting for dominance. For the vast majority of Chinese people, food is still locally produced and traded, prepared from fresh ingredients, and eaten in a convivial family or social setting. But a recent article by Alan Herro on global fast foods brands in China signals a less welcome trend.[1] Some fast food giants have thrived in China's cities for several years, but the arrival of products such as Krispy Kreme donuts, the latest in a line of high-calorie, low-nutrient products, comes at a time when Chinese newspapers are printing articles on the "steadily deteriorating health condition of children" and the "alarming" increases in obesity that are emerging from five national health surveys.[2]

In *Who will feed China? Wake-up call for a small planet*, Lester Brown (1995) suggests that, to feed its people in the 21st Century, China may have to import so much grain that this could trigger unprecedented rises in world food prices. In China, even with population control policies, the population increases by the equivalent of a new Beijing every year. Meanwhile, where 80 percent of the grain crop is irrigated, water scarcity and loss of cropland to industrialisation and urbanisation mean that food production is stagnating. Cropland losses are heavy in countries that are densely populated before industrialisation, and these countries quickly become net grain importers.

On my journey across southern China, the landscapes and farming systems were incredibly variable, with the signs of both relatively traditional and industrial systems shaping the environment in different areas. The traditional small land holding, with glistening paddy fields being planted and tended by extended families dressed in blue cotton suits and round straw hats, is still widespread in many areas. The lack of transport infrastructure and refrigeration means that it is simply uneconomic to transport food over long distances, and so far, China's unique system of land-holding and food production seems largely intact, even though it is heavily reliant on industrial inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides. In between the fields and smaller towns were the large factories and industrial complexes, belching filth into the air and

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Laura Davis

water, or closed down and abandoned, as production shifts elsewhere or new technologies require new sites and scales of production.

As the long train journey progressed, the landscape changed to one in which we could see stunted crops of maize in poor soils between rocky outcrops, and there was an overall sense of poverty and struggle among the people. This view from the train window went on for hundreds and hundreds of miles. Then it dawned on me what had transformed the landscape: deforestation, leading to massive soil erosion and the undermining of productivity, leading in turn to impoverishment. Once again, the sheer scale on which this had occurred was breathtaking. Some new plantings were visible in places, but these were clearly relatively recent and too late to conserve that most precious resource, the soil.

As the journey took us onward into the Himalayas, the cultural and environmental complexity of China took on a new form, with completely different ethnic communities, having unique cultural forms and languages, existing within a few miles of one another, due to the inaccessibility of remote valleys and plateaus. In some areas lived the Yi (known as 'noble') people, in others were Tibetan minority groups, and in one remote area, one of the last matrilineal societies on earth was being turned into a Disney-style theme park by the new market for internal tourism.

Once again, there was a patchwork of viable and collapsing food production systems across different, quite small areas. The plains with the viable systems had sleek, fat cattle, healthy, vigorous looking crops, neat and well maintained homesteads, and relaxed, happy-looking residents. But in other areas, the trees had been cleared, the crops were stunted and struggling, homesteads looked impoverished, and people and animals looked less healthy. In all of these areas, the older people were tiny, the middle generation were larger, but the younger generation were substantially taller and larger. I realised that what I was seeing was the impact of hunger and struggle across the generations; the older generations had lived through devastating war with the Japanese, civil war between the nationalists and communists, the 'great leap forward' which produced a devastating famine, and the cultural revolution. Food insecurity persisted until the early 1980s.

So what was behind this patchwork of productivity and impoverishment?

[1] www.worldwatch.org/node/4494/
[2] *China Daily*, 21 Aug 2006.

Feeding China

The impoverished areas had been extensively deforested, maize was the staple grain crop, there was visible overgrazing and the resulting soil erosion was cutting through carefully terraced small farms on the mountainous slopes, washing away the red soils, gradually exposing bare rock and damaging fragile roads. Although I was not there long enough to find out, I imagined that these areas would become increasingly depopulated, leading to a cycle of abandonment and further collapse of the food production systems. The more productive areas had much more mixed systems, although maize was clearly the main grain crop, and had more settled, stronger homesteads and communities. In these areas, extensive terracing on slopes was well maintained, with cropping and animal husbandry systems being mixed and integrated. Soils were conserved; productivity and health were more visible.

Having spent many of my younger adult years as an organic farmer, I found myself reflecting on the underlying ethic of organic husbandry as expressed by Eve Balfour in her 1946 classic *The living soil* – that the health of soil, plants, animals and humans is 'one and indivisible'. Where soils are impoverished and eroded, productivity declines and, inevitably, people's health gets compromised in time too. In the West, we are buffered from this because we can, to an extent, buy our way out by sourcing food globally unaware of the impact of far flung food production systems on soil and water resources, or on the health and dignity of people where the food is being grown.

The relationships between food production systems and health outcomes are complex and non-linear, and they become increasingly hard to comprehend in a globalising world. What is clear is that China faces immense challenges of scale and complexity in feeding itself, and new threats to public health are emerging linked to the country's transition towards an industrial food system. The signs are that China is now in the grip of the 'nutrition transition'; population health is threatened in new and different ways to those that the country experienced in the 20th century. The outcome of the contest between two food systems – one exemplified by the Krispy Kreme Donut Corporation, one by China's patchwork of locally-adapted, highly productive, culturally appropriate food systems – matters for us all. It matters for the health, wellbeing and body mass index of the Chinese people, and it matters for the health and wellbeing of us in the West because, as Lester Brown points out, in an integrated world economy China's land and water scarcity will become everyone's scarcity, and China's rising food prices will become everyone's rising food prices.

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Analysis: hunger

'Now is the Time for Food Sovereignty!'

Ten years after the World Food Summit, the scourge of hunger is increasing. Worse still, governments seem to have lost the will to stop it.

At the Special Session in Rome in October to review 'progress' in achieving the 1996 World Food Summit goals, the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) confessed that ten years after the World Food Summit's commitment to halve hunger, the numbers, far from going down, were increasing by four million per year. For 854 million people the barrel is empty.

Nations that gathered in 1996, represented by presidents, heads of state and prime ministers, had agreed a plan of action that would halve hunger, a proposal so modest that Fidel Castro, the president of Cuba, called it shameful. Referring to a world of plenty – there are enough food and food producing resources to eradicate hunger if they were distributed equitably – and a world that then spent, annually, more than $600 billion on weapons and war, Castro ended his intervention with a warning. "The bells that are presently tolling for those starving to death every day will tomorrow be tolling for all humankind if it did not want, did not know how, or could not be sufficiently wise, to save itself."

A decade later, as annual military spending doubles to $1.13 trillion, multilateralism collapses and agribusiness corporations grow ever stronger, political will to banish hunger is vanishing. In place of presidents, governments limply proffered low-level bureaucrats with a smattering of ministers to defend their inaction at this review meeting. Few could muster more than blandishments with a hand-wringing concern for the hungry and the need for more charity and welfare.

But worse was to come. The conclusions of a report on an important process to review land reform policy were rejected. In March 2006, FAO and the Brazilian government organised the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The conference proposed urgent actions needed for the governance of this vital resource.

The majority of countries at the meeting in Rome supported the setting up of a task force to examine land reform issues in greater depth. But, the French chair of the meeting, siding with the USA, European Union and Canada which wanted no action, switched off the microphones and walked out, despite enraged cries from the Brazilian delegation and others to continue negotiations. The outcome is a deliberate delaying tactic to bounce this issue to another, even less motivated FAO committee next year rather than take overdue actions now; it is 25 years since these urgent land reform issues were properly addressed at international levels.

One reason for the clarity of proposals was that civil society had organised a parallel event called 'Land, Territory and Dignity' which, among other things, urged governments to "apply policies that recognize rights and democratize access to land, coastal areas, forests and other natural resources where access to these resources is concentrated in the hands of a few". The event also emphasised the importance of food sovereignty that is: "based on the human right to food, to self-determination, on indigenous rights to territory, and on the rights of rural peoples to produce food for local and national markets. Food sovereignty defends agriculture with farmers, fisheries with artisanal fishing families, forestry with forest communities, and steppes with nomadic pastoralists…"

That call was reinforced in the October meeting. Eloquent interventions by the global farmers movement, La Via Campesina, forums of artisanal fisherfolk, pastoralists and indigenous peoples, supported by churches, civil society networks and many more who crowded half of the conference hall, emphasised the importance of implementing the food sovereignty policy framework. But with the exception of the Italian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who called for this radical new approach to eradicating hunger, the call fell on deaf ears.

In this FAO conference the people at the sharp end of food production – small-scale farmers, herders and fisherfolk – made it clear that they could eradicate hunger if policy permitted them to do so. With the failures of existing international governance so harshly exposed and governments bereft of ideas, there is new urgency. Civil society and social movements do have the answers. Their slogan spells out the bottom line for us: that now is The Time for Food Sovereignty!

More about

Land, Territory and Dignity
www.tierraydignidad.org
Farmers' views on the future of food
www.iied.org/pubs/pdf/full/14503IIED.pdf
World Food Summit: five years' later
www.ukabc.org/wfs5+report.pdf

The fight against hunger

The world's poor cannot live on promises

LETTER FROM INDIA

Devinder Sharma

Almost every new agricultural technology and international summit – from transgenic crops to the Climate Convention – is launched in the name of eliminating hunger and poverty. With the media reprinting the great words of wisdom rolled out at each international conference, it is tempting to believe that poverty and hunger will soon be history. But don't hold your breadth.

At the first World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996, heads of state of most countries present "reaffirmed the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger". Terming prevailing hunger "shameful" and "a crime against humanity" they considered it unacceptable that more than 800 million people throughout the world did not have enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs.

Leader after leader appealed for urgency in the fight against mankind's worst scourge. And in all their benevolence these leaders committed themselves to halving that number by the year 2015. In other words, instead of urgently waging a war against global hunger, they actually postponed the monumental task of feeding the world. Vowing to feed half the world's 800 million hungry by the year 2015, they actually meant that it would need another 20 years (beyond 2015) to provide food to the remaining 400 million hungry.

And now look at the 'urgency' to remove hunger. The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that some 24,000 people die from hunger every day. In other words, by the time the global leadership promised to remove half the world's hunger (by 2015), more than 165 million people would have succumbed to hunger.

Ten years after the 1996 Food Summit, the number of hungry has grown to 854 million. This is a conservative estimate. We all know that the actual number is more. Ironically, the only country to have actually reduced the number of hungry year after year happens to be a communist regime – China. For democratically elected governments in the developing and developed world, removing hunger is not a political necessity. Why blame the dictators, when democratically elected governments are no better?

I come from a country that alone has one-third of the world's hungry – some 320 million people go to bed with empty stomachs. Five years after the 1996 Food Summit, India's food stores were overflowing with surplus grain – some 65 million tonnes, much of it stacked due to shortage of space. While much of the surplus grain was exported at below poverty-line prices, the hungry waited endlessly. The world's largest democracy did not even think of using the surplus grain to feed the hungry.

For democratically elected governments in the developing and developed world, removing hunger is not a political necessity

Internationally too, compassion for the hungry has evaporated. Take the FAO – keeping hunger alive is the only way for the international organisation to stay functional. The World Food Programme, another UN body, which provides food aid to least developed, low income and food deficit countries, is also institutionally hooked on hunger. When FAO was created at the conference in Hot Springs, Virginia, USA in 1943, its responsibilities were limited to gathering and disseminating data on agricultural commodities, production and trade. As John Boyd-Orr, the first Director General of the FAO, put it, "the poor required food and all that they got was statistics."

The poor are still fed an overdose of statistics. They are being made to live in an illusory world of sophisticated technology and market trends – vitamin A-enriched 'Golden Rice' and the potential that Wal-Mart or Tesco might bring food to their begging bowls. While scientists, policy makers and the agribusiness giants exploit global hunger, the poor live on hope.

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Going local

'Alternative' business plans still need to add up

ON THE FARM

John Turner

The case for local food could not be stronger and the key messages of traceability, reduction of food miles and investment in local communities are, if not actually implemented, at least becoming widely recognised.

One of the first steps we took after establishing our new beef herd was to set up a local box scheme for our meat – our contribution to developing an 'alternative food network': alternative to the abuse of market dominance of the major retailers, alternative to the logjam of lorries that make up so much of the transport on our roads and, most importantly, an opportunity for those in our local community to break the habit of paying for indifferent produce from indifferent checkout staff.

Setting up our box scheme wasn't easy or cheap. If finding a suitable abattoir and butcher to prepare the meat was relatively simple, registering our new venture with the local Trading Standards and other agencies made me start to realise why so many other farmers shy away from taking the same initial steps into local retailing. Eighteen months later, we are supplying about 40 six-kilogramme boxes of assorted beef cuts every six weeks to villages in our local parish - hardly likely to make the local supermarket managers start looking for alternative employment, but for us a significant start nevertheless.

At the same time, we have continued to market the bulk of our beef through the same centralised food distribution system whose abuse of market dominance led to the demise of our dairy enterprise. Eighteen months ago, I had anticipated that by now we would be increasing local sales (for which demand continues to outstrip supply by a factor of three) and reducing the produce that eventually finds its way onto the supermarket shelves. Yet, we are not.

So why do I currently struggle to justify continuing with my beloved box scheme? Well, our experience so far has brought home some uncomfortable facts. We have to make a 60-mile trip with the single animal we take on each occasion to the butcher who dispatches and prepares the meat for us – a 120-mile round-trip that is repeated 21 days later when we collect the boxes of meat. A very conservative cost for this transport at 40p per mile adds almost £100 to the costs incurred in processing. We store the boxes in a chiller and freezer room that we installed to comply with Environmental Health standards at a cost of almost £10,000. Each room has a 7.5 KW refrigeration unit which, although the most efficient available, still has to run regardless of whether 40 boxes are being stored or just one. In total, the cost of transport, processing and storage adds up to a hefty £425 of the £1,400 that the boxes are worth.

By comparison, animals destined for the supermarket embark on a 120-mile trip to the abattoir, but this transport is shared with probably sixty other animals and costs us just £12.50 per animal. Similar efficiencies in both energy and cost apply to all aspects of the chain, including processing and cold storage.

When I established our box scheme, the most import objective was to supply good quality produce to local households for about the same price they would expect to pay at the supermarket. I also wanted to challenge some of the marketing strategy that suggests organic food should be the preserve of the well-heeled; I wanted this to be local, organic food for all.

Ethics don't pay the rent, the insurance or any one of the endless overheads that farming businesses like ours incur. Yet increasing the price we charge for the boxes would take them out of the reach of the very people we set up the scheme to supply.

The case for local food efficiencies may seem self-evident, but in reality many vital pieces of the supply chain needed to make it a viable alternative to centralised systems just don't exist. We already have a growing interest in local food from households and small-scale producers through to public sector bodies and supermarket chains. To make good on this potential we now need investment in infrastructure and expertise that will make local food both efficient and affordable. Many farmers are ready to play their part, but we are only one link in the chain.

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Analysis: food miles

Are air miles fair miles?

The concept of 'food miles' suggests we should buy goods which have travelled the shortest distance from farm to table and discriminate against long-haul transportation, especially air-freight. Long-distance food transport is associated with additional greenhouse gas emissions. In light of growing international concern over the speed and scale of climate change, the notion of 'food miles' has captured public attention and seems to be changing what some consumers buy. But, in the process, is it denying people in poor countries – say in parts of rural Africa – vital economic opportunities?

Nowhere are UK consumers more persistently engaged with rural Africa than through food consumption choices. A wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables (FFV) is imported to the UK from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA – excluding South Africa). UK consumers spend over £1 million at retail every day on FFV from this region.

Kenya is a good example of how local economic development follows export horticulture development. Kenya was the first SSA country to develop systems in which high-value horticulture is exported to the UK. A full 70 percent of quality green beans produced in Kenya come to the UK. This business is perceived as a success, and a number of other countries have followed. Over one million people in rural Africa are supported by the FFV exports to the UK.

Much high-value produce imported to the UK from SSA, especially flowers and a whopping 40 percent of FFV, is air-freighted, and is being singled out as the epitome of unsustainable consumption. This brings climate change impacts of FFV trade squarely into the development equation. What is clear is that decisions – of consumers, of policy makers, and of food businesses – should be based on good information.

Currently, per capita carbon dioxide emissions are unequal and the gap is widening: global, 3.6 tonnes; the UK, 9.2 tonnes, Kenya 0.2 tonnes, Uganda 0.1 tonnes. Under current calculations of a sustainable carbon future, equitable ecological space per capita is 1.8 tonnes. Hence, SSA countries have considerable reserves of 'ecological space' compared with industrialised countries, including the UK.

There is also inequality in impact and adaptive capacities to climate change. Many African countries are feeling the force of climate change, caused primarily by developed countries. Poorer countries have fewer disposable financial resources to commit to adapting to these impacts. The Kyoto Protocol recognises the need to be fair and not to restrict economic development for developing countries in the transition to a low-carbon future.

There is increasing evidence that the UK's carbon footprint is largely generated domestically. Indeed, to reach targets under Kyoto, the UK needs to prioritise addressing domestic road transport and energy use.

Estimates of doubling of air travel in the next twenty years coupled with high carbon emissions, and the exacerbating effect of 'radiative forcing, make aviation cuts a necessary part of the solution.

Yet the driver for increased flights appears to be passenger volumes; in the UK passenger flights account for 90 percent of emissions from air transport, and international freight for 5 percent. Nevertheless, air-freight is a significant contributor to food transport emissions in the UK. Only 1.5 percent of imported FFV arrive in air transportation but that portion produces 50 percent of all emissions from fruit and vegetable transportation (excluding consumer travel).

It is clear that for most products that can be grown outside of greenhouses and without heating, air-freighted produce usually scores poorly compared with locally-grown produce. Plus, air-freight is responsible for 200 times more emissions if flown rather than shipped from Kenya, or 12 times more energy.

But air-freight of FFV from SSA accounts for less than 0.1 percent of total carbon UK emissions. In the big picture, the environmental cost of international food transport is trivial compared with UK domestic food-miles. Plus, air-freight is the only possible mode of transport from Africa for some highly perishable produce where no other infrastructure exists.

From a development perspective, airfreight of FFV from SSA is a relatively efficient 'investment' by the UK in allocating its carbon emissions when compared to the efficiency of the remaining 99.9 percent that is supporting 60 million UK residents.

Economic development for the poorest in a low carbon future necessarily means expanding emissions for some. Countries with excess 'ecological space' can use it to reduce poverty, generate low-carbon economic growth and foster development. Export horticulture is one of the few genuine opportunities for developing countries that have direct and indirect benefits that reach into poor rural areas.

The concept of 'food miles' is blind to the social and economic benefits associated with trade in food, especially from developing countries. Singular comparisons do not necessarily help us to generate good policy. All environmental and social aspects need to be analysed, and trade-offs assessed. It is essential to look at the huge impacts of the food system at home, before pulling up the drawbridge on Africa.

This article is based on an IIED *Sustainable Development Opinion* paper in October 2006.

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Analysis: triple bottom line

Aiming for the top

The relationship between the bottom line of companies and sustainable development has preoccupied us at SustainAbility ever since the term 'triple bottom line' was coined by the company's founder, John Elkington, in 1994. Since then, the management of social, environmental and economic considerations has gradually become a key consideration for business as it has sought to manage and explain its impacts beyond the narrow financial lens. While the concept of a triple bottom line has mobilised companies around the idea that they need to manage risks in order to maintain their licence to operate, only a few companies are breaking out of this defensive mindset and exploring how sustainability issues can also improve top line growth.

In the food sector we find that leading multinational companies are becoming increasingly conversant with the sustainability agenda and adept at focusing their responses on issues of acute concern to their stakeholders. The table lists a few examples.

Yet, despite some companies responding to these issues, it is clear that, as things stand, global food and agriculture markets are far from sustainable. Corporate responses do not go far or fast enough to make a marked impact on the big challenges that face the world – from providing food for all to tackling poverty.

To make that bigger difference, companies need to recognise the potential to grow their existing markets and enter new markets while having a positive impact on society. This is especially true at a time when consumers are looking for more sustainable products. According to the Co-operative Bank's 2005 ethical consumerism report, UK consumer spending on ethical products grew for the sixth year running in 2004 to £25.8 billion, representing a 15 percent increase over the year before compared with a 3.7 percent rise in total UK household expenditure.

For example, according to the Fairtrade Foundation, global sales of Fairtrade certified products reached €1.1 billion in 2005 representing a 37 percent increase on 2004.

When viewed in this light, solutions to triple bottom line issues can become a business opportunity, both for entrepreneurs with a greater social focus to their business models and for established multinationals.

The emergence and success of Innocent Drinks, Green and Black's, and Ben and Jerry's, are good indicators of the potential market. So is the expansion of markets for organic and fairly traded products. Looking at the supermarket sector as an example, the likes of Migros (Switzerland), Whole Foods (USA), Kesko (Finland), Marks and Spencer (UK) and Waitrose (UK) all make significant revenue from organic and fair trade products. And even the global chain Wal-Mart, known best for its high volume low price proposition, is now selling fairtrade coffee.

Many multinational companies are choosing to enter the ethical market by acquiring firms that have built their markets by developing products that, in business-speak, deliver a sustainable proposition. This is the case with two of the companies we mentioned above – Green & Black's and Ben & Jerry's – which were acquired by Cadbury and Unilever respectively.

Another way of identifying new products is through engagement with opinion leaders and partnerships with not-for-profit organisations, both of which may be better attuned to future trends and customer needs in developed countries and in the developing world. Unilever and Danone provide examples of collaboration with international institutions or research institutes intended to encourage research and disseminate knowledge about nutrition and health. Such investments serve not only to build the brand image of these companies, but also to generate ideas that may turn a profit.

As we look at the issues facing the food and agriculture industries we see reasons to be positive; corporate leaders are starting to realise that providing solutions to some of the biggest global problems is vital to the growth of their businesses. Because the challenges of sustainability are so large and widespread, being able to provide scaleable solutions may soon be interpreted as a strong indicator of future corporate success. However, without massive expansion of such initiatives, they risk being limited to niche markets or to the margins of business.

Social bottom line	Environmental bottom line	Economic bottom line
Obesity	Chemical and pesticide use	Fair trade
Health and nutrition	Monoculture	Agricultural dumping
Farm & factory work conditions	Transportation	Monopoly
Advertising	Energy consumption	Taxes, tariffs & subsidies
	Water use	
	Climate change impacts	

Charlie Clutterbuck

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Analysis: triple bottom line

From bottom line to better values

How many times have I been told "You can't do that because the bottom line is…". I could never understand why this term was used, when it was easier to say "we can't afford it". Presumably it invokes the idea of accounts, spreadsheets and some sort of economic law. As soon as the words came out, I knew it meant "I am going to take no notice what you are saying. I can't be bothered answering your point, and I can keep pointing to the bottom line."

The notion underpinned much of Conservative Party philosophy in the 1980s and '90s. The Tories encouraged all levels of business and public services to have 'delegated budgets' – so that all levels of managers could repeat the mantra about the 'bottom line'. They knew the price of everything and the value of nothing. It meant nobody planned ahead and nothing else mattered in the world than a few pennies profit. Yet time and again when I heard those words, I could point out that a balance sheet does not necessarily add up the right things and very often does not take into account longer term issues.

To deal with this, there developed the idea of the 'triple bottom line', a concept that was intended to take into account social and environmental elements as well as short term economic concerns. Business Week carried a whole issue with all the top companies extolling its virtues. Most of the companies – Ford, IBM and so on – probably meant what they said. After all, most are in it for the long term, and most were becoming aware of social and environmental impacts on their business. This has given rise to the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda, accompanied by indicators promoted by the likes of the Global Resources Institute.

How does this apply to food? If we run a cheap food economy then 'bottom line' is the only approach. A cheap food policy followed the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and was encouraged to help feed the workforce on a shoestring. It did nothing to help the people or planet that made the food. This cheap food policy wrecked UK agriculture for 70 years around the turn of the last century, to be replaced by systems and subsidies that were geared to produce more food. We are now beginning to realise that more food does not equal better food.

There are signs that instead of 'value for money' we are starting to look for 'values for money'. We expect that the food should be both affordable and good for us and the environment. For example, Sainsbury's include an extra four percent on top of their basic costing to add social and environmental values to their food. In other words, they work on the basis that their customers are willing to spend that little bit more than they would pay at ASDA, say, in the expectation that the products they buy in Sainsbury's are produced to higher social and environmental standards. More companies need to do this and people need to be persuaded to pay more for better food.

Yet some of that money could come from the subsidy system. Who is the largest UK recipient of CAP subsidies? Tate & Lyle, who received £350 mil in 3 years.[1] And who is the largest food/farming carbon dioxide emitter among UK FTSE 100? Tate & Lyle again.[2] All this for a commodity which is probably doing more damage to people than asbestos! The triple bottom line is that if we got rid of sugar, we'd do our health a favour and have money to encourage more ethical and environmentally-sound food production.

[1] www.farmsubsidy.org
[2] www.telegraph.co.uk/money/graphics/2006/11/05/cccarbon05big.jpg

Spring '07 - the work issue

The deaths of 23 Chinese cockle pickers in February 2004 cast a spotlight on working conditions in the UK food sector and in farming, which depend on migrant workers to fill seasonal, low-skill, low-paid jobs. The tragedy exposed not only the vulnerability of legal and illegal migrants, but also the poor pay and conditions experienced by others working to provide our food, within the UK and internationally. Almost three years on, new rules and bodies regulate migrant labour, yet language difficulties and low-visibility leave migrant workers vulnerable. Meanwhile, catering, food retail and agriculture continue to have some of the lowest salaries in the UK.

Next year will see renewed interest in the labour behind our food labels when Romania and Bulgaria join the EU in January 2007. Whereas the UK held the door open to previous accession states, the inflow of low-skilled workers from Romania and Bulgaria will be heavily restricted - to begin with they can work only in food or farming.

Such is the backdrop to the first issue of next year's magazine, which will include contributions from Zad Padda, founder of Ethical First, which helps companies affected by the Gangmaster Licensing Act, and Palwinder Kaur, who is researching migrant labour for the Commission for Rural Communities. It will look at labour exploitation in the food sector, explore the effects of migrant labour on rural communities and discuss whether new measures to protect workers are succeeding.

Subscribe now to receive this issue by visiting www.foodethicscouncil.org or using the form on the inside cover of this issue.

NEWS reading

Four new members

We are delighted to welcome four new members to the Food Ethics Council. The twelve existing members will be joined by: Charlie Clutterbuck, an agricultural scientist who works with trade unions and runs Environmental Practice @ Work Ltd.; David Croft, who is Director of Ethical Sourcing and Sustainability at Cadbury Schweppes, having previously worked at the Co-operative Group; Julia Hailes, an environmental sustainability consultant and author of the forthcoming *New green consumer guide*; and Christopher Ritson, who is Professor in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development at the University of Newcastle.

We are increasing the number of members in order to extend of breadth of knowledge and experience represented on the Council, and improve our capacity to make a positive contribution to decision-making about food and farming. The board made the new appointments having advertised the vacancies over the summer.

Road Pricing & Sustainable Food

Our project about food transport (Autumn '06, News) is now under way, led by Research Fellow Paul Steedman, who previously worked for the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable. The first product of this work will be a discussion paper that outlines the most important questions to emerge from our initial review of evidence about the ways that road pricing and related policies might affect the food system. To receive this paper and keep in touch with further progress, please sign up to the project's monthly e-newsletter at www.foodethicscouncil.org/ourwork/roadpricing.

'One planet farming'?

Not long after David Miliband became Secretary of State at Defra this summer, he made a splash with the idea of 'one planet farming'. The UK government's sustainable development framework already commits it to 'one planet living' – WWF's catchy term for living within the worlds ecological limits – and the fact that this applies to food as much as anything else was spelled out in *Strategy for sustainable farming and food* back in 2002. So the significance of 'one planet farming' lies less in conceptual novelty than in its practical effect – to push big ecological issues, and alongside them questions about international justice, out of quiet obscurity and into the spotlight.

Taking a 'one planet' perspective brings some hefty challenges for farmers, for the food sector and for government. It affects the role we see for farming in UK land use, it has implications for our position in EU negotiations on the Common Agricultural Policy, and much more besides. We explore these challenges in a new discussion paper available on our website. The paper includes a forward by Jonathon Porritt, Chair of the Sustainable Development Commission, which is running a web-forum on related issues, and it has been welcomed by Sir Don Curry, Chair of the Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy Delivery Group.

Bread and water

Alongside climate change, water scarcity is one of the monumental ecological challenges of our time. Projections suggest that, by 2025, three billion people will live in water-stressed countries. Changes in farming and in the food sector have a central part to play in averting this, since crop production alone accounts for 86 percent of the world's water footprint. It takes 500 litres to produce even a loaf of bread.

To mark World Water Day 2007, we are planning a major conference on the risks that water scarcity poses to the food sector and on opportunities for responsible water use. It will take place on 27th March 2007 at the Royal Geographical Society in London. Visit our website for details.

Agricultural history review

The journal of the British Agricultural History Society is relatively unknown among food policy thinkers. Its contents are freely available on www.bahs.org.uk up to the year 2000 – after that, you buy the issues and subscribe. What is curious is how even in the 1990s agricultural issues were not part of the food-ethicsal discussion that they are today. One talks about 'provenance' and it leads to this. MF

Attitudes towards ethical foods

2006 | Mintel
Market research on the ethical foods sector, taken to mean mainly products that are certified organic, fair trade, free range or animal welfare-friendly, now valued £2 billion. The report mixes a discussion of market trends – such as Nestlé and other big players buying into fair trade – and consumer research. The consumer research finds that human issues trump the environment and then animals in people's ranking of their concerns, and that it is older people, not the younger trendy stereotype, who tend to be more aware of ethical issues. The report concludes that the ethical foods market is 'hot' and will probably remain so. TM

Cosmopolitanism: ethics in a world of strangers

Kwame Anthony Appiah | 2006 | Allen Lane
This young Princeton philosopher, born in Ghana, discusses the 'morals' we must adopt when we live in cities. Although he does not focus on food ethics, each of his arguments is easily applicable to us. MF

Ethics and the politics of food

Matthias Kaiser & Marianne Lien (eds.) | 2006 | Wageningen Academic Publishers
A collection of around 100 papers delivered at the 6th Congress of the European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics. This is great snapshot of current research and thinking on ethical issues in food and farming, ranging across issues from nanotechnology to pig breeding, and it contains some real gems. TM

Farmers' views on the future of food and small scale producers

Michel Pimbert et al. (eds.) | 2006 | IIED, Progressio, Tebtebba, SMFFA, UKFG
The report of a pioneering electronic conference involving small-scale producers from over 30 developed and developing countries. This is a powerful and eloquent statement of the concerns, hopes and insights of people from communities who are being marginalised economically, politically and culturally. It includes information about how the conference was run and who took part. TM

Feeding Desire: design and the tools of the table 1500-2005

Darra Goldstein | 2006 | Assouline/Smithsonian Institution
The Cooper-Hewitt exhibition under this title opened in May and is now travelling to various venues. But this large book is far more than an exhibition catalogue and argues that our relation to food is reflected by what happens to the food between the plate and our mouths. MF

Global governance of food and agriculture industries

Reba Carruth (ed.) | 2006 | Edward Elgar
A heavyweight discussion of international food safety regulation. The book argues for stronger multilateral 'harmonisation' in the face of corporate concentration in the global food sector. TM

Terra Madre: 1600 food communities

Paulo Di Croce | 2006 | Slow Food Editore
This is an amazing index to the 1,600 remote food 'communities' (a group producing any traditional and endangered type of food) who were assembled in Turin for the Terra Madre congress in October. What is stunning about this 760-page anthology is that Carlo Petrini, the Slow Food founder, insisted that such food-networks will grow only if each remote community has an email contact! If you are fighting for a particular food issue in Kenya or the Philippines, now you can contact people who farm hillsides and yet understand their place in an international context. MF

upcoming events

bulletin of the food ethics council

28th Nov – 1st Dec '06	**The Food Industry at Pollutec – Food Industry and the Environment** Pollutec | www.pollutec.com | Lyon, France
5th Dec '06	**Rachel Carson Memorial Lecture: Farmers and Fashion – from Harvest to High Street** Pesticide Action Network UK | www.pan-uk.org/Info/RCML/index.htm | London, UK
5th Dec '06	**Working with Devolution: Political Communication in a Devolved UK** Epsilon | www.epsilonevents.com | London, UK
6th Dec '06	**Food Ethics Council Reception** Food Ethics Council | www.foodethicscouncil.org | London, UK
6th – 7th Dec '06	**Food and Drink Futures – Driving the NPD of Tomorrow** William Reid Conferences and Leatherhead | claughton@leatherheadfood.com | London, UK
6th – 8th Dec '06	**Consumption: Emerging Themes, New Approaches** Cultures of Consumption | www.consume.bbk.ac.uk | London, UK
11th – 12th Dec '06	**Organic Producers: In Principle and in Practice** Elm Farm Organic Research Centre | www.efrc.com | Cirencester, UK
15th – 19th Dec '06	**Conference on Ecological Sustainability and Human Well-being** ISEE | www.isee2006.com/index.htm | New Delhi, India
23rd Jan '07	**Healthier School Meals Conference** Centaur Conferences | www.centaurconferences.co.uk | London, UK
23rd Jan '07	**City Food Lecture** The Guildhall | Laurence.olins@poupart.co.uk | London, UK
23rd-24th Jan '07	**The New Era for UK Agriculture** Peak District National Park Authority | www.greendirectory.net/events/ | Derbyshire, UK
24th Jan '07	**Doing More – Doing Better: Voice07 The UK Conference for Social Enterprise** Social Enterprise Coalition | www.socialenterprise.org.uk/conference | Manchester, UK
25th – 27th Jan '07	**Soil Association Annual Conference – One Planet Agriculture** Soil Association | www.soilassociation.org/conference | Cardiff, UK
11th – 14th Feb '07	**International Bioethics Conference – Today in the Mirror of Future Generations** UNESCO | www.isas.co.il/bioethics2007 | Eilat, Israel
7th – 8th Mar '07	**How to Communicate Climate Change to Consumers** Ethical Corporation Conferences | www.ethicalcorp.com | London, UK
19th – 22nd Mar '07	**Secure and Sustainable Living: Social and Economic Benefits of Weather, Climate and Water Services** World Meteorological Organization | www.wmo.int/Madrid07/ | Madrid, Spain
26th – 28th Mar '07	**Genomics and Society: Retrospects and Prospects** CESAgen | www.cesagen.lancs.ac.uk | London, UK
27th Mar '07	**Water Scarcity and the Food Sector** Food Ethics Council | www.foodethicscouncil.org | London, UK
3rd May '07	**Landwards 2007 – Achieving Traceability across the Food Chain** IAgrE | www.iagre.org/landwards2007 | Peterborough, UK
9th – 11th May '07	**Functional Foods in Europe – International Developments in Science and Health Claims** ILSI | europe.ilsi.org/events/upcoming/functionalfoods.htm | Malta
15th – 19th May '07	**World Environmental and Water Resources Congress** Environmental and Water Resources Institute (EWRI) of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) content.asce.org/conferences/ewri2007/ | Florida, USA
12th – 13th June '07	**3rd Annual Obesity Europe Conference** Epsilon | www.epsilonevents.com | Brussels, Belgium