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New system marks, measures and cuts

Date: Fri, 31 Mar 06

Story Text

Norwood Marking Systems/ Kingsley Machine Company has launched a new programmable thermal printing, measure and cut system.

The company, which designs tools for the food industry, claims that the MCM-2005T marks, measures and cuts a range of heat shrink sleeving and generic thin wall flexible tubing.

The newly-improved system can print multiple lines of fixed and/or variable information directly onto sleeving or tubing.

It has a superior print quality, with high resolution of 300dpi as well as offering a choice of font styles and sizes and can print text, graphics, logos, and a range of barcodes.

The new system features a more accessible user interface and a streamlined layout and settings can be stored in the system's memory to speed up the process.

In addition, unlike most other integrated thermal printing and cutting systems, the Norwood/Kingsley system is designed to mark, measure and cut tubing and sleeving from the majority of manufacturers, giving customers the versatility to obtain their supplies from a wide variety of sources and seek out the most cost-effective materials.

Further information: <http://www.manufacturingtalk.com/news/noo/noo108.html>

Volvic targets people with busy lifestyles

Date: Fri, 31 Mar 06

Story Text

Danone Waters has announced that it is expanding its Volvic range, by launching a new product aimed at people with 'busy lifestyles'.

Volvic on the Go is also expected to appeal to sporty people and Danone hopes that it will attract more people to the brand, which also has a calcium-enriched water aimed at the health-conscious market, reports Brand Republic.

Danone has already invested heavily in Volvic, which has its standard mineral water and fruit-flavoured water as well as Volvic Splash aimed at children.

Meanwhile, Carat has been hired to take responsibility for the media planning and buying account for all of the company's bottled waters, which also include the Badoit and Evian brands.

In 2004 the bottled water market was worth \hat{A} £1.6 billion, according to Mintel, with sales increasing by 46 per cent from 2000.

Further information:
http://www.brandrepublic.co.uk/login/index.cfm?fuseaction=Login&resource=BR_News&articleType=news&article=550112

Consumers lose confidence in food industry claims

Date: Fri, 31 Mar 06

Story Text

A recent survey has shown that Britain has become a nation of consumer sceptics.

Research for independent market analyst Datamonitor has revealed that there is growing scepticism amongst consumers about product brand claims, particularly those made by large corporations.

Just 44 per cent of shoppers trust the product information they receive, indicating that people seem to be losing their confidence in nutritional claims made by the food and drink industry.

The growing trend is apparently not just confined to the UK; 86 per cent of US and European consumers said that they had become more distrustful of corporations over the last five years.

In addition, the research revealed that 72 per cent of people regard recommendations by friends or family as either "important" or "very important" when considering which everyday products and services to purchase.

Health advice provided by professional bodies and associations is also deemed to be worth listening to, with nearly half of US and European consumers describing them as "very trustworthy".

The report's author, Daniel Bone, said that the research showed that companies need to place more emphasis on rebuilding trust among consumers.

Further information: [http://www.inthenews.co.uk/news/news/buisness/britain-nation-consumer-sceptics-\\$356417.htm](http://www.inthenews.co.uk/news/news/buisness/britain-nation-consumer-sceptics-$356417.htm)

Diageo expands ready-to-drink portfolio

Date: Fri, 31 Mar 06

Story Text

Diageo is launching a new range of premium, spirit-based drinks which will feature many of the premium drinks company's major spirit brands combined with mixers.

The Classic Mix will include, among others, Smirnoff rum drink and Schweppes soda, Smirnoff vodka and cola, and Morgan's Spiced Developed cola and will have an ABV of eight per cent.

The new drinks are being launched in an effort to increase the company's profile in the ready-to-drink market, which has been declining in recent years.

Samantha Hancock, innovation manager for Diageo GB, told mad.co.uk: "We expect people to drink Classic Mix when having a night in, when they've just got in from work or with friends."

The drinks have been designed for the UK off-trade and will be available in 70cl glass bottles retailing at Â£4.99.

The range, which is being launched by a Â£1 million advertising campaign including in-store and coupon sampling, is aimed primarily at women aged between 25 and 50 years of age.

Further information:
<http://www.mad.co.uk/Main/News/Articlex/190258e39fc54b96a55619c0e515796e/Diageo-launches-Classic-Mix.html>

Hollywood craze hits UK market

Date: Fri, 31 Mar 06

Story Text

One of Hollywood's latest food crazes is set to be launched nationwide in May.

The new snack bar, Flax 9, which is known to be popular with celebrities such as Demi Moore, Hilary Swank, Carol Vorderman and lifestyle guru Carole Caplin, contains flax seed, sunflower seeds and hemp, all of which are reported to provide significant health benefits.

The bar claims to help improve hair, skin and nail condition as well as preventing arthritis, cholesterol problems and even cancer.

Each bar contains the equivalent of 1,000mg of flax seed oil which is known to contain antioxidants as well as lignans, which some researchers believe have anti-cancer properties.

High levels of Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids are provided by the sunflower seeds, while hemp provides a good source of protein and essential amino acids.

Mark Gould, managing director of the Flax 9 bar's producers Wholebake, said: "The health benefits of flax seed are well known and now people can follow the celebrity trends and enjoy the benefits of the seed on a daily basis with our tasty Flax 9 bars."

The bar, which is available in original and nutty varieties, is being stocked by Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Holland & Barrett and specialist health food shops.

Further information:
http://www.responsesource.com/releases/rel_display.php?relid=24830&hilite

Artois lager expands its range

Date: Fri, 31 Mar 06

Story Text

Inbev UK is launching a new light beer, Peeterman Artois, which will be the third addition to the range.

The four per cent ABV wheat beer, brewed with wheat, barley malt and coriander using historic Belgian recipes, will join the 5.2 per cent Stella Artois and the more recent Artois Bock, the 6.2 per cent lager that was added to the family last May.

The new wheat beer, which is weaker and aimed at younger drinkers, will be launched in bars and supermarkets in July this year.

According to the Publican, InBev UK is spending £50 million on the portfolio this year, including new glassware and a new Brasserie Artois font which will consist of two taps serving both Stella Artois and Artois Bock.

Steve Kitchin, managing director of on-trade sales, told the Publican that the new products should bring "much-needed impetus" to the beer industry.

"What consumers want and when they want it has been changing; they are increasingly looking for a better quality experience, they're willing to indulge themselves more often but aren't willing to pay for a product unless they know it will deliver," he commented.

Further information: <http://www.thepublican.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=20316&d=32&h=24&f=23&dateformat=%25o%20%25B%20%25Y>

EU funding should boost fishing industry

Date: Thu, 30 Mar 06

Story Text

The tenth round of a European Union programme to help modernise fisheries will benefit Scotland and is expected to create 276 new jobs and safeguard another 2,300.

Funding worth £5.19 million will be provided by the EU's Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) programme to enable 78 companies in the fish sector to carry out improvement projects such as refurbishing port facilities and upgrading processing plants and vessels.

The programme began in 2000 and will finish at the end of 2006. It has provided Scotland's fisheries with £55 million, with £17 million going to firms and organisations in the Highlands and Islands region.

Announcing the funding, fisheries minister Ross Finnie also gave details of the Scottish Executive's additional £3.75 million funding to support projects that will improve the fishing and aquaculture industries.

"Fishing and aquaculture is the economic mainstay of many of our remote and fragile coastal communities. This investment will not only bring new jobs to these areas but will also secure existing jobs for the future," he said.

Further information: http://presszoom.com/story_115326.html

Increase in sales through vending machines

Date: Thu, 30 Mar 06

Story Text

Vending machines are benefiting from ongoing consumer demand for convenience foods and the trend towards snacking.

Sales of products through vending machines totalled £3.42 billion in 2005, an increase of 3.1 per cent from the previous year.

The number of vending machines also rose last year by 3.4 per cent to 1.2 million.

Research also shows that the growth in sales in the vending market between 2001 and 2005 was greater than that recorded for household expenditure on food and non-alcoholic beverages.

Of the three main sectors of the vending market – refreshment, cigarette and tobacco machines – the largest is refreshment machines, including hot and cold drinks, snacks, confectionery, sandwiches and meals.

The vending industry is facing an uncertain time, following the government's decision to ban machines from selling certain types of unhealthy foods in schools from 2006.

However, many leading vending operators have already replaced the foods in their machines with healthier alternatives.

Further information:
http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reportinfo.asp?report_id=328430&t=d&cat_id=2

Sweetener preference has little to do with sweetness

Date: Thu, 30 Mar 06

Story Text

A study has found that we are tempted by a lack of sour, bitter or metallic tastes in food rather than by sweetness itself, a finding that could have implications for creating more palatable sugar substitutes for use in food preparation.

Researchers from Ohio State University conducted a study in which volunteers rated 13 different sweeteners and sweet substances.

The study found that sugar was rated highest, while sucralose, a sweetener derived from sugar, was deemed to be the best alternative.

On the whole, the volunteers preferred sweeteners that contained little or no sour, bitter or metallic tastes.

Co-author Jeannine Delwiche, assistant professor of food science and technology, commented that many sugar substitutes have unpleasant tastes.

"Understanding how people perceive these tastes may help create a sugar substitute that is more

palatable," she said.

"That ultimately means making tastier products with fewer calories."

The researchers now plan to conduct further studies with larger volunteer groups to learn more about the factors behind individual taste preferences.

Further information:
http://www.rxpnews.com/research/neurosciences/taste/article_3825.shtml

French wine industry succumbs to cost-cutting measures

Date: Thu, 30 Mar 06

Story Text

France has broken tradition and agreed that its vintners may flavour their wine with wood shavings in a move that has angered many critics.

The French government said yesterday that the moneysaving shortcut will soon be allowed, to help the industry compete in the tough international marketplace.

The practice, which is common across much of the winemaking world, involves adding wood chips to wines to achieve an oak flavour without needing to use expensive wooden barrels.

Many French vineyard owners now want to use the technique so that they have a better chance against their competitors but traditionally, the country has always been against the practice and some critics regard the move as the beginning of the end for the industry.

In a statement, the French agriculture ministry said that it aimed to "open up the range of authorised winemaking practices".

"The use of wood shavings is already authorised by the European Community and will soon be entered into national regulation."

Further information:
http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0700world/tm_objectid=16880535%26method=full%26siteid=50082%26headline=vintners%2dto%2dflavour%2dwine%2d%2d%2d%2dwith%2dwood%2dshavings%2d-name_page.html

Firm excludes allergens from its products

Date: Thu, 30 Mar 06

Story Text

An inspired businessman has designed a range of products suitable for people with common food allergies.

Martin Hopkins built a career in the oil and gas industry before spotting the gap in the food market.

His firm, Safetoeat, excludes all common sources of food allergies from its products, including gluten, nuts, dairy products, fish, soya, mustard and sulphites.

Mr Hopkins told the Manchester Evening News: "If you suffer from an allergy or intolerance, then making a confident choice in the food you buy can be worrying, confusing, difficult and time-consuming, and in some cases it can be life-threatening."

The company, which is based in the Peak District, has also launched a range of foods which are approved by the Vegetarian Society and the Coeliac Society, including vegan-friendly soups and sauces.

The 'free from' market is worth an estimated £100 million in the UK and supermarket giants including Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Morrisons are already holding talks with the company, which also hopes to break into Europe and the US within the next twelve months.

Further information:
http://www.manchesteronline.co.uk/men/business/s/209/209494_safetyfirst_recipes_do_a_healthy_trade.html

Labelling systems are quick and versatile

Date: Thu, 30 Mar 06

Story Text

A new range of high speed weigh price labellers should help to bring new levels of automation to the factory floor.

Weightron Bilanciai are introducing the innovative range, designed to provide fast, accurate weighing and labelling for the most demanding of food processing environments.

The systems can label anything from cabbages to delicate packs of strawberries and an ingenious 'V' belt option enables irregular products such as cylindrical packs of meat or wrapped vegetables to be labelled.

The new systems include the fully automatic Mercury model, which can weigh and label up to 150 packs per minute, and the compact Venus, which is capable of weighing and labelling packs at speeds of up to 80 packs per minute and is available in both manual and automatic versions.

Both models can be used in isolation or networked as part of an LAN and set-up can be performed quickly, either from the operator console or remotely via a PC.

The system stores data for traceability and productivity purposes and has the facility to produce detailed management reports.

Further information: <http://www.weightron.com/Mainfiles/weigh-price-labellers.htm>

New technology to sanitise meat processors

Date: Wed, 29 Mar 06

Story Text

Genitor International has released a new technology that can be used to sanitise meat processors and to prevent the spread of BSE in bovine slaughterhouses.

Prions, the causative agents of both BSE and its human form, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD), have proved problematic over recent years due to a lack of technology capable of eradicating them – something Genitor says its Prionzyme can rectify.

Prionzyme will initially be used to disinfect medical equipment being used for invasive surgery, before being expanded into a range of products specifically for usage in sanitising equipment for the meat processing industry.

Thomas Pekich, president of Genencor, commented: "Using the tools of biotechnology to address important issues facing the world today, Genencor is very pleased to commercialise the first enzyme technology to target this unconventional, infectious agent."

Prionzyme was created in conjunction with the UK's Health Protection Agency, and Mr Pekich claimed that this partnership, along with the considerable protease experience accumulated by Genitor over more than 20 years, was crucial in this breakthrough.

The firm's vice president John Gell added that the technology would replace traditional caustic chemicals, therefore addressing issues of both worker and environmental safety.

Further information: http://www.genencor.com/wt/gcor/pr_1143225359

Fresh fish research finds clue to longer shelf life

Date: Wed, 29 Mar 06

Story Text

The shelf life of fresh fish can be doubled by lowering the temperature of cold display counters, new research has revealed.

The Norwegian Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture has published a report showing that lowering the temperature of cold counters from the standard four degrees Celcius to nearer zero degrees has a remarkable effect on shelf life.

The research, which was funded by the Fishery and Aquaculture Industry Research Fund and Innovation Norway, looked at the shelf life of tray-packaged fresh cod and salmon fillets.

Senior scientist Margrethe Esaiassen reveals: "If you reduce the temperature in the cold counter to zero degrees, you can increase the shelf life of fish from one to two weeks when the raw materials are completely fresh to start with."

The research also revealed that a cold counter maintaining a temperature of seven degrees will sustain a shelf life of only five days.

"It has not generally been known how much quality loss a small increase in temperature can actually cause with fish from our cold, northern waters," Ms Esaiassen adds.

The findings are likely to have a profound impact on profitability for fresh fish retailers as well as enabling better selections for consumers.

Further information:
http://en.fiskforsk.norut.no/fiskeriforskning/nyheter/nyhetsarkiv/dobler_holdbarheten_ved_null_grader

Upmarket crisps receive makeover

Date: Wed, 29 Mar 06

Story Text

Walkers is hoping to re-invigorate its Sensations snack range by introducing several new flavours and giving the products a distinctive new look

According to the Publican, the brand is focussing on authentic food flavours in a bid to bolster its status as an upmarket snack and is backing the move with a new advertising campaign featuring frontman Gary Lineker and the singer, Charlotte Church.

The extended range will include Gently Infused Lime & Thai Spices, Slow Roasted Lamb & Moroccan Spices, and Simply Sea Salt.

Other additions will include Lime and Coriander Chutney poppadoms and Japanese Beef Teriyaki crackers.

The brand's packaging has also received an overhaul.

The full range will be available in 150g bags, designed to share, and the pub sector is being targeted with smaller, 40g bags of five core flavours.

Cara Beeby, marketing manager of the Walkers brand owner PepsiCo, told the Publican: "We strongly believe the new luxury Walkers Sensations will re-invigorate the snacks category.

"By rationalising the range, introducing real food flavours and a distinctive new look, 2006 will see even more consumers enjoying the Walkers Sensations experience."

Further information: <http://www.thepublican.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=20303&d=32&h=24&f=23&dateformat=%25o%20%25B%20%25Y>

Website meets growing demand for home-delivered milk

Date: Wed, 29 Mar 06

Story Text

A new website is being launched to help consumers find local doorstep milk delivery services, reflecting the growing trend in home deliveries and the recent rise in milk sales.

Dairy UK has announced that the website, www.findmeamilkman.net, will soon put customers in contact with their nearest milkman.

Jim Begg, Dairy UK director general, said: "It is consumer demand that is driving this initiative and the dairy industry is moving in line with modern consumer requirements.

"Today's shopper is more comfortable with ordering and purchasing groceries online and understands and appreciates the convenience of a home delivery service."

Milk sales have risen for the first time in 30 years and the website will make it easy for the nation's growing population of milk-lovers to have milk delivered to their homes in environmentally-friendly, returnable containers.

In addition, Britain's 9,500 milkmen now deliver a range of other goods ranging from food stuffs including eggs and potatoes through to garden compost and kitchen foil.

Further information: <http://www.dairyuk.org/pdf/pr270306.pdf>

English consumers won over by Scotch beef

Date: Wed, 29 Mar 06

Story Text

Nearly half of English consumers agree that Scotch beef is the best on the market, analysts have found.

Beef from Scotland is enjoying its highest ever popularity south of the border, following a Â£1 million marketing campaign launched last August by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), promoters for the red meat sector.

The survey, carried out by independent market analysts Millward Brown, indicates that an increasing number of English consumers "43 per cent" are happy to pay more for the unique taste and quality of Scotch beef, while 48 per cent acknowledge that it is produced to the highest standards.

Donald Biggar, interim chairman for QMS, said: "With around 70 per cent of all beef produced in Scotland sold south of the border, England remains our biggest export market.

"That is why these very positive results from the Scottish red meat industry's first major marketing campaign in England are so welcome."

Further information: <http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/news/news-story.php?id=553>

High speed shrink-wrap solution

Date: Wed, 29 Mar 06

Story Text

An innovative solution, designed to shrink-wrap frozen fish products at high speed, has been launched in the UK

The latest addition to Ulma Packaging's extensive range, the Ocean claims to wrap up to 120

packs per minute, making it ideal for high demand production.

According to the manufacturer, the system uses stainless steel in a way that eliminates food and dust traps and the movement of products through the machine has been simplified to reduce downtime.

Strict hygiene standards are maintained through use of a cantilever design and the machine is ideal for use in small packaging rooms, taking up less than four square metres of floor space.

The manufacturer claims that the Ocean will benefit the fish industry by keeping down costs and reducing wastage while maintaining maximum levels of production.

Derek Paterson, managing director of Ulma UK, says: "This latest machine will be of particular interest to anyone with limited space looking for a high speed, high performance machine."

Further information: <http://www.manufacturingtalk.com/news/ulm/ulm113.html>

Sustainable policy reflects global trend

Date: Tue, 28 Mar 06

Story Text

One of the UK's biggest supermarket chains has announced that its fish will all be taken from sustainable sources within the next five years, reflecting a growing global trend.

Asda has said that its fish will all be certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), meaning that it will stock only wild-caught fresh and frozen fish from fisheries that meet the MSC's environmental standards and carry the MSC's blue label.

The move is part of the supermarket's new sustainable policy towards sourcing for its stores and will bring it in line with its parent company, Wal-Mart.

The company's chief executive, Andy Bond, told Checkout magazine: "Our customers tell us they want to buy their fish with peace of mind.

"We believe the MSC mark on our products, together with clear, country of origin labelling will give our customers the reassurance they're seeking."

Rupert Howes, chief executive of the MSC, added that the move "reflects a growing trend amongst major retailers around the world to develop and implement sustainable seafood sourcing policies."

Asda also plans to suspend the sale of North Sea cod while discussions for a stock recovery plan are held with the North Sea Advisory Committee and EU Fisheries and the supermarket has already removed several endangered fish species from its shelves.

Further information:
http://www.checkoutmagazine.co.uk/market_update/market_update_story.ehtml?o=1834

Cask strength bottles for Whisky Galore

Date: Tue, 28 Mar 06

Story Text

Cask strength versions of Duncan Taylor's Whisky Galore Collection are being added to the range to accompany a redesign of the entire brand.

Selected casks from the collection will be bottled at cask strength and the bottles will carry full details of the cask, including the cask number and bottling date, as well as stating whether or not the whisky has been matured in a sherry cask.

The entire collection, including the existing 46 per cent range, has also been redesigned to make the brand more noticeable on shop shelves.

The cask strength range will be differentiated from the 46 per cent versions by the colour used for the Whisky Galore logo.

The logo on the new cask strength range will be gold while the original 46 per cent version's logo will be copper.

According to the company's website, the new label designs should help to enhance the presence of the range on the shelves and carry wider appeal.

Further information: <http://www.dtcscotch.com/index.htm>

Transgenic pigs provide alternative omega-3 source

Date: Tue, 28 Mar 06

Story Text

Researchers have created transgenic pigs that produce omega-3 fatty acids, compounds which are thought to improve heart function and help reduce the risk of heart disease but which are ordinarily only found in certain types of fish.

The breakthrough represents the first cloned, transgenic livestock that is capable of making the fatty acid and could provide an alternative and safe source of the compound.

At present, omega-3 fatty acids are usually obtained from eating certain types of fish which obtain their omega-3 from marine algae in their diet; however, these types of fish often have high levels of mercury.

The research was carried out by a team that includes researchers from the University of Missouri-Columbia, the University of Pittsburgh and Massachusetts General Hospital and is being published by Nature Biotechnology.

The team transferred a gene responsible for creating omega-3 fatty acids, known as fat-1, into pig cells.

Nuclear transfer cloning was then employed to create transgenic pigs from these cells, and tissues from the pigs were tested for the presence of omega-3 fatty acids.

The research could eventually provide an alternative food source of omega-3, enabling health-conscious consumers to include the fatty acid in their diet without having to rely on fish.

<http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/518926/>

Nanotubes could play role in food industry

Date: Tue, 28 Mar 06

Story Text

Research into novel nanotubes has uncovered possible applications in the food and pharmaceutical industries.

Scientists in the Netherlands investigated nanotubes obtained from a milk protein, alpha-lactalbumin, and concluded that it would be fairly easy to use the nanotubes in food applications.

The milk protein has significant nutritional value and is thought to confer positive health benefits.

The nanotubes, several micrometers in length, could be useful as a viscosifying agent because of their high aspect ratio and stiffness or as a gelling agent for strong, transparent gels.

Joanke Graveland-Bikker, who co-authored the report, said: "An important issue for example in food applications is the stability of the alpha-lactalbumin nanotubes under a variety of conditions.

"In our experiments it appeared that these nanotubes could withstand some important treatments, such as those which might be encountered in industrial manufacturing processes and applications.

"They withstand conditions similar to a pasteurisation step (40 seconds at 72 degrees C) and they withstood a freeze-drying treatment," she says.

Further information: <http://www.newswiretoday.com/news/4478/>

UK retailers lead the EU in terms of healthy options

Date: Tue, 28 Mar 06

Story Text

A new report has highlighted the significant progress that retailers have made in providing consumers with healthier food choices over the last two years.

The report, which was published today by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and is entitled Healthy Options: Retail initiatives towards healthier eating, outlines the commitments made by retailers to develop healthier products and clearer labelling.

It also shows how retailers have promoted healthy eating and helped customers to make informed diet choices.

Kevin Hawkins, director general of the BRC, explained how the consortium is committed to tackling the problem of unhealthy eating and how it has been working with its members to address healthy eating and nutrition.

He also said that UK retailers are leading the EU in terms of the wide range of healthy options available to consumers and the concise nutritional labelling on products.

However, he warned that providing a healthy range of products in stores will not solve the problem on its own.

"All consumers must be educated about healthy lifestyles," says Mr Hawkins, "including clear advice about the contribution that all foods make to a healthy diet as well as the importance of physical activity."

Further information: <http://www.brc.org.uk/showDoc04.asp?id=2750&moid=3532>

Low fat camel's milk chocolate set for launch

Date: Tue, 28 Mar 06

Story Text

A new type of chocolate, made from camel's milk, is due to be launched in Abu Dhabi in the autumn by an Austrian chocolate maker.

Hochleitner, a Vienna-based chocolatier, was given funds by the Abu Dhabi royal family to help develop the sweet treats using camel's milk from the United Arab Emirates.

The company's head, Johann Georg Hochleitner, told [ananova.com](http://www.ananova.com): "We have come so far and what was once thought of as a crazy idea has become a huge project, particularly in the Arabic world where there is a potential market of about 200 million people."

Mr Hochleitner explained that powdered camel milk is sent to Austria where the raw chocolate is produced before being sent back to Abu Dhabi for processing.

Camel's milk is said to be an excellent alternative to cow's milk as it contains less fat and tastes sweeter.

The chocolate, which is called Al Nassma after the cool wind that blows in the desert, is expected to be introduced in the EU at a later date.

Further information:
http://www.ananova.com/news/story/sm_1780316.html?menu=news.quirkies

Reponse to Irn-Bru 32 'overwhelmingly positive'

Date: Mon, 27 Mar 06

Story Text

AG Barr, the Scottish drinks firm, has revealed that the response to its £3 million launch of Irn-Bru 32 has been "overwhelmingly positive".

A spokesman for the company said that the product, which has gone on sale in the north of England and Scotland, received good feedback from the general public and retailers, the Scotsman reports.

"The next big test comes after we begin our major promotion in the rest of England," he said.

This nationwide launch is due to take place on April 18th and early reports indicate that some major retailers, including Tesco and Asda, believe Irn-Bru 32 could rival the Red Bull brand.

The drink, which has a high caffeine content, is the Scottish company's first new launch since it began selling Diet Irn-Bru in 1980.

Over this time it has been struggling to keep hold of its customers in England, where it currently has some two per cent of the market share.

Further information: <http://business.scotsman.com/agriculture.cfm?id=470752006>

French put forward vision for simpler agricultural policy

Date: Mon, 27 Mar 06

Story Text

The French government has put forward a "vision" paper featuring a number of proposals, including a simplification of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Proposed by French agriculture minister Dominique Bussereau at this week's farm council in Brussels, the plan called for the lightening of the burden of the CAP's management rules, and won widespread support within the council.

It stated that cross-compliance, greater independence for member states in spending their rural development money, and the introduction of various income stabilisation tools for farmers should all be prioritised.

The UK's National Farmers Union backed the plan, telling Farmers Weekly: "By highlighting the importance of communication, competitiveness, reducing the regulatory burden and refusing re-nationalisation, the document aligns itself with four of our core concepts."

Nonetheless, the UK was not one of the 11 members represented at the council that gave the French proposals its backing, instead joining Sweden and Denmark in calling for a more radical and earlier reform of the CAP.

The French paper also demanded measures to improve the competitiveness of EU agriculture on the global stage, as well as for a degree of protection to be retained in light of the higher standards that European farmers have to maintain.

Further information:
<http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2006/03/27/93450/EU+council+supports+French+'vision'.html>

Scottish company launches organic products

Date: Mon, 27 Mar 06

Story Text

A range of new organic products has been launched by a Scottish company, increasing the variety of organic options available for consumers.

According to the Scottish Food and Drink website, Blackmount Organics, a Lanarkshire-based firm specialising in organic produce, has launched Organic Chicken Bites, Organic Bacon Lardons and Coulter Bacon onto the market.

The new Organic Chicken Bites consist of oven-cooked, breaded chicken pieces containing only organic ingredients.

The Organic Bacon Lardons are small cubes of bacon which are ideal for making quiches, adding flavour to soups or sprinkling onto salads, while Coulter Bacon is an economy product with a flavour you would expect from more expensive bacons.

The company's meats are produced without the use of antibiotics and with minimal use of agrochemicals.

Alex Allison, the company's managing director, said: "These new products will enhance our existing range at Blackmount Organics, offering customers more choice.

"More and more people are buying organic food and there is no doubt the quality and taste is a cut above."

Further information:
http://www.scottishfoodanddrink.com/view_item.aspx?item_id=24723&list_id=list1-7161&list_index=2

New healthy meal options demonstrated

Date: Mon, 27 Mar 06

Story Text

Europe's largest processor and packer of fresh sweetcorn products has extended its range of innovatively prepared goods.

According to freshinfo.com, Barfoots of Botley has added a number of new products to its range, including a roasted vegetable medley, prepared butternut squash, prepared sweet potato and a range of mashes.

The company was at the Food and Drink Expo last week to demonstrate its new products, which also include a healthy food-on-the-go box, containing butternut mash, sweet potato mash and a corn-on-the-cob.

Chris Moreman, Barfoots' commercial manager, told freshinfo.com that the product is a healthy

vegetarian option, specifically designed for the forecourt trade as it can easily be prepared in the microwave.

"We're really just testing the marketplace with some of these products, but there has been a lot of interest," he said.

"Our new products are aimed across the board, from foodservice through to retail.

"We're trying to do as much added value as possible, we have no intention of sitting on our laurels," he added.

Further information: <http://www.barfoots.co.uk/iqs/sid.0393995078501721902646/index.html>

Labelling package provides cost-effective solution for sandwich company

Date: Mon, 27 Mar 06

Story Text

A complete labelling solution, comprising a bespoke label design and new label overprinter, has been devised to meet the needs of a leading sandwich supplier.

The Red Pepper Sandwich Co gave Weber Marking Systems the task of creating a new generic label design for its product range, which includes meals and snacks as well as sandwiches.

The company intended to use its own thermal printer but when tests showed that the quality was inadequate, Weber suggested a cost-effective, all-inclusive package to include both the labels and the cost of the equipment.

Weber's Zebra S600 Stripe thermal transfer printer is being used to produce the labels, which include product details and best before dates, at the company's factory in Macmerry, Scotland.

Red Pepper's managing director Mel Doward says: "The new label design has given us a much more upmarket image, particularly in vending machines where the fluorescent lights reflect on our labels and really make them stand out, and it was important that this was not compromised by poor overprinting.

"What is more, the Weber printer is quicker and therefore saves valuable time during production and packing," she adds.

Further information: <http://www.manufacturingtalk.com/news/web/web118.html>

Productivity enhanced by new shrink-wrap

Date: Mon, 27 Mar 06

Story Text

A new shrink-wrap film has been specially designed to reduce sealing time and increase productivity.

Cryovac Adapt has been developed by Sealed Air, a company specialising in the design and manufacture of packaging equipment and materials.

The film is the result of over two years of research and its formula guarantees a wrinkle-free pack and a low haze, high gloss appearance.

The product can be used to wrap almost any light to medium weight items, from confectionary through to DVDS, and can be used on any shrink equipment.

Halios Ruiz, European marketing director for the shrink packaging division of Sealed Air, said: "Sealed Air is renowned for its commitment to innovation and Cryovac Adapt is just one in a long line of new product developments.

"Our philosophy is to listen to our customers, look at the market place and provide solutions, and that is exactly why I anticipate Cryovac Adapt will be of great interest for shrink wrappers looking to increase production."

The film is resistant to both tears and punctures and shrinks at low temperatures, cutting the amount of energy that is needed to apply the wrap and enabling it to be used on heat-sensitive products.

It is capable of wrapping up to 100 packs per minute and is available in three strength grades and in any colour.

Further information: <http://www.manufacturingtalk.com/news/seq/seq106.html>

Chips with an added twist

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 06

Story Text

A new machine which slices whole potatoes into a twisted "chip on a stick" has been launched at the Food and Drink Expo this week.

A spiral cutter slices the potato onto a stick, which can then be fried for a few minutes and seasoned with salt, spices or sauce prior to being served.

The novel gadget, known as a Chip Twister, has been developed by a South African company called Flavourlicious Foods and has been introduced into the UK by potato supplier Greenvale.

Both companies were present at the Birmingham exhibition to demonstrate the machine, which is said to be ideal for the catering sector.

It enables large quantities of twisted chips to be created in a minimal amount of time and is likely to be particularly popular with mobile catering outlets looking for novel, easy-to-create food ideas.

Craig Sankey, Greenvale's marketing manager, told Freshinfo that the device has gone down well with visitors.

"We're the only company with a licence to sell the equipment in the UK and we've had a lot of

interest from people at the show," he said.

Further information: <http://www.flavourliciousfoods.com/chiptwister/>

Reality TV creates generation of 'carpet grazers'

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 06

Story Text

A new eating trend has emerged, largely as a result of the popularity of reality TV shows.

Young professionals planning informal dinner parties are becoming increasingly likely to rely on their TV guide for inspiration.

Singletons are beginning to host dinner parties specifically designed to coincide with particular programmes and organise party food to nibble at during the show rather than putting on a traditional sit-down meal.

The new trend could be worth millions of pounds to the UK food industry and is reported to have been responsible for a 55 per cent rise in party food sales at Tesco over the last twelve months.

"Party food has become one of the fastest-growing food trends in recent years and the rise of reality TV shows has had a direct influence on this phenomenon," Quentin Sandell, a buyer for Tesco, told icWales.

He explained that sales of party foods soar on days when there is a major eviction on shows like Big Brother or The X Factor.

"The trend has been coined 'carpet grazing' because these parties all tend to be informal affairs with people sitting on the floor or cushions watching television," he added.

Further information:
http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0200wales/tm_objectid=16857130%26method=full%26siteid=50082%26headline=carpet%2dgrazing%2dthe%2dnorm%2din%2dbig%2dbrother%2dera-name_page.html

Biodegradable wrapping for organic produce

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 06

Story Text

A leading supermarket is carrying out trials on a fully compostable wrapping for organic apples and potatoes to try and reduce the amount of waste packaging it produces.

The trial will be conducted in 140 of Sainsbury's stores and, if successful, the supermarket aims to use the packaging on its entire organic range throughout its outlets.

Approximately 30 per cent of the chain's organic produce is already packed in biodegradable packaging while the remainder is in recyclable packaging.

The new plastic wrapping is made entirely from genetically unmodified sources and is fully biodegradable and compostable.

The scheme could prevent an estimated 16.5 million bags from being dumped on landfill sites every year.

James McKechnie, recycling and resources manager for Sainsbury's, said: "Packaging represents 20 per cent of waste from UK households of which plastics represent an average 11 per cent.

"Sainsbury's is dedicated to reducing the environmental impact of all our packaging and pioneering renewable, sustainable and truly compostable materials."

Summary Text

A leading supermarket is carrying out trials on a fully compostable wrapping for organic apples and potatoes to try and reduce the amount of waste packaging it produces.

Possible end to cold aeroplane meals

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 06

Story Text

A British design company has come up with a new idea for making sure your aeroplane meal is the perfect temperature.

Far too many travellers have gone through the unpleasant experience of having to put up with lukewarm in-flight meals and air travel has become synonymous with less-than-desirable food.

Product innovation consultancy PDD has devised a catering system that might just provide the answer.

According to TechDigest, the new system – called Platinum – features an integrated heater, steamed and chiller all on a single plate.

Passengers are given the chance to order their meal before boarding the flight and can then decide what time they want to eat.

The plate then cooks or chills the relevant food to exactly the right temperature, ensuring that it arrives on your fold-away table in perfect condition.

Airlines will also be able to cut down on waste, as the new technology is reported to be completely reusable.

Further information: http://www.techdigest.tv/2004/04/airlines_meals_.html

Pathogen detector to be used in bottling industry

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 06

Story Text

Bottling facilities may soon be able to benefit from a laser-based technology that detects harmful

pathogens in water more easily than current systems.

The BioSentry water monitoring system, developed by JMAR Technologies, uses a laser to provide continuous monitoring of bacteria such as E Coli, Salmonella and Legionella and is designed to be used in food and drink production and for the testing of municipal water supplies.

The device works with water flows of up to three litres an hour and offers an attractive alternative to current techniques which involve laboratory sample analyses and are extremely time-consuming.

Highlighting the system's high detection capability, John Ricardi, JMAR's business development vice president, told Optics.org: "During operation, every particle that passes through the laser beam is analysed by an on-board computer for a possible database match."

The system is currently being used for a number of applications and JMAR's new agreement with water-processing systems manufacturer Portaqua should see the technology being extended to the water bottling market.

The company also plans to increase the device's capabilities in the future to enable it to detect Bacillus, algae, yeast and mould.

Further information:
<http://optics.org/optics/Articles.do?channel=technology&type=news&volume=12&issue=3&article=21&page=1>

New mature cheese already in great demand

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 06

Story Text

A new cheese has made reached the market and is attracting interest from several independent stores, delis and farm shops.

The extra vintage cheddar " called 1833 " is aged for two years before reaching the shelves and is made using traditional local cultures.

Its manufacturer, West Country cheese maker Barber's, produces the cheese in its own laboratory to ensure that the cultures are kept completely separate from freeze-dried alternatives.

Giles Barber told Farmers Weekly: "We want to educate the market about traditional cheese cultures and why they need protection.

"They are a vital part of making the flavour and character of the finished cheese."

Although much of the family's cheese, a blend of their own Holstein Friesians' milk and other local milks, is sold as supermarket own-label, the new cheese is not destined for mass production and only two tonnes of the variety will be made each month.

It has already drawn interest from over 30 shops who hope to stock the cheese following its public launch at Food and Drink Expo, Britain's biggest food fair, last week.

Further information:
<http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2006/03/24/93519/Traditional+cheese+maker+shows+maturity+counts.html>

Launch of innovative bottles and cans announced

Date: Fri, 24 Mar 06

Story Text

A US-based technology company has announced that it will present its new Choice-Enabled Packaging technology at a forthcoming international conference.

The Smart and Intelligent Packaging 2006 conference, due to be held in Sweden on March 30th, will mark the first public outing of IPIFINI's latest technology, which enables the consumer to press buttons on the container to select different varieties.

For example, a cola bottle might have several buttons for different flavours such as lemon, cherry and vanilla which, when pressed, release the relevant additives into the liquid immediately prior to consumption.

The technology allows for up to 32 potential varieties of flavours, colorants or fragrances and is being licensed to leading beverage, food, paint, pharmaceutical and personal care companies.

"Providing choice at the point of consumption creates tremendous advantages for the consumers as well as the manufacturer," said Glenn Wachler, the technology's co-inventor.

The packaging can be used with any liquid product that has multiple varieties, allowing consumers to select their desired variation at the time of use as well as simplifying manufacture, distribution, promotion and sales by employing just one single container.

Further information: <http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/060323/neth016.html?v=48>

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Further information: <http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/060323/neth016.html?v=48>

Innovation advice for food and drink businesses

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 06

Story Text

Food sector firms based in the south-east of England will be able to benefit from free independent consultancy, thanks to a government-funded development programme.

The Innovation Advisory Service will give smaller food and drink businesses in particular free access to around ten days of free advice from experienced innovation advisors, so they can get the resources they need to help their businesses grow.

Treve Willis, project director, said that the programme's aim was to help firms both in spotting opportunities for growth and in bolstering their own capacity for innovation and research.

He commented that he would like to encourage firms to "take advantage of this opportunity to have an independent, expert pair of eyes review their business potential."

"By offering them greater access to both specialist advice and the UK's best resources in science and technology, we hope that they can achieve a substantial boost to their profitability and competitiveness," he added.

The service aims to aid firms in applying for funding, securing new business opportunities, investigating new technologies and accessing the latest research.

The programme is also designed with the target of giving businesses access to a wide range of information tools, while also aspiring to increase the transfer of knowledge between the academic and business communities both regionally and nationally.

Further information: <http://www.manufacturingtalk.com/news/sfy/sfy108.html>

Industry group threatens warning stickers for pork

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 06

Story Text

The British Pig Industry Support Group (BPISG) has warned retailers it will plaster their shelves and products with warning stickers if they continue to stock poor-quality, imported pork.

The BPISG will also be supplying the stickers carrying the notice: "Warning: Does this imported pork meet United Kingdom production requirements?" to pig producers in England, the allied trades and supportive members of the public.

It says that it is taking action because several supermarkets are selling increasing quantities of imported pork that has been produced in ways that are unacceptable in the UK – and it has identified Tesco as the biggest culprit.

BPSIG warns that buying teams like Tesco's are using increasingly intimidating tactics in dealing with their UK-based meat processor suppliers.

The group was nonetheless careful to exclude Waitrose, Marks & Spencer and Budgens given that these three chains have, in its eyes, all shown a continuing fidelity to British quality standards.

Further information:
<http://www.thepigsite.com/LatestNews/Default.asp?AREA=LatestNews&Display=11173>

WRAP backs glass packaging progress

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 06

Story Text

A major resource efficiency programme is making significant progress in speeding up innovations

in glass packaging.

The Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) is supporting companies in a bid to make their glass packaging lighter.

The Container Lite project is supported by WRAP's waste minimisation innovation fund and has already helped Coors Brewers to cut the weight of its Grolsch bottle by 13 per cent, cutting the amount of material used annually by 4,500 tonnes.

Richard Swannell, head of innovation at WRAP, told letsrecycle.com: "The project has shown that many existing food and drink bottles can be lightweighted without affecting packaging performance or product sales.

"This reduces material and energy costs bringing benefits to manufacturers, retailers, consumers and the environment."

He added that the potential for cost and waste reductions, particularly in the wine industry, was large.

The waste minimisation fund has so far awarded £4.2 million since its launch and has approved 28 projects for funding in its bid to encourage innovative packaging initiatives.

Further information: <http://www.letsrecycle.com/materials/glass/news.jsp?story=5454>

Innovative veggie skewers provide meatless alternative

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 06

Story Text

A new range of meatless, ready-for-the-grill veggie skewers has been announced, offering a new meat-free alternative for the barbecue.

The skewers have been developed by North American food company Yves, which specialises in developing fresh, meat-free products.

The culinary innovation was created using a new process that transforms soy and wheat into naturally shaped meat-like products.

The resulting product is said to be similar to meat in appearance, texture and flavour.

The skewers are low in fat and free from cholesterol and provide a good source of protein, fibre, iron and zinc.

They take half as long to grill as beef or chicken and retain both their moisture and flavour for over 15 minutes on the heat, enabling them to be left on the grill for longer than existing soy foods.

The veggie skewers will be available in lemon herb chicken and BBQ beef flavours throughout the US and Canada and the company is said to be moving forward with plans to make the products available throughout Europe.

Further information:
beverages/20060322/NYW02122032006-1.html

<http://sev.prnewswire.com/food->

Celebrity chef extends advertising, food development deal

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 06

Story Text

The face of Sainsbury's supermarket brand, Jamie Oliver, has signed an additional one-year extension to his contract which is now entering its seventh year.

The celebrity chef will continue to appear in the supermarket's advertising campaigns as well as working alongside the grocer's food development team to create innovative ways to combine ingredients.

Helen Buck, Sainsbury's brand director, describes Mr Oliver's approach to food as "passionate but down-to-earth" and says that his adverts have had a huge impact on food sales.

The supermarket had to order two years' worth of nutmeg to meet customer demand after an advert featured the chef sprinkling nutmeg over spaghetti bolognese.

Another advert, in which Mr Oliver endorses asparagus, resulted in sales of the vegetable rising by 290 per cent.

The supermarket claims to be delighted with the success of the campaign and describes Mr Oliver as the "perfect centre piece" to their marketing strategy.

"Our customers agree as our research shows thousands of them are taking inspiration from Jamie's ideas and trying them at home," says Ms Buck.

Further information:
<http://www.mad.co.uk/Main/News/Articlex/ba4b415f8897412d838a517136d846f8/Oliver-extends-Sainsbury%E2%80%99s-deal.html>

Further information:

New 'urban' wine targets 25 to 35 year-olds

Date: Thu, 23 Mar 06

Story Text

Preparations are being made for the launch next month of a new range of wines, described as the first "urban wine brand".

Halewood International wine division Charlie Richards is targeting the wine at 25 to 35 year-olds and is understood to be planning a marketing campaign worth a quarter of a million pounds which will include sampling at urban music festivals and online advertising.

Bob Rishworth, managing director of Charlie Richards, said: "One World has been developed as the first 'urban wine brand', focusing less on the traditional characters of wine, and more on the shared social experiences of wine drinkers."

The initial launch will consist of Orange Street from South Africa and Ocean Point from Australia.

A number of additional wines will be introduced at a later date including an Argentinean wine called Orchid Boulevard which is due to be released later in the year.

The range will use the strapline "One world " our world " my wine" and is expected to retail at £4.99 a bottle.

Further information: <http://www.brandrepublic.com/bulletins/design/article/548197/chalie-richards-unveils-new-one-world-wine-range/>

Local food and drink favoured by the majority of Brits

Date: Wed, 22 Mar 06

Story Text

In a boost to the region's food producers, a new survey among UK consumers has found that more people are buying local food and drink.

The poll, commissioned by Food from Britain and conducted by international food and drink experts IGD, revealed that 65 per cent of shoppers claim to buy local produce when purchasing food and drink, a six per cent increase on March 2005.

In addition, a further nine per cent said they would be interested in buying local goods if there was better availability.

Helping this increase is a move towards local cooked meat products such as pie and pasties and more specialised products like frozen desserts and soft drinks to complement traditional high demand for local fruit and vegetables.

Supermarkets remain the preferred place to buy local produce, with almost half of consumers selecting these outlets, while farm shops (25 per cent), butchers (24 per cent) and farmers markets (21 per cent) are becoming more popular.

The top reason to buy local is still freshness, chosen by 64 per cent of consumers, with the next best being support for local producers (31 per cent) and a concern for the environment (25 per cent).

Further information: <http://www.igd.com/cir.asp?cirid=1901&search=1>

Initiative aims to improve food industry workforce

Date: Wed, 22 Mar 06

Story Text

A government-backed initiative has been launched to help enhance the aptitude of food industry employees, so as to overcome a perceived skills shortage within the sector.

Government-backed agency Improve claims that the food and drink sector's workforce is one of the most poorly trained of any UK industry, with 19 per cent of its employees having no

qualifications whatsoever.

In a bid to improve this, it is launching the Sector Skills Action plan (SSA), with the aim of aiding the food sector in its efforts to find and train workers.

Improve has also actively sought the cooperation of the industry on the matter.

The agency's chief executive Jack Matthews commented: "This is the first time that the sector has had the opportunity to have a properly coordinated plan to boost skills in order to drive up productivity and profitability.

"So far the response to our initiatives from all parties involved has been excellent, and we are working extremely hard to ensure that the training provision is properly reformed to address the needs of employers."

The plan was formulated after consultation with representatives of employers, public and private training providers, and government departments – all of whom will have to agree the plan before it can be implemented next January.

In addition, changes have also been made to the system for apprenticeships within the sector, with the Young Apprenticeship in Food and Drink Manufacturing scheme having now been opened up to children as young as 14.

Further information:
http://www.improveltd.co.uk/improve/Top_Links/Research/Improve_Sector_Skills_Agreement_c1473.aspx

New detection system should improve cost and efficiency

Date: Wed, 22 Mar 06

Story Text

A new product to quantify trace levels of products, metabolites and contaminants in complex samples of food, blood, urine and soil has been introduced into the market.

The Agilent 6410 triple quadrupole LC/MS, developed by Agilent Technologies, is the company's first triple quadrupole liquid chromatograph/mass spectrometer (LC/MS) system, providing ease-of-use features and reliability at prices which are 30 to 50 per cent lower than other similar instruments.

The product's features should facilitate analysis in a variety of food safety applications which are increasingly reliant on highly-sensitive technology to quantify trace levels of products, metabolites and contaminants in samples.

The increasingly stringent standards being laid down by regulatory agencies around the world mean that laboratories can rarely afford the equipment required to meet detection levels.

"We designed the 6410 with sensitivity, performance and costs in mind to address the growing challenges of the modern analytical laboratory," said Taia Ergueta, general manager of Agilent's mass spectrometry business.

"The 6410 will transform the efficiency and productivity of quantitative MS and allow

laboratories to meet the critical needs of their research projects and businesses."

Further information: <http://www.laboratorytalk.com/news/agi/agi375.html>

Ad campaign highlights health properties of dairy spread

Date: Wed, 22 Mar 06

Story Text

A £4 million national television campaign has been launched to advertise Dairy Crest's St Ivel Gold Omega 3, the first dairy spread product enriched with the long chain of the fish-derived fatty acid.

Unlike other products which tend to contain the short chain variety of the fatty acid Omega 3, the Dairy Crest spread contains the long chain form which is claimed to be up to ten times more effective at reducing cholesterol.

The campaign aims to highlight St Ivel Gold Omega 3 as the only dairy product containing the long chain form of Omega 3, which is essential for growth and development.

The advert uses computer technology to create a shoal of fish dashing through the ocean and grouping together to form a beating heart.

Dairy Crest marketing director Richard Tolley said: "There are many products on the market that contain Omega 3 and some make very bold health claims.

"It was therefore absolutely crucial to us that the campaign informs consumers of the superior nutritional qualities of the long chain Omega 3 variety so that consumers are aware there is a marked difference between what our spread and those containing the short chain variety can offer them."

Further information:
<http://www.brandrepublic.co.uk/sectors/advertising/creative/advertisement/24851/st-ivel-school-st-ivel-grey-london/>

Takeaway market set to soar

Date: Wed, 22 Mar 06

Story Text

Convenience foods and takeaways are likely to see a boom in sales with home-delivered pizzas leading the growth, a new report has predicted.

The study also suggests that innovations in communications technology are likely to result in changes to the way consumers order their food.

The study, commissioned by Domino's Pizza and conducted by think-tank the Future Foundation, indicates that the takeaway and convenience food sector is likely to grow in value from £8.7 billion in 2005 to £12.3 billion by 2015.

The pizza delivery market is predicted to enjoy particular success, inflating its profits to £1.1 billion within the next ten years and increasing its share of the market by 2.6 per cent.

William Nelson, a spokesman for Future Foundation, said: "Companies that offer a home delivery focus are better placed to take advantage of trends than takeaway-only operators."

The biggest change is likely to be the number of pizzas ordered by text-messages which are expected to represent £44 million worth of sales by 2015.

In addition, the placement of orders over the internet or television is set to increase by a massive 2877 per cent within a decade, from only £13 million to £374 million.

Internet and TV orders are expected to represent one in three home deliveries by 2015.

Further information: <http://www.caterersearch.com/Articles/2006/03/21/305843/Home-delivered+pizzas+to+lead+boom+in+convenience+foods.htm>

Rosy red apple provides added health benefits

Date: Wed, 22 Mar 06

Story Text

A variety of apple with even greater health benefits than ordinary fruit has been unveiled by researchers and could be on the market within years.

Developed by New Zealand-based fruit science company HortResearch, the new fruit has a strikingly rich red flesh which is both appealing to the eye and full of a health-promoting antioxidant called anthocyanin.

The company hopes that advances in genomic science techniques will enable the trees to be commercially available within as little as five or six years.

By determining those genes responsible for turning the apples red, researchers should be able to significantly speed up the breeding process.

Dr Ian Ferguson, chief scientist at HortResearch, stresses that the process does not involve genetic engineering.

"The genes are not modified by us in any way," he explains.

"We simply use our understanding of the genes to identify which of the natural crosses stand the most chance of successfully producing red-fleshed fruit with the right balance of flavour and appearance."

Research on the apple began in 1998 as part of the company's established breeding programme which has already produced a number of successful new apple varieties as well as a yellow-fleshed kiwifruit which has been a multi-million pound global success.

Further information: <http://www.hortresearch.co.nz/index/news/467>

Food standards watchdog releases salt guidelines

Date: Wed, 22 Mar 06

Story Text

The Food Standards Agency has published new guidelines for food manufacturers and retailers to encourage salt reductions in processed foods by 2010.

The new targets are aimed at bringing the average UK salt intake down in a bid to reduce the number of deaths from heart disease and stroke.

High levels of salt intake have been linked to high blood pressure, one of the main factors contributing to heart disease.

At least 26 million people in the UK are estimated to consume too much salt, with three quarters of their intake coming from processed foods.

Around ten per cent of people are thought to consume more than the recommended 6g a day, with estimates putting the average intake at around 10g.

The targets apply to salt levels in everyday foods such as bread, cereals, pizza, ready meals and cakes.

Many manufacturers and retailers have already made voluntary efforts to reduce the levels of salt in their products and the Association of Cereal Food Manufacturers has cut salt levels by a third since 1998.

Sales of household salt have already dropped by ten per cent over the last year, indicating that consumers themselves are being more careful about the amount of salt they use for cooking.

However, many manufacturers are concerned that reducing the amount of salt in their products will have an adverse effect on their taste and make them less appealing to consumers.

Further information: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/mar/salttargets>

Comprehensive allergy management guidelines released

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

New guidelines have been released to assist with food allergy diagnosis and management which highlight just how sophisticated and challenging the field has become in recent years.

The guidelines, published this month, are the results of a joint effort between the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) and the Joint Council of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (JCAAI).

"The practice parameter on food allergy represents more than ten years of research and investigation of literature by members of the joint task force," says one of the chief editors, Dr

Jean A. Chapman.

"Designed to improve patient care, the guidelines provide practicing physicians with an evidence-based, broadly accepted approach to the diagnostic evaluation and management of IgE-mediated [allergic] food reactions."

According to the authors, food allergies tend to be more common in children than in adults, with the most common childhood allergens being cow's milk, eggs, peanuts, soybeans and wheat.

The most common allergens in adults are peanuts, fish, crustaceans, molluscs, fruit and vegetables.

Sensitivity to most allergens decreases with age but allergy to peanuts and seafood tend to continue throughout a person's lifetime.

The guidelines include information for doctors on how to interpret diagnostic tests and recommendations for food allergy management as well as details on successful avoidance, risk factors and prevention of food allergy.

Further information: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=39859>

New test to detect common bacterium

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

A new test has been launched which detects and quantifies the amount of Campylobacter in poultry rinse samples within three hours.

Campylobacter, which causes diarrhoea, cramping, abdominal pain and fever, is commonly found in poultry and has been difficult to detect until now.

The new test, which is being launched by biotechnology company Warnex, is designed for use with Warnex's own real-time PCR-based rapid pathogen detection system.

"Given the prevalence of Campylobacter infections from food, particularly poultry, there is an increasing need for rapid tests that detect this pathogen," said Warnex' president and chief executive officer, Mark Busgang.

"Our test, which detects and quantifies this pathogen, can be instrumental in assisting food companies in improving the safety of their products."

Campylobacter is one of the most common bacterial causes of diarrhoea in the United States and new regulations for decreasing the incidence of the infection in Europe are imminent.

The test detects the three most common species of the pathogen, which account for 99 per cent of reported Campylobacter infection, and will be available in April.

Further information: <http://www.laboratorytalk.com/news/wan/wan100.html>

New food spoilage sensor developed

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

A team at the University of Florida has developed a new machine that can tell how long food products have before they will spoil or pass their expiration date.

The new smart sensor can also record and wirelessly transmit information to retailers about when and where problems occur as a product is being shipped.

"We think this sensor will make the perishable supply chain both safer and more efficient," said Bruce Welt, an assistant professor of agricultural and biological engineering and a faculty adviser on the project.

"Hopefully, that will translate into lower cost, better quality products for consumers."

The sensor is capable of tracking and interpreting not only temperature but also humidity, the shock of a product being dropped and other variables.

In the temperature setting, the device checks the temperature. It then merges its readings with an algorithm that electronically mimics the spoilage characteristics of milk, fish, flowers or whatever product is being shipped.

The device can communicate its results constantly and in real time via a wireless transmitter.

A patent application has been filed for the sensor, and the research team recently received a \$15,000 grant to continue developing the technology this summer.

More information:

<http://news.ufl.edu/2006/03/15/temp-sensor/>

Martek DHA available in powder form

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

A new vegetarian omega-3 fatty DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) powder has been developed for use in food and beverage products requiring dry mixing.

Martek Biosciences' new powder form of Martek DHA has much higher concentrations of DHA than fish oil powders currently on the market, leading to easier food formulations because less powder is needed to achieve desired DHA levels.

Available in DHA concentrations of ten or 17 per cent the powder offers an easily accessible form of DHA that is naturally limited to fatty fish but which has been shown may benefit people of all ages, from infants to adults.

Made from algae under tightly controlled manufacturing conditions, Martek DHA is free of oceanic contaminants that may be present in certain fish or fish oils. Algae are the only plant

source of DHA, a long chain omega-3 fatty acid.

Other plant sources of omega-3s, such as flax seed, walnuts and certain vegetable oils, are sources of omega-3s, but do not contain DHA, the only omega-3 that supports brain and eye development and function.

More information:

http://www.corporate-ir.net/ireye/ir_site.zhtml?ticker=matk&script=410&layout=7&item_id=833706

Trends and innovation the focus of Packaging Summit Europe

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

Some of the world's biggest brands are set to discuss the developments in food packaging at the Packaging Summit Europe 2006.

Taking place on July 4th and 5th in Amsterdam, the summit will offer delegates the chance to hear case studies and expert opinions on future trends in packaging solutions affecting a variety of industry sectors including food and drink.

Among the speakers at the conference will be Unilever's global packaging manager, Richard Inns, who will focus on trends in the European packaging industry and will talk about the latest innovations and next generation products being developed.

Beiersdorf's director of corporate packaging management will take delegates through the various stages involved in launching an innovative product from the concept phase to marketing and promotion.

Companies taking part include Unilever, Nestle, Procter & Gamble, Beiersdorf, Tetra Pak, Reckitt Benckiser, Cardinal Health and Tesco

Roger Pellow, Packaging Summit Europe managing director, said, "We're delighted to have our prestigious conference speakers on board. The conference topics will undoubtedly provide delegates with practical ideas and advice on how best to manage packaging in their supply chain and how to drive innovation across this key part of their business."

More information:

<http://www.pkgeurope.com/index.asp?page=52&key=35&language=en&prscat=>

Heinz sells fish division to focus on innovation

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

The sauces and canned food giant H.J Heinz has announced that it has completed the sale of its European seafood business and is on its way to realising its stated strategy of focusing on innovation.

The company has sold its European seafood business to Lehman Brothers Merchant Banking for £425 million.

Commenting on the sale Heinz chairman, president and chief executive officer, William R Johnson, said the sale would help the company drive innovation in its core brands of "ketchup and sauces; infant nutrition; and meals and snacks".

The sale confirmed today includes three major brands - John West in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands; Petit Navire in France; and Mareblu in Italy - and a reduction of approximately 5,000 employees at four seafood processing facilities in Ghana, the Seychelles, Douarnenez, France and Peniche, Portugal.

"In Europe specifically, Heinz has been streamlining its organisational structure and divesting non-core businesses like seafood, the HP Foods Limited Ethnic business and the HAK vegetable business to create a more focused portfolio that will accelerate growth and deliver improved margins," said Mr Johnson.

More information

http://www.heinz.com/jsp/news_f.jsp

Promise to revamp upscale chocolate range unfounded

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

The Galaxy Promises chocolate range will not be receiving a major overhaul despite rumours to the contrary, its manufacturers have said.

Masterfoods, the UK division of confectionary giant Mars, claims that it is pleased with the success of the brand and does not envisage a full-scale overhaul.

A report by the marketing portal mad.co.uk had suggested that a revamp of the premium range was imminent, involving redesigned packaging and smaller bars of chocolate, aimed at boosting flagging sales.

The report also claimed that the current packaging places the product in the 'discount' market rather than reflecting the upscale image of the brand and that this has resulted in sales being weaker than expected.

However Masterfoods asserts that, while it is injecting an additional Â£4 million into the Galaxy Promises brand, this investment is nothing to do with declining sales and that the company is satisfied with the UK performance of the range.

Further information: http://www.food-business-review.com/article_news.asp?guid=51219099-9AB5-426D-BFA7-BD05ADAB982B

Sulphur-deficient barley affects beer flavour

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

Growing malting barley on soils which are low in sulphur can result in massive yield losses and affect the resulting beer flavour, according to new research.

Trials funded by the Home-Grown Cereals Authority (HGCA) found that sulphur deficiency can reduce yield by as much as one tonne per hectare or more.

"Sulphur deficiency has become more widespread and affects an increasing range of crops which now includes malting barley," said Professor Jellis, HGCA director of research.

"Deficiency can adversely affect some malting and brewing characteristics, as well as damaging yields."

The tests, designed to determine yield and quality responses, were repeated over two growing seasons at four different UK sites where sulphur deficiency was likely.

Sites in Norfolk and Bedfordshire were planted with winter barley variety Pearl and spring barley variety Optic was grown in Aberdeen and County Durham.

Out of the eight resulting trials, five produced significant yield responses to sulphur levels.

The results imply that farmers in sulphur-deficient areas should apply a sulphate-containing fertiliser in mid-March to mid-April to correct deficiency and improve both the yield and subsequent quality of their crop.

Further information:
http://www.hgca.com/cms_publications.output/2/2/Publications/Publication/Sulphur%20for%20yield%20and%20quality%20in%20malting%20barley.msp?fn=show&pubcon=3026

San Miguel claims innovation generated strong growth in 2005

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 06

Story Text

Beverage and packaging company San Miguel is hoping to continue its recent success throughout the coming year as it aims to build on the robust growth it enjoyed in 2005.

The Philippine-based company claims that strong innovation and effective brand building provided the impetus behind the strong growth in its beer and food businesses last year.

It also expects further expansion in 2006 following the acquisition of the Australian company, National Foods Ltd, which contributed an estimated 21 per cent of San Miguel's total revenue last year.

San Miguel's president, Ramon S Ang, is pleased with the company's outlook and sees potential for further growth.

"National Foods has proven to be an outstanding acquisition in a number of ways," he comments.

"It has helped push revenue and it has given us access to a market that has tremendous potential.

"I can't think of any other business that could have given us such huge gains in such a short period of time," he adds.

Further information: <http://www.sanmiguel.com.ph/newsroom.asp?subid=37&nID=288>

Cheaper, more efficient wastewater filtration system designed

Date: Mon, 20 Mar 06

Story Text

A new membrane filtration system has been designed to better treat oily wastes before they leave the plant, enabling food manufacturers to avoid falling foul of environmental laws.

Koch Membrane Systems says that its Inducor and Inducor R-G tubular modules boast higher packing density and need less power than traditional tubular membranes.

Therefore the modules can be used to make the ultrafiltration of industrial process streams and wastewater cheaper and more efficient, according to the firm.

Constructed from half-inch and one-inch diameter tubules respectively, the Inducor and Inducor R-G both feature open channel configurations tolerant of high solids streams, including food waste and the activated sludge from membrane bioreactors.

The membrane is compatible with most industrial wastewater streams, but is ideally suited for the treatment of oily wastes and metal hydroxide wastes, and can be used in systems with flow rates of upwards of 100,000 gallons per day.

The two Inducor models use the same ultrafiltration seen in Koch's FEG tubes and Ultra-Cor modules, as well as industry-standard threaded and Victaulic fittings.

Further information:
http://www.kochmembrane.com/pdf/Press_Releases/INDUCOR%20_2%2009%2006_FINAL%20with%20image2.pdf

New vegetarian product a 'huge leap forward'

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 06

Story Text

The world's first vegetarian omega 3 DHA EPA is due to be launched soon by a Swiss based company, Eau Plus.

Algae Pure is extracted from an undisclosed strain of algae and is claimed to provide a credible, organic and environmentally sustainable alternative to fish, according to its creator.

Containing both EPA and DHA, fatty acids which are found in oily fish and which provide numerous physiological benefits, it is being hailed as a "huge leap forward for the health of everyone".

EPA and DHA help to lower cholesterol levels and are also said to play a significant role in brain function but our bodies are unable to manufacture them, making it necessary to obtain them from our diet.

Yvonne Bishop-Weston, a top London nutritionist, said of the discovery: "The fact nutritionists can now recommend a sustainable sourced, pure plant based product that contains both EPA and DHA is a huge leap forward for the health of everyone, and especially vegetarians, vegans, religious and ethical groups who avoid animal products for ethical and environmental reasons."

Further information:
http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?idNewsMaker=10487&fSite=AO545&next=6

Mollusc allergens demand new labelling rules

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 06

Story Text

Allergens in molluscs are not reduced by processing techniques, suggesting the need for new labelling requirements according to a study by the EU's food safety authority (EFSA).

A current EU directive lists ingredients that are known to trigger allergies or intolerances and states that foodstuffs must be labelled whenever a listed ingredient is used in their production.

The directive also requires the list of allergens to be updated whenever there are advancements in relevant scientific knowledge.

Molluscs are often added to processed foods including soups and sauces, but several molluscs, such as snails, oysters, clams and squid, are known to cause food allergic reactions which can be life-threatening.

EFSA yesterday released a scientific opinion indicating that tropomyosin, one of the major allergens found in most molluscs, is heat-resistant and therefore not reliably reduced by food processing.

"Although the allergenicity of some other mollusc allergens appears to be destroyed by heat treatment, there are also reports of increased allergenicity after heating," EFSA stated.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=66487-efsa-allergens-molluscs>

Fizzy drinks out of fashion

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 06

Story Text

The outlook is bleak for drinks companies unless they move away from carbonated drinks, soft drinks giant Britvic has warned.

With public opinion swaying towards healthier options, the demand for fizzy drinks is declining and people are becoming increasingly less inclined to drink full-sugar drinks.

The company has revealed that pure juices outsold full-sugar colas last year, with the fruit flavoured carbonates category declining by 12 per cent.

At the launch of Britvic's Soft Drinks Category Report, the company's chief executive Paul Moody advised that companies now need to react quickly to the "sea change of public opinion".

Consumers are seeking out low and non-sugar drinks, he said, and companies need to seize the opportunity to move with the trend.

"It is quite clear the industry should not look at these changes as threats, but as a real opportunity," he urged.

"The changes to school vending laws, as well as the increase in pub opening hours, is something we should take advantage of."

The Britvic report also revealed that UK sales of soft drinks increased to £7.8 billion in 2005 with sales of dairy drinks up 35 per cent, mineral water rising 16 per cent, and smoothie brands enjoying a 100 per cent increase in popularity.

Further information:
<http://www.caterersearch.com/Articles/2006/03/17/305827/Gloomy+future+for+fizzy+drinks.htm>

Cows milk found in milk-free formula

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 06

Story Text

Baby formula producer Farley's has recalled a single batch of its soya formula from supermarket shelves after finding traces of milk in the product during routine testing, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has said.

Parents have been advised that babies who are known to have lactose intolerance or are allergic to cow's milk should not be given the product and concerned parents are recommended to call Farley's for a full refund.

The product had been advertised as appropriate for a lactose or milk free diet by the company, the FSA said.

The recall affects products which can be identified with batch number 607D and best before date February 1st 2008, both located on the bottom of the can.

The FSA said that Farley's has already been in contact with the Anaphylaxis Campaign and Allergy UK, members of which will be informed of the problem through a mail shot.

"Farley's has also contacted the Vegan and Vegetarian Societies' headquarters to inform them of this recall," it added.

Those who require further information and refunds can call 08000 151577.

Further information: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/mar/farleysoya>

Caffeine drinks require warning labels, study finds

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 06

Story Text

A new study in the US has recommended that drinks packaging should contain information on

caffeine content.

The report, published in the Journal of Analytical Toxicology, found that all the fizzy drinks studied contained caffeine levels well above the recommended limit for cola drinks.

Most of the energy drinks had levels exceeding 65mg for an 8oz serving, compared to the recommended limit of 65mg per 12oz serving.

"Because of the previously mentioned health concerns arising from the consumption of caffeine, it seems appropriate that warning labels should accompany all caffeinated beverages," the study advises.

Dr Bruce Goldberger, one of the researchers, said that consumption of caffeine could cause serious health effects in certain people including anxiety, palpitations, insomnia and stomach complaints.

Caffeinated drinks should be labelled to protect vulnerable consumers from such effects, he said.

The UK Food Standards Agency advises that people should consume no more than 300mg of caffeine per day, particularly in the case of pregnant women who are at greater risk of miscarrying or giving birth to babies with low birth weight if they exceed the recommended intake.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=66486-soft-drinks-caffeine-energy-drinks>

Low carbohydrate diet declared unsafe

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 06

Story Text

The low carbohydrate Atkins diet "should not be recommended for weight loss", medical experts have said.

US scientists from the New York School of Medicine published a case report in today's issue of the Lancet which links the Atkins nutritional programme to a life threatening disease suffered by a 40-year-old obese woman.

It appears that low levels of carbohydrate encourage the liver to produce perilously high amounts of ketones, causing a condition known as ketoacidosis, the case report says.

Although relatively unknown at the moment, the research team suggested that ketoacidosis could become permanently associated with Atkins if the diet's popularity continues to increase.

"As researchers and clinicians, our most important criterion should be indisputable safety, and low-carbohydrate diets currently fall short of this benchmark," commented Professor Klaus-Dieter Lessnau.

"Low-carbohydrate diets for weight management are far from healthy, given their association with ketosis, constipation or diarrhoea, halitosis, headache, and general fatigue to name a few side effects."

High intakes of fat and protein raise cholesterol levels and the risk of cardiovascular disease, prompting criticism from a variety of health bodies.

The American Dietetic Association described Atkins as "a nightmare of a diet", while the American Medical Association's chairman called it "a serious threat to health" in testimony to the US Congress.

But the diet has proved extremely successful since its popularisation in 2003 for its short term effectiveness in inducing weight loss.

Further information:
<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=10000102&sid=aIWlrzW5pYCc&refer=uk>

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Date: Fri, 17 Mar 06

Story Text

Baby formula producer Farley's has recalled a single batch of its soya formula from supermarket shelves after finding traces of milk in the product during routine testing, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has said.

Parents have been advised that babies who are known to have lactose intolerance or are allergic to cow's milk should not be given the product and concerned parents are recommended to call Farley's for a full refund.

The product had been advertised as appropriate for a lactose or milk free diet by the company, the FSA said.

The recall affects products which can be identified with batch number 607D and best before date February 1st 2008, both located on the bottom of the can.

The FSA said that Farley's has already been in contact with the Anaphylaxis Campaign and Allergy UK, members of which will be informed of the problem through a mail shot.

"Farley's has also contacted the Vegan and Vegetarian Societies' headquarters to inform them of this recall," it added.

Those who require further information and refunds can call 08000 151577.

Further information: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/mar/farleysoya>

Caffeine drinks require warning labels, study finds

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 06

Story Text

A new study in the US has recommended that drinks packaging should contain information on caffeine content.

The report, published in the Journal of Analytical Toxicology, found that all the fizzy drinks studied contained caffeine levels well above the recommended limit for cola drinks.

Most of the energy drinks had levels exceeding 65mg for an 8oz serving, compared to the recommended limit of 65mg per 12oz serving.

"Because of the previously mentioned health concerns arising from the consumption of caffeine, it seems appropriate that warning labels should accompany all caffeinated beverages," the study advises.

Dr Bruce Goldberger, one of the researchers, said that consumption of caffeine could cause serious health effects in certain people including anxiety, palpitations, insomnia and stomach complaints.

Caffeinated drinks should be labelled to protect vulnerable consumers from such effects, he said.

The UK Food Standards Agency advises that people should consume no more than 300mg of caffeine per day, particularly in the case of pregnant women who are at greater risk of miscarrying or giving birth to babies with low birth weight if they exceed the recommended intake.

Further information: <http://www.foodnavigator.com/news/ng.asp?n=66486-soft-drinks-caffeine-energy-drinks>

Clearer pricing announced for online supermarkets

Date: Thu, 16 Mar 06

Story Text

Supermarket chains offering online shopping and delivery services are to introduce clearer pricing, the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) has announced.

The UK's leading online grocery retailers, Asda, Sainsbury, Tesco, Waitrose and Ocado, have agreed to make their pricing policies more transparent following an OFT investigation into complaints about discrepancies between list and delivery prices.

A number of consumers had complained to the trading watchdog that the price of goods delivered would often be different from the prices listed on the supermarkets' websites.

The OFT found this was because supermarkets were quoting the price of goods in-store on the day the order was placed on their websites, but charging customers the in-store price on the day the goods are delivered.

The trading standards body ruled that supermarkets "did not make it sufficiently clear that the prices shown were guide prices and what relation they had to the actual prices that would be charged".

Online grocery retailers have responded today by pledging to make this pricing policy clear to consumers before they place an order.

The supermarkets also pledged to ensure that goods ordered at special-offer prices are delivered at that price, provided the delivery date remains within the offer period.

John Fingleton, OFT chief executive, believes today's move by online supermarkets is a positive step in increasing consumer confidence in doing their grocery shopping online.

"We welcome the supermarkets' improvements to the information available to customers buying groceries online," Mr Fingleton said.

"Customers have a right to clear and transparent information upfront when making their buying decisions."

The OFT has urged shoppers who do their groceries online to check delivery prices against current list prices and advised them that they are not contractually bound to pay for the goods until they are delivered, meaning they are able to reject deliveries if they believe the pricing has been altered.

Online grocery sales have soared in recent years as shoppers have grown more confident about having their shopping delivered to their doors.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), non-store sales, the bulk of which are made via the internet, rose 3.4 per cent in the three months to February, the fastest rate of growth since July 2004.

Further information: <http://www.offt.gov.uk/News/Press+releases/2006/53-06.htm>

Further expansion for pasta firm

Date: Thu, 16 Mar 06

Story Text

Swiss plant design and construction firm Buhler is set to expand its operations in the pasta sector.

Buhler Pasta has been developing equipment for the manufacture of dry pasta since 1903 and now the firm wants to establish itself as the global leader in this section of food production.

The firm currently supplies around 40 per cent of the world's pasta lines every year.

"Our enclosed system ensures top sanitation standards in dough preparation," comments Beat Muller, head of Buhler Pasta.

He says that because pasta is inexpensive and has a long shelf life, consumption will expand from traditional markets to new market segments.

"It is needless to say that we plan to be a major player also when it comes to developing these new markets," Mr Muller adds.

"But we must also open up new market segments if we want to sustain healthy growth over the next few years."

The firm has already developed a process for the production of gluten-free pasta from maize or rice.

Mr Muller adds that Buhler is currently researching possibilities for the production of Asian noodles.

The next step for the company is to develop new regional markets and identify and enter new market segments, Mr Muller concludes.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=66424-buhler-pasta-gluten>

European food market research proposal accepted

Date: Thu, 16 Mar 06

Story Text

The European Science Foundation has been given the go-ahead to develop a detailed research project examining European food systems.

The aim of the project will be to address the health and environmental issues, such as food security and sustainability development.

This will be carried out with the main focus on Europe, but the foundation says that it will also include a global perspective to the research.

It is hoped that the work will act as a spur to the creation of scientific networks throughout all areas of food research.

European food systems are changing due to a number of technological and political developments, as well as the forces of globalisation and changing diet.

Consumer pressure has also increased in areas such as food safety and animal welfare.

The Look Forward research will assess these changes and their effects.

Dr Rudy Rabbinge, a main contributor to the project, commented: "The collaboration between various disciplines will result in unifying concepts, unifying methodologies, unifying approaches.

"This may lead to true interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research with much added value.

"I have been working all my life, through research; training and education, on the improvement of agricultural systems in trying to make them productive; environmentally clean and sustainable."

It is hoped that the finished research will be a useful tool for policymakers across the continent.

Further information:
http://www.esf.org/esf_genericpage.php?language=0§ion=2&domain=0&genericpage=2518

Coca-Cola launches new Blak coffee drink

Date: Thu, 16 Mar 06

Story Text

Coca-Cola is ready to introduce its innovative coffee essence and natural flavours drink called Coca-Cola Blak.

The drink will be launched in the US on April 3rd, and it has been suggested that the beverage will eventually be available in several other countries around the world.

"There is no other beverage available today quite like Coca-Cola Blak," said Katie Bayne, senior vice president of Coca-Cola Brands for Coca-Cola North America.

"Imagine the refreshing taste of an ice-cold Coca-Cola that finishes with a rich essence of coffee. Only Coca-Cola can deliver that distinct combination of flavours."

Marketing for the product in the US began earlier this year, with a teaser advertisement placed during the pre-show red carpet television coverage of the Oscars.

Last month, Coca-Cola launched the hybrid drink Vault onto the American market.

Further information:
http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?idNewsMaker=10469&fSite=AO545&next=2

Carlsberg breaks the mould with new draught beer system

Date: Thu, 16 Mar 06

Story Text

A new draught beer system from Carlsberg promises to supply the perfect pint every time.

The DraughtMaster, available both for professional and home use, offers perfect temperature and taste as well as easy cleaning and maintenance.

The technology replaces the traditional metal keg with a plastic, high barrier PET keg which is filled with ready-to-drink beer in a process that prevents oxygen from entering the keg, thereby keeping the beer fresher for longer.

Carlsberg claims that the new technology, which involves the keg being compressed from the outside while beer is poured, enables the contents to stay fresh entirely naturally for at least 21 days after the first pint is served.

The smaller, home version of the technology is the size of a small espresso machine and enables drinkers to enjoy five litres of the same draught quality beer in the comfort of their own homes.

The system is currently only available in Denmark, Norway, Portugal and Sweden but will soon be found in other European countries and beyond.

"DraughtMaster is the answer to many smaller outlets' wish to serve fresh and cold draught beer," says Nils S.Andersen, the company's chief executive.

"Results from our field studies make us very confident that we have found the key to a new market where draught beer has never been available, because it did not deliver a satisfactory profitability to the customer due to the low throughput," he adds.

Further information:
http://www.foodingredientsfirst.com/newsmaker_article.asp?idNewsMaker=10470&fSite=AO545&next=2

Rhubarb enjoys unexpected growth spurt

Date: Thu, 16 Mar 06

Story Text

Rhubarb has been enjoying a recent surge in popularity, with sales doubling over the last month in some supermarkets.

The vegetable, which is often assumed to be a fruit because of its regular appearance in pies and crumbles, has made it back onto shopping lists with the help of endorsements from celebrity chefs such as Rick Stein and Anthony Worrell Thompson, who included rhubarb in his recent books on the controversial Glycaemic Index (GI) diet.

First introduced into Europe by Marco Polo, rhubarb is renowned for being low in carbohydrate, provides only seven calories for every 100 grams consumed and also helps to reduce cholesterol levels.

It has traditionally been used in folk medicine to treat intestinal problems and is a good source of fibre, vitamin C, calcium and potassium.

Growers, most of whom are found in the so-called 'Rhubarb Triangle' in Yorkshire, are expecting sales of the vegetable to exceed 1,000 tonnes this year.

Further information: <http://www.freshinfo.com/index.php?s=n&ss=nd&sid=38550>

Summary Text

Rhubarb has been enjoying a recent surge in popularity, with sales doubling over the last month in some supermarkets.

Hope for red pepper cancer cure

Date: Wed, 15 Mar 06

Story Text

New research claims that spicy chilli peppers can help kill cancer cells, inducing apoptosis and causing them to "commit suicide".

The team from University of California, Los Angeles, (UCLA) and the Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute found that tumours in mice with prostate cancer were a fifth of the size of their compatriots when fed capsaicin, the active "spicy" chemical in chillies.

Writing in the journal Cancer Research, study author Dr Soren Lehmann said that "capsaicin had a profound anti-proliferative effect on human prostate cancer cells in culture".

The researchers claim that giving a human the weekly equivalent of three to eight habanera peppers – the hottest known peppers – would slow development of prostate cells and kill others.

Prostate cancer is the most common malignancy in men in the US and is said to be responsible for 221,000 deaths worldwide each year and 10,000 in Britain alone.

While the report's authors claim that eating equivalent of 120 jalapeno peppers every week would be good for men, others are more sceptical.

Chris Hiley, head of research at the Prostate Cancer Charity in the UK, said that while she found the research "interesting", she warned against men eating too many chilli peppers until there was a way to extract capsaicin.

"We caution men with prostate cancer in the UK against upping their weekly intake of the hottest known chillies," she said.

"High intake of hot chillies has been linked with stomach cancers in the populations of India and Mexico."

The charity's advice until there was further research was that men should cut down on fatty foods, eat less red meat and take in more fruit and vegetables.

Unfortunately for men looking to follow this advice and increase their chilli intake, the most popular dishes containing chillies, such as jalfrezi or chilli con carne, are often high in fats and

red meat.

Further information: <http://www.newscientist.com/channel/health/dn8849.html>

Healthy smoothie joins market

Date: Wed, 15 Mar 06

Story Text

Another smoothie fruit drink is set to join the market, at a time when the consumer beverage choice seems to be swinging to the health conscious range of drinks that are increasingly available.

According to the business insight website mad.co.uk, Sweetbird, the Beyond the Bean owned brand, is to launch its range of smoothies next month, throwing it into direct competition with Innocent and PJ Smoothies.

Six flavours will be available when the product is initially launched, according to mad.co.uk, each branded with the Sweetbird cartoon bird icon.

Mango, peach, strawberry, banana, wild berry and strawberry-banana will be the first flavours in April when the product gets its full launch, following the soft launch in bars and cafes that has already taken place.

Recently, Tesco announced that demand for smoothies increased by a massive 84 per cent in the last year, making it one of the country's quickest growing drink sectors.

Further information:
<http://www.mad.co.uk/Main/News/Articlex/b9575e63212942be8ebaa907d69debaf/New-smoothie-set-for-launch.html>

E Coli fears for Norwegian ground beef

Date: Wed, 15 Mar 06

Story Text

Discount retailer Lidl has stopped selling Norwegian ground beef amid fears that it could have been contaminated with a strain of the lethal E coli bacteria.

Nine children have been taken ill in Norway with acute kidney failure, four of whom have shown signs of the E Coli bacteria.

The consumption of ground beef is a common factor that could be accountable, it has been reported.

Now Lidl has told Norway's health authority Mattilsynet that it found a strain of E Coli in meat producer Gilde's Gullgrytten brand of ground beef.

Lidl has since recalled its meat packages, which are produced in the Gilde Fosen plant before being ground and packaged by Vestfold Kjøtttravare, ahead of tests to be carried out by the authority.

"All products made with ground beef [between January 1st to February 24th] should be left in the freezer until we know more," the director of Mattilsynet, Joakim Lystad, told the Norway Post.

Meanwhile, analysis of the bacteria that has caused the kidney failure amongst the nine Norwegian children worryingly suggests the presence of a new and highly aggressive form of E coli.

The head of pediatrics at Ullevål University Hospital in Oslo told the Afterposten newspaper that such cases of acute kidney failure are highly rare, having previously witnessed only five earlier cases since 1998.

Further information: <http://www.aftenposten.no/english/local/article1248338.ece>

Ready source of antioxidants in fruit and vegetable waste

Date: Wed, 15 Mar 06

Story Text

Residues from the production of fruit juices could be a good source of antioxidants, according to the latest research.

A Spanish-German study into fruit and vegetable waste products found that they offer a practical source of potent antioxidants, according to NutraIngredients.com.

The research evaluated the practical, economic and industrial viability of waste products from the production of fruit and vegetable juices, such as apple, strawberry and pear juice.

According to the supplements and nutrition website, the research paid particular attention to the remnants from apple juice production, but added that high demand for the antioxidant would be needed to warrant the "substantial changes in the production chain" that would be needed to use the remnants as a product.

The market for healthy products and health supplements is currently extremely buoyant, increasingly so in the UK where Britvic recently noted consumer preference was taking focus away from carbonates to "healthier" options.

Smoothies, which often contain a lot of fruit, are currently one of the biggest growing drinks categories in the UK.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=66422-antioxidants-bht-apple>

Decrease in demand for fish oil

Date: Wed, 15 Mar 06

Story Text

Despite an increase in demand from manufacturers of nutraceuticals, production of fish oil around the world declined over the course of last year.

A new report compiled by Globefish, a department in the US fisheries department, has revealed that output dropped in four of the five main producing nations, website NutraIngredients reports.

The total production of these countries during 2005 was 570,000 tonnes, which is 12 per cent less than that of the previous year.

Chile, Denmark, Norway and Peru all saw a decline in output, while Iceland was the only producer to see an increase in supply.

The European market for supplements based on omega-3 is largely centred on oils derived from marine sources and is worth approximately £160 million.

Further information: <http://www.nutraingredients.com/news/ng.asp?n=66435-fish-oil-omega>

Robot stops five times faster than F1 car

Date: Wed, 15 Mar 06

Story Text

The fastest robot in the food processing industry has been developed, according to its designer's claims.

Fatronik, a Spanish company, claim that its new Quickplacer robot can increase productivity by up to 20 per cent, picking up and positioning over 200 items per minute.

"The Quickplacer robot is the most rapid in the world," the company claims.

"Its high acceleration and braking capacity, five times more than that of a Formula One racing car, makes it world leader in production capacity."

According to Fatronik, the robot can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from positioning chocolates in individually-shaped slots and packaging lipstick bars into groups right through to feeding fish or meat into flowpack machines.

Apart from the benefits in eliminating the error associated with manual packing, it should also help to significantly cut labour costs and improve output in the confectionary, bakery, fish, meat and vegetable markets.

The robot was unveiled at the International Machine-Tool Biennial in Bilbao last week.

Further information: <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/news/ng.asp?n=66429-fatronik-robot-automation>

Quality standard for Aldi products

Date: Tue, 14 Mar 06

Story Text

Aldi, the discount food retailer, is to launch a new campaign to improve the overall opinion of its own label products, according to reports.

The certification campaign will be backed by advertising and promotional work, according to website freshinfo.com.

In order to emphasise the quality of its own brand products, the discount retailer will use the Quality Standard (QS) logo to advertise the fact that the products are of a decent standard.

The system of QS labelling should be in place by October, the website reports, with the onus on individual stores to gain QS certification before they can offer any of the products to customers.

Aldi is one of the largest grocery retail chains in the world, with approximately 5,000 stores worldwide. Over 16 countries currently have Aldi stores, including the UK, USA, France and Germany.

It competes against discount retailers such as Lidl and the changing format that is Kwik Save in the UK.

Further information: <http://www.freshinfo.com/index.php?s=n&ss=nd&sid=38528>

Improvements in school meals not reflected by cookery lessons

Date: Tue, 14 Mar 06

Story Text

School cookery lessons are not doing enough to back up recent efforts to make children eat more healthily, according to Ofsted inspectors.

Chief inspector Maurice Smith told BBC News that lessons in food technology were not reflecting those about healthy eating.

Ofsted has produced two reports on the subject – 'Healthy eating in schools' and 'Food technology in secondary schools'.

The first report focuses on the standard of school meals, a subject which has courted much controversy in recent months.

Inspectors agreed that the standard of meals has improved in some schools, particularly primary schools where pupils were using their newly-learnt skills to make informed choices about healthier eating.

The report also concluded that the level of teaching about healthy eating is predominantly good in both primary and secondary schools.

The second report, which focuses on school cookery lessons, finds that pupils spend too much time doing written work and not enough time learning how to cook nutritious meals.

In an opinion poll conducted on behalf of Ofsted, more than half of parents believed that the quality of their children's school meals had improved.

Further

information:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/pressreleases/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.details&id=1741>

Seven Seas withdraws own-brand products from stores

Date: Tue, 14 Mar 06

Story Text

One of the UK's leading healthcare brands has taken steps to withdraw a number of its products from stores.

Seven Seas, well known for its cod liver oil supplements, has withdrawn several batches of its food supplements because of unacceptably high levels of dioxins.

Dioxins are chemicals that can cause health problems if they are absorbed into our bodies at high levels for long periods, although they have been shown to have no immediate effect on health.

Although the amounts found in the withdrawn Seven Seas products do not pose any health risk, they still exceed strict legal levels.

The Food Standards Agency has issued a food alert detailing the situation and Seven Seas has contacted all retailers, requesting that the affected batches are removed from stores.

The affected products include the company's own brand of high strength cod liver oil, extra high strength cod liver oil, JointCare capsules and ProBrain capsules.

Further information: <http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/alerts/2006/mar/sevenseas>

Coca-Cola wins funding for environmentally-friendly packaging trials

Date: Tue, 14 Mar 06

Story Text

Coca-Cola Enterprises has been awarded funding from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (Wrap), a fund designed to encourage initiatives to reduce packaging waste.

The drinks company is using the funding for trials of redesigned and lighter weight 500ml PET bottles, according to Wrap, in addition to addressing the feasibility of using recycled PET in the bottles.

The programme has also backed projects by Dairy Crest and Sainsbury's and Proctor & Gamble.

"Coca-Cola Enterprises is delighted to be working with Wrap again. The project seeks to trial lightweight 500ml carbonated drinks bottles, and also address the misconception that light weighting cannot be achieved whilst increasing recycled content," said Martin Rodgers, rPET manager at Coca-Cola Enterprises.

The latest approvals are some of the 28 that Wrap has granted funding to since the launch of the programme in November 2004.

Through the programme, the innovation fund has awarded £4.2 million of its £8 million budget so far.

Further information: <http://www.prw.com/main/newsdetails.asp?id=5279>

Oasis Fusion launched amidst widespread marketing campaign

Date: Tue, 14 Mar 06

Story Text

Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE) has announced it is expanding its range of Oasis drinks with the launch of Oasis Fusion in the UK.

The drink is available in two flavours – passion fruit and vanilla and fusion berry and elderflower – which have arisen following customer research that highlighted a growing demand from female consumers for contemporary tasting beverages.

"Oasis is a fantastic brand that continues to go from strength to strength. We're confident that Oasis Fusion will prove a valuable addition to the fast growing Oasis brand, offering consumers further choice and answering their need for great tasting beverages that are both low in calories and truly refreshing," said Kieran Hemsworth, operational marketing director for CCE.

According to research carried out prior to the product launch, 70 per cent of non-Oasis drinkers and 90 per cent of existing Oasis drinkers are likely to try the product.

CCE has invested some £3 million into the marketing for Oasis Fusion, with PR activity, an outdoor poster campaign, nationwide summer sampling and in-store work all playing a part.

Oasis brand sales are currently selling at approximately three times the rate of juice drinks, according to CCE.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=30343

New packaging and flavour for Robinsons High Juice

Date: Tue, 14 Mar 06

Story Text

Britvic has revamped the packaging for Robinsons High Juice squash and at the same time unveiled a new flavour in the High Juice range.

According to just-drinks.com, the drinks range will now include an apple, strawberry and lychee version, which will carry the new frosted packaging in accordance with the rest of the High Juice range.

"Britvic is continuing to develop its Robinsons squash portfolio and the repackaging of High Juice will help drive the entire squash sub-category, by pulling in new customers and urging existing consumers to trade up to premium," said a spokesman for Britvic yesterday.

"As more adults buy into premium squash, Britvic will be assisting our retail partners to help build sales and profits across their range."

A marketing campaign to support the launch will run from March until June, the website reports.

Britvic recently said that the current market was tough for carbonated soft drinks, as consumers

turn more to health conscious options.

Further information: http://www.just-drinks.com/news_detail.asp?art=30345

EU: No plans for GM legislation at this time

Date: Mon, 13 Mar 06

Story Text

The European Commission has announced that it has no plans to develop EU-wide legislation on genetically modified crops at present.

A report by the EC has decided that further legislation "does not appear justified at this time."

According to the report, the Commission reached this conclusion from its "limited experience with the cultivation of GM crops and the need to conclude the process of introducing national measures."

It still plans to engage in an in-depth consultative process with member states and stakeholders at a conference in Vienna on April 5th and 6th before making a final decision on the subject.

At present, measures regarding the co-existence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming are the subject of a Commission Recommendation dating back to July 2003.

The measures are designed to allow for GM crops to be grown without negative economic consequences that might be caused by accidental contact with non-GM crops.

Mariann Fischer Boel, commissioner for agriculture and rural development, said of the decision: "Growing conditions are very varied from country to country and experience with GM crops is still limited in Europe.

"It therefore does not seem appropriate to propose unified EU rules at this time."

Further information:
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/293&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Approval scheme for meat plants launched

Date: Mon, 13 Mar 06

Story Text

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has started checking meat plant facilities to ensure they are up to the necessary standards following new regulations.

New EU rules on food hygiene require meat products establishments to be approved by their country's regulatory body in order to continue trading.

FSA veterinary director Alick Simmons said a "firm but fair approach" will be taken and the agency will give plants time to make sure they comply with the regulations.

However, he warned that "where appropriate action is not taken in order to comply with the regulations, the FSA will not hesitate to refuse approval and therefore non-compliant plants may have to close".

Over the past 12 months, the FSA has been working with the food industry to help firms set up processes to meet the EU requirements, contacting all premises that were to be affected.

It has also offered and carried out free appraisal visits to around 300 businesses in all food sectors and will continue to support the industry on this issue.

Further information: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/2006/mar/meatapprove>

Large quantities of fluoride harmful for teeth

Date: Mon, 13 Mar 06

Story Text

Fluoride may help to prevent cavities, but drinking too much of it may lead to white streaks on your teeth.

Fluoride, which protects against cavities, is added to many public water supplies as well as being found in many toothpastes, foods and drinks.

However too much fluoride can lead to a condition known as fluorosis which causes the enamel of the tooth to be compromised, making it more susceptible to decay.

In its mildest form, fluorosis results in white streaks on the teeth; however in more serious cases, the teeth can suffer from severe discolouration and even erosion.

Researchers from the University of Iowa studied the fluoride intake of a group of children for ten to 13 years after birth.

Around 35 per cent of the children exhibited signs of dental fluorosis, although mostly only mild.

Those children with fluorosis were found to have consumed more fluoride contained in beverages than the other children and the results suggest that the intake of fluoride during infancy and early childhood can increase the risk of children developing fluorosis in their permanent teeth.

The researchers concluded that parents should be aware of how much fluoride is contained in their water supply and take this into account when deciding which drinks to purchase for their children.

Further information: http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2006-03/iaa-fbc022806.php

Sustainable cod now available in the UK

Date: Mon, 13 Mar 06

Story Text

For the first time ever, British consumers will be able to purchase sustainably-caught cod, as Young's Seafood launches its new line in this product.

Young's has become the world's first company to complete a deal for Alaskan line-caught Pacific cod to be supplied to the UK market, following certification of the fishery by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) last month.

Young's marketing director James Turton announced that he was delighted with this latest addition to the firm's MSC-approved portfolio, which at 22 products is the largest range in the UK.

He commented: "Young's is passionate about seafood so it's no surprise that we are also passionate about securing sustainable supplies for the long term.

"The MSC initiative has a major role to play in boosting this process and it's great news that we can now offer the UK market an MSC-approved species which offers a delicious direct alternative to Atlantic cod."

Pacific cod, also known as true cod, is a groundfish species similar to the Atlantic cod with a white, lean and flaky flesh, and is sourced around the coasts of the northern US and Canada.

Young's is now supplying Sainsbury's with Pacific cod being sold on its fish counters and as of this week its new packs of chilled Young's Smoked Pacific Cod Fillets will also be available at Asda stores nationwide.

Seaweed found to be the perfect substitute for caviar

Date: Mon, 13 Mar 06

Story Text

Seaweed, an increasingly popular food ingredient, has been found a new and unexpected role as a replacement for caviar.

According to just.food.com, Danish-based Jens Moller Products has introduced two varieties of its new seaweed-based caviar substitute, known as Cavi-Art.

The two varieties, black Seaweed Lumpfish Caviar and pink Seaweed Salmon Roe Caviar, are aimed at vegetarians as well as the growing number of consumers who are concerned about depleting sturgeon stocks.

The seaweed caviar is said to have the "same texture, feeling and burst" as caviar itself according to Jan Petersen, senior trade adviser for the Danish Trade Commission in Montreal, but without the same fishy taste.

Cavi-Art exhibits a number of health benefits over the real thing, including being cholesterol- and fat-free, as well as being much lower in salt.

It also has a shelf-life of three years and is a good deal cheaper than caviar; 3.5 ounces of the substitute costs around £4.60 compared to spending hundreds of pounds for the same amount of authentic beluga caviar.

Further information: <http://www.caviart.com>

Innovative container designed with customer feedback in mind

Date: Mon, 13 Mar 06

Story Text

An innovative new plastic container has been designed to store potato granules.

Graham Packaging Company designed the Safe-T-Can using feedback from extensive customer research carried out by Basic American Foods after it became apparent that the original container was not meeting expectations.

The top priorities of safety, ease of use and convenient storage have all been met in the new product, which features a wide mouth and a snap-off, re-closable cap that removes the need for a tin opener.

The Safe-T-Can also has a handle for pouring as well as a no-slip grip, and can be stacked easily.

It can hold 105 fluid ounces and is made using six layers of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and is currently being used for an instant mashed potato product in the USA.

Terry Keener, business development manager for Graham Packaging, said: "The Safe-T-Can is an example of designing a product that meets the specific needs of the end user.

"We created a container that pairs design with functionality and offers all the features that are important to our customers."

Graham Packaging produces 20 billion container units throughout North America, Europe and South America.

Further information: <http://www.woio.com/Global/story.asp?S=4527110>

Microbiologists debate food protection

Date: Fri, 10 Mar 06

Story Text

Europe's leading microbiologists have met to discuss the role they can play in combating contaminating bacteria and diseases that can be spread through food.

At the top of the microbiologists' agenda when they met in Cardiff on Wednesday was the issue of E coli O157, which continues to present a great dilemma in food borne diseases, as well as the matters of cleaning up contaminated land and combating growing antibiotic resistance.

The meeting was called by the Society for General Microbiology, whose president Hugh Pennington was keen to stress before the meeting the huge importance of the field of microbiology both in food and drink production and in fighting disease.

He said the industry needs microbiologists, adding that the belief that antibiotics would make microbiologists redundant was wrong.

"E coli O157, foot-and-mouth disease and avian influenza have proved the reverse to be true,"

the president added.

Mr Pennington told the meeting that consumers only seem to be familiar with the dangers of microbes and are unaware of the positive role they play in driving the world's nutrient cycles and the potential role they could play in environmental protection.

His organisation boasts around 5,000 members and provides a medium for discussion between leading scientists working in the numerous different fields affected by microbiology, including the food sector.

More information:

<http://www.sgm.ac.uk/default.cfm>

Healthy growth for catering market

Date: Fri, 10 Mar 06

Story Text

The UK catering market increased by 4.2 per cent in 2005, according to a new review.

The market grew to Â£29.87 billion according to the review by Research and Markets, with public houses, followed by restaurants, as the fastest-growing sector.

Extended opening hours in pubs after November's introduction of new licensing laws has had an impact on the industry, according to the report.

The extended opening hours, combined with the bigger casino venues allowed by last year's gambling act is expected to result in an increase in catering sales.

However, health concerns are reported to have had a negative effect on areas of the fast food and takeaway market, particularly in burgers.

Global burger giant McDonald's last week announced the closure of 25 of its UK restaurants due to falling sales and poor customer confidence in the brand.

Contract catering and foodservice management companies are reportedly turning to offering other support services in order to maintain profits.

The report forecasts steady growth to 2010 for the catering market, as a result of growing tourism, an increase in the number of catering outlets in the UK and a better quality and variety of food on offer.

http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20060306005065&newsLang=en

'Tool to boost potato strips production'

Date: Fri, 10 Mar 06

Story Text

A new automatic defect removal system for potato strips will increase production capacity by up

to 20 per cent, according to its manufacturer.

The ADR 5 system from Key Technology is said to provide an improved balance for potato processors between quality and productivity. It can cut out defects from a quantity of 16,200 pounds per hour, ranging from thin to thick steak-cut fries.

As well as including high-resolution trichromatic cameras, a patented belt conveyor and rotary cutter as well as Iso-Flo high-speed vibratory conveyors, ADR 5 uses advancements made to the company's G6 electro-optical platform to enhance the speed at which checks can be made.

The system's modular design and use of industry-wide connectivity standards allows producers to efficiently and quickly make upgrades so that further improvements are made to production levels as technology advances.

In addition, it has a "bed shift" feature, which allows lane widths to be easily adjusted to the best settings.

More information:

<http://www.keyww.com/>

Dual lane food inspection system launched

Date: Fri, 10 Mar 06

Story Text

A new dual-lane x-ray inspection system has been developed that allows manufacturers to inspect two different kinds of food products at the same time.

According to its makers, Australian company Applied Sorting, the machine will save floor space as well as creating savings in the cost of supplementary materials and handling facilities.

Each lane can be operated with different detection settings, and the machine can detect two streams of products up to 150mm wide in dual mode, or products up to 300mm wide in single channel mode.

The machine is being targeted at the producers of frozen foods, bakery products, dips, confectionary and powdered food products.

Defective products can be rejected on the basis of under fill, missing ingredients, or contaminants such as metal and glass.

The company expects the new machine to be popular with contract packers as well as food manufacturers.

More information:

<http://www.appliedsorting.com.au/>

Technological boost for producers

Date: Fri, 10 Mar 06

Story Text

A new device has emerged that could help food sector businesses better meet the demand of retailers that they identify and track their products throughout the supply chain.

Ross Systems claims that its new RFID-to-go device is the solution, offering these firms easy deployment and cost effectiveness and placating retailers who see radio frequency identification (RFID) as the ideal method of logistics within the sector.

RFID-to-go is also said to boast a number of other features that enhance its attractiveness to food businesses, such as traceability, real-time inventory visibility and order performance, while it can also be scaled to suit the size of the product.

Eric Musser, chief technology officer of Ross Systems, commented: "Not only does RFID-to-go make it easy for process manufacturers to comply with RFID compliance requirements, it improves supply chain visibility by leveraging EPC [electronic product code] data to improve inventory management and increase sales.

"The results have been significant and evident upon implementation."

RFID technology enables products to be traced through tags called transponders.

These are fitted to the product and carry a plethora of data that transmits the information upon receiving a radio signal from a compatible reader, thus enabling identification.

Numerous big retailers, including Wal-Mart, have demanded that their suppliers implement RFID, but the price of the technology has often discouraged many firms from adopting it – something RFID-to-go may remedy.

More information:

<http://www.rossinc.com/aview.asp?atype=P&id=13380&showexpired=1>

Pomegranate flavour breakthrough

Date: Fri, 10 Mar 06

Story Text

A UK-based flavour manufacturer claims that it has developed a truly authentic and natural pomegranate flavour, something other firms in the sector had deemed to be impossible.

Create Flavours has announced that its new flavouring could prove hugely popular within the health food market, as the pomegranate's high polyphenol and vitamin C content make it hugely beneficial to the health of the heart.

Chief flavourist Jonathan Jones claimed that a lack of effort in research and development among his firm's rivals means that competitors have been unable to come up with a flavouring anything like the real pomegranate taste.

However, he admitted that identifying the true flavour of pomegranates had been a difficult task.

He told the Food Navigator website: "Compared to other fruits, the pomegranate has a low concentration of volatile compounds, and as a result, a lot of flavour companies have given up.

"The problem is that the aroma volatiles that give flavour to pomegranate occur in very minute

concentrations so there's very little data available to the flavourist to get him started."

Nonetheless, Create Flavours managed to prevail over this obstacle, with researchers using their highly trained noses to distinguish the exact characteristics of pomegranate flavour and, through trial and error, come up with a detailed sensory analysis.

Mr Jones identified the drinks sector as an area where his firm may really profit, with demand for pomegranate juice soaring in the UK, rising ten-fold between mid-2004 and mid-2005 to 500,000 litres a month.

More information:

<http://createflavours.com/>

McDonald's declares rise in global comparable sales

Date: Thu, 09 Mar 06

Story Text

Restaurant firm McDonald's today announced that comparable sales in Europe rose by 5.4 per cent last month.

The increase reflected global trends that saw the restaurant's US comparable sales increase by 3.6 per cent with a 4.7 per cent rise worldwide.

The firm's chief executive Jim Skinner said that the introduction of premium burgers and promotional menu offers had been partly responsible for the upsurge in Europe, with the UK, France and Germany particularly strong.

Mr Skinner noted that the UK's figures were based upon an "ongoing emphasis on brand building initiatives", adding that the firm had built up momentum in Europe by "providing relevant menu selections and everyday value in an inviting and contemporary atmosphere".

US sales were boosted by the introduction of the Spicy Premium Chicken Sandwich, with two more premium offerings expected in the country by May.

Mr Skinner declared that the "line-up of Premium Chicken Sandwiches, popular breakfast menu options and extended hours" were responsible for the US improvement.

It was the company's 34th consecutive month of global comparable sales growth.

Further information: http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/news/fnpr/2006/fpr_030806.html

PepsiCo promotes healthy living

Date: Thu, 09 Mar 06

Story Text

PepsiCo has joined forces with YMCAs in the US to promote healthy living.

The soft drinks manufacturer is set to provide the youth organisation's Activate America scheme with Â£6.6 million as part of a five-year deal.

The funding is intended to promote the YMCA's public health initiative through marketing and the development of programmes and indicates the growing necessity for major food and beverage firms to be seen as health conscious in the current climate.

Sam Evans, acting chief of staff at YMCA of the USA, commented: "With PepsiCo's evolving and expanding pro-health corporate strategy, it was natural for the YMCA and PepsiCo to deepen their alliance around healthy living through YMCA Activate America."

PepsiCo follows McDonald's in attempting to alter its negative public perception.

The fast food chain has phased in alternatives to burgers on its menu in the past years and has promoted itself as a place to visit as part of a balanced diet.

The carbonated soft drinks volume market fell last year in the US for the first time in two decades, with some analysts citing growing consumer health concerns as behind the downturn.

Further information: <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=78265&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=828887&highlight=>

NHF urges firm stance on labelling

Date: Thu, 09 Mar 06

Story Text

The National Heart Forum (NHF) has urged the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to remain firm on its traffic light labelling plans.

The FSA will today put forward a system that will advise consumers on sugar, salt, fat and saturate content of products through a colour coded scheme.

The NHF hopes the government will make the recommendations mandatory for food manufacturers and suppliers, in a bid to lower obesity levels and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Tesco is one of a number of firms that has said it will ignore any FSA proposals and its stance has been backed by the Food and Drink Federation, which represents around 95 per cent of manufacturers including Kraft, Unilever and PepsiCo.

A spokesperson for the federation warned the Daily Telegraph: "Traffic lights are simplistic and demonise certain foods."

Paul Lincoln, chief executive of the NHF, insists: "This is a tremendous opportunity for the Food Standards Agency to show leadership in consumer protection by providing clear, consistent, evidence-based information on the front of food packages, where it is most needed, whatever the brand, wherever it is sold."

Sainsbury's currently puts traffic light codes on around ten per cent of its products.

Further information: http://www.heartforum.org.uk/whats_new.html

Summary Text

The National Heart Forum (NHF) has urged the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to remain firm on its traffic light labelling plans.

Supermarkets face OFT investigation

Date: Thu, 09 Mar 06

Story Text

Supermarkets could face financial penalties after the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) today revealed it will ask the Competition Commission to further investigate the UK's groceries sector.

The market is worth almost Â£100 billion a year and accounts for 13 per cent of all household spending.

While there is intense competition between leading supermarket chains, the OFT has concluded that there is significant enough grounds for a Competition Commission inquiry.

This follows pressure from consumer groups and smaller retailers who have expressed concern about the expansion of supermarkets into the convenience store sector.

In a statement issued today the regulator raised concerns about the control large supermarkets have over the groceries market.

The OFT said the land held by the leading chains, coupled with the planning laws, could make it difficult for new entrants, while some of their pricing practices could "distort competition".

"Although consumers have benefited from lower prices, the restrictions in the planning system, and the possible incentives those restrictions create for retailers to distort competition, may harm consumers and mean that competition in the market is less than it might otherwise be," said John Fingleton, chief executive of the OFT.

The announcement has been welcomed by small business leaders, with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) describing it as "not a moment too soon".

"When supermarkets, convenience stores and branded petrol stations are considered together, there is little doubt that there is a dominant position being taken by the big four supermarkets in the grocery sector," said Carol Undy, FSB national chair.

The OFT will now hold a four-week consultation period ending on April 6th.

Further information: <http://www.offt.gov.uk/News/Press+releases/2006/49-06.htm>

Delight as beef ban lifted

Date: Thu, 09 Mar 06

Story Text

The food industry has broadly welcomed the news that the ban on British beef exports has been lifted.

Due to come into effect in six weeks, the proposal by the European commission to lift the embargo was accepted unanimously by Europe's standing committee on the food chain and animal health yesterday.

Martin Paterson, director general of the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), has said the organisation welcomes this approval and that the decision brings the UK "into line with the rest of Europe".

He said the FDF is looking forward to the implementation of this decision, pointing to the "possibilities it offers to regain export trade in beef products".

The chairman of the English Beef and Lamb Executive (EBLEX), John Cross, commented that the retraction of the ban means that the industry will no longer be isolated from the rest of the EU.

"Access to export markets will help assure a more stable future for our beef producers and processors," Mr Cross said.

"Our beef industry can now start to get on with the job of providing overseas customers with the quality product they are clearly telling us they want."

The ban on export of live cattle, beef and beef products from the UK was imposed by the European commission March 1996 amid fears over the spread of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) in British cattle.

But now the commission is convinced that the appropriate measures it set last summer have been met.

"The commission has taken no chances when it has come to dealing with BSE, and the most stringent monitoring and control measures have been applied," said Markos Kyprianou, the EU's commissioner for health and consumer protection.

"However, the UK has made great strides in tackling this disease and has met all of the criteria that were set for the lifting of the beef export ban, in line with scientific and veterinary advice."

He concluded that this must be acknowledge and said "normal trade" in this sector should now resume.

Further information: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2006/animal-0308.htm>

Ultra-fast sausage machine offers high-speed service

Date: Thu, 09 Mar 06

Story Text

A new sausage cutter has been released that is, according to its manufacturers, fast, versatile and simple to use.

Union Food Machinery and Equipment (UFM) is behind the launch of the new WT05, which can work at a speed of up to 1,800 cuts per minute, as well as having the capacity to process 1.85 metres of sausage in any casing.

Furthermore, it allows for a sausage diameter of anything between 12 and 52mm, which can be set using a dial which its manufacturer claims is highly easy to use.

UFM managing director, Malcolm Burgess, commented: "The key to WT05 is its ability to take a signal direct from the filling machine. As a result it can modify its speed in accordance with that of the rest of the line.

"Furthermore, it can sit closely coupled to the portioning attachment of the filler and can thus work in the same horizontal plane. As a result, it is versatile enough for natural, collagen or artificial casings."

The machine has a synchronised loading machine that enables the sausages to be cut to preset lengths, as well as for them to be packaged into trays and cans, or to be fed into another packaging machine.

The WT05 also features a servometer to drive the knife shaft, a sensor to ensure each sausage is measured precisely, and a microprocessor to synchronise and manage all machine data.

Further information: <http://www.manufacturingtalk.com/news/uno/uno100.html>

'Portfolio' of foods can keep doctor at bay

Date: Wed, 08 Mar 06

Story Text

A combination of different foods is capable of lowering cholesterol as much as prescribed drugs, according to new research.

A study by a team at the University of Toronto has found that consumption of a portfolio of foods including oatmeal, fish, lean meats and almonds can reduce cholesterol as much as a first line statin drug.

The findings, reported in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, were the result of a year-long test in to lowering cholesterol through the intake of vegetarian foods.

However, the study found that some meats could play a significant part in the process as well.

"One third of the patients achieved and sustained a clinically meaningful reduction in LDL cholesterol of more than 20 per cent," claims co-author Dr David Jenkins.

"The extent to which they lowered their LDL cholesterol level depended on how closely they followed the diet by eating certain heart-healthy foods."

Almonds were found to be amongst the top foods for helping maintain general well being and a healthy heart and were popular with subjects due to their convenient size and pleasant taste.

Further information: <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=165610>

Unilever in major advertising tie-up with ITV

Date: Wed, 08 Mar 06

Story Text

Multinational food giant Unilever has announced an advertisement deal with ITV.

The Anglo-Dutch firm, which owns brands such as Flora, Birds Eye and Walls, has signed a four year deal with the television company that will allow it Â£200 million of advertisement air time.

The agreement will see the company, which changed its boardroom structure last year, place advertisements on ITV's four flagship channels as well as Men & Motors.

Nigel Cowlin, Unilever's head of media and communication in UK and Ireland, told the Manchester Evening News: "ITV is unique in its ability to deliver mass audiences in an increasingly fragmented market.

"Advertising on ITV enables us to concentrate our resources behind our focused portfolio of leading brands using the power of television."

The deal will make Unilever one of ITV's top three advertisers, alongside the government and Procter & Gamble.

The first commercial aired on ITV was for a Unilever brand in 1955: Gibbs SR toothpaste.

Further information:
http://www.manchesteronline.co.uk/men/business/s/207/207028_unilever_in_200m_itv_deal.html

Fingerprint technology for supermarket scanners

Date: Wed, 08 Mar 06

Story Text

Co-op stores in Oxford are set to trial a scheme that allows customers to pay by scanning their fingerprints.

The scheme, which is thought to be the first of its type in Europe, will be available to shoppers at three stores from this month.

The project, run using technology from US firm Pay by Touch, links a customer's fingerprints to their bank details, meaning no need to carry around cards or money.

The Co-op's Headington store is offering the service from today, with Summertown and Carterton branches set to follow from next week.

The three-second transaction will offer convenience and speed to customers, whilst providing security for the supermarket.

"In Oxford we have a lot of students who often look younger than they are," Bill Laird, chief operating officer of trading at Midcounties Co-op, told Retail Bulletin.

"We thought of fingerprint ID as a quick and efficient means of confirming their ages for self-checkout as otherwise supervisors had constantly to intervene and that slowed down the process

and reduced the benefit."

Consumers can register for the project online or at stores and it is hoped the scheme will prove as popular in the UK as it has done in the US, where 2.5 million people are signed up.

Further information: <http://www.midcounties.coop/live/cme2149.htm>

Fish coating offers healthy alternative

Date: Wed, 08 Mar 06

Story Text

A new type of coating is being developed that could reduce the fat uptake in battered fish products.

Researchers at the Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association (CCFRA) have demonstrated that different hydrocolloid coating material could potentially lower the lipid uptake in fish.

In a series of experiments, battered fish fillets were covered with either water or a type of edible coating such as alginate, pectin or gellan gum. The fillets were then fully or par-fried.

With the par-fried fish, the level of fat was radically reduced with all the types of coating, even water.

The fat reduction in the fully fried product was less dramatic as the longer frying time seemed to have a detrimental effect on the coatings.

It is thought the fat reducing effects of the various coatings are due to their waterbinding capabilities.

This latest research from CCFRA could help in the government's aim to reduce the total lipid intake of the population.

Further information: <http://www.campden.co.uk/whatsnew/news105.htm>

RushNet in new energy drink push

Date: Wed, 08 Mar 06

Story Text

Beverage company RushNet has said that wholesalers around the world are eager to sell its new brand of energy drinks.

The all-natural ginseng-based energy drinks, Ginseng Rush XXX and Rush Ginseng Cola XXX, are very popular and coveted according to the company, which claims they are better than rival energy beverages.

"Following our recent news of RushNet's entry into the huge Japanese market, the company has been inundated with calls from overseas distributors who want to sell our ginseng-powered, non-caffeinated, 100 per cent natural energy drinks," said Robert Corr, president of RushNet.

"Our caffeine-free, natural energy beverages provide 'crash-free energy' In order to take advantage of opportunities, presented to us, for global marketing of our energy drinks, we are printing labels in five languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Japanese."

If the drinks take off in the UK, they could prove a strong competitor in the energy drinks market to rival the dominance of Red Bull or the influence of newly launched Irn-Bru 32, if RushNet's claims about popularity are true.

According to the company website, drinks infused with ginseng provide a "boost to your body".

Further information:
http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20060303005486&newsLang=en

Food and drink products set to flood the market

Date: Tue, 07 Mar 06

Story Text

A vast range of new food and drink products are expected to enter the market this year, according to a new report.

The Mintel Global New Products Database predicts that the industry will build upon last year's estimated unveiling of 16,000 new food products in the US and expand in to new ventures.

Mintel expects areas such as brainpower foods, portion control and age related edibles to significantly increase their market share this year.

Companies are becoming increasingly aware of age related products as global life expectancy continues to grow.

Japan has seen the launch of new easy to chew foods with the older generation in mind, such as Kameda Seika's rice porridge.

Calorie aware snacks introduced last year, such as the Kraft 100 Calorie Pack and Doritos 75 Calorie Snack Pack, are expected to pave the way for calorie-controlled products to be used in other areas.

"Health is now a top priority for product developers," explains Lynn Dornblaser, director of Mintel's custom solutions.

"As consumers embrace more organic and specialty products, mainstream consumer packaged goods manufacturers need to compete with products that promote wellness and overall care for body and soul."

Cereal bars that claim to improve the mind were also a big hit last year, with accelerated growth in the industry predicted for this year.

Further information:

http://home.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20060306005865&newsLang=en

FSB seeks supermarket probe

Date: Tue, 07 Mar 06

Story Text

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has called for an inquiry in to what it perceives is a monopoly of the grocery market.

The FSB has written to the Office of Fair Trading asking for a Competition Commission inquiry to be set up to investigate the "Big Four" supermarkets.

The federation claims that the proliferation of convenience store branches of major supermarkets, such as those attached to petrol stations, caused the closure of 7,337 independent stores between 2000 and 2004.

It believes that supermarkets and their convenience outlets should be viewed as a single sector, which would likely prompt a monopoly investigation.

Tesco is thought to have a 40 per cent stake of the two markets, without taking in to account petrol stations.

Clive Davenport, the FSB's trade and industry chairman, said: "Such domination of a vital part of UK commercial and family life, based on overly-favourable government policy decisions and unfair trading practices, cannot be allowed to stand.

"With a full and open inquiry now, a balance can be found where supermarkets and small shops can co-exist, providing value for all consumers."

As part of the changes the FSB is putting forward, it claims a ban on below cost selling by supermarkets should be imposed, as it has been in France.

Further information: www.fsb.org.uk/news.asp?REC=3148

World's biggest retailer goes organic

Date: Tue, 07 Mar 06

Story Text

Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, has announced plans to double the number of its organic food products, according to the Reuters news agency.

The US firm, which is also the country's biggest grocery store, will introduce new organic stock over the next couple of weeks.

It is hoped the move will attract a wider range of customers to the stores by offering consumers more options than merely cheap necessities.

Items such as pickles and macaroni and cheese will be added to the firm's current organic line up, which includes fruit juice, pasta sauce and baby food.

DeDe Priest, the company's vice president of dry grocery, told a news conference yesterday that the majority of US consumers now buy some organic produce, meaning it's the perfect time to cash in.

She explained to the news agency that the firm wants to "knock out the myth" that organic food is just for the rich.

Wal-Mart's decision to increase its organic food output follows its success in other organic markets, such as clothing.

Further information:
http://today.reuters.com/news/articlebusiness.aspx?type=ousiv&storyID=2006-03-06T222048Z_01_N06371542_RTRIDST_0_BUSINESSPRO-FOOD-SUMMIT-WALMART-DC.XML&pageNumber=1&imageid=&cap=&sz=13

New Branston Beans help Premier Foods prosper

Date: Tue, 07 Mar 06

Story Text

Premier Foods announced today a significant rise in operating profit for 2005.

The company, which launched its Branston Beans line in the fourth quarter, increased its figures by 18.2 per cent to Â£95.3 million.

Branston Beans already holds seven per cent of the baked beans market, which is thought to be worth Â£250 million a year.

The new product is evidence of Premier Foods' chief executive Robert Schofield's concentration on key profitable brands.

"We have invested heavily behind our brands, increasing our marketing spend on our existing brands by Â£5 million, of which Â£3.5 million was spent in the final quarter of 2005 launching our new Branston Beans," he said.

The company sold its tea business, including Typhoo, for Â£80 million in October but more than made up for this by acquiring Bird's, Quorn and vegetarian firm Cauldron during the year.

"The integration of these businesses has gone well and the brands have performed in line with our expectations," the company said.

The Â£789.7 million sales figure was despite a number of unfortunate incidents throughout the year, including a fire in the Branston factory in Bury St Edmunds.

Further information:
<http://www.premierfoods.co.uk/about/investor/financial/announcements.cfm>

KPMG: Food firms struggle with Far East

Date: Tue, 07 Mar 06

Story Text

Western food manufacturers are being forced to cut jobs and reduce spending on research and development because of cheap competition from abroad, according to the business analyst firm KPMG.

It says that as energy prices rise, manufacturers in the UK and western European are struggling to maintain profit margins, allowing producers in developing nations such as Asia and eastern Europe to steal a march.

The struggle has been outlined by several profit warnings and job losses among major operators in western Europe.

Both Campbells and Heinz recently disclosed that their operations in the UK and western Europe were ailing, while the Golden Wonder, the British snack manufacturer, went bankrupt earlier this year, blaming intense competition and rising costs for its poor performance.

KPMG's survey says that whilst western European firms are concentrating hard on making profits in the face of increased costs, companies operating in developing countries are able to sell their products much cheaper because their input costs are much lower.

It also reveals that just one quarter of British food companies are investing in research and development, a level lower than anywhere else in Europe.

In eastern Europe however the outlook is much more positive, with most regions looking set to make profits in the year ahead.

Andrew Smith from KPMG said: "It's a two-speed Europe. By and large, companies in most of northern and central Europe are cost competitive and relatively optimistic. But those in the UK, France and southern Europe think it will be tougher to grow sales and profits."

Further information: <http://www.kpmg.com/news/index.asp?cid=1205>

GI comes under scrutiny

Date: Tue, 07 Mar 06

Story Text

A new study suggests that the Glycemic Index (GI), the cornerstone of popular diets such as the GI diet, may not be an effective way of choosing healthy foods.

The Glycemic Index ranks carbohydrates according to how they affect blood glucose.

The idea is that eating a diet high in foods with a low GI such as apples, rather than foods with a high GI such as white bread, will help weight-loss and reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

However, the study by diabetes researcher Dr Elizabeth Mayer-Davis at the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health suggests that scientific evidence supporting the GI

theory is "mixed" and inconsistent.

Mayer-Davis says that the Glycemic Index does not take into account the difference between laboratory conditions and real-life settings, such as the interaction between different foods, when monitoring foods' effects on blood glucose.

The researchers found that the Glycemic Index of participants' diets was not related to their measures of blood glucose.

"In general, the Glycemic Index does not seem to be useful in understanding how diet impacts health, and use of the Glycemic Index may not be an effective way to identify foods for optimal health," stated Dr Mayer-Davis.

Lincolnshire producers Naturally Best announced the creation of a low-GI potato in February, with up to 38 per cent less carbohydrate than regular potatoes.

Further information: <http://uscnews.sc.edu/hlth049.html>

Childhood obesity rates set to soar

Date: Mon, 06 Mar 06

Story Text

The number of obese children worldwide is set to rise dramatically by 2010.

A report in the International Journal of Pediatric Obesity claims that almost half the children in South and North America will be overweight by the end of the decade, up from the current figure of around a third.

In the EU, the current quarter of children overweight will have risen to 38 per cent, around 26 million youngsters, the report predicts.

Dr Philip James, chairman of the International Obesity Task Force, told the Associated Press: "We have truly a global epidemic which appears to be affecting most countries in the world."

In Europe, around 20,000 children will have type two diabetes by 2010, the report warns.

In addition, more than a million youngsters are expected to have raised blood pressure, high cholesterol levels or signs of cardiovascular disease.

Dr Tim Lobstein, co-author of the report, claims children must cut back on high fat and high sugar products and become more active.

Further information: <http://www.iotf.org/media.asp>

Healthy eating row splits industry

Date: Mon, 06 Mar 06

Story Text

A number of UK food suppliers and manufacturers have condemned the government's proposed

reforms on labelling, according to the Daily Telegraph.

The government department, the Food Standards Agency, will on Thursday unveil plans to place traffic light labels on products, designed to advise consumers on sugar, fat, salt and saturate content.

The proposals, which are the outcome of 18 months' deliberation, have been attacked by many big players in the industry.

A spokesman for the Food and Drink Federation, which represents around 95 per cent of manufacturers including Unilever, PepsiCo, Kraft and Danone, told the publication: "Traffic lights are simplistic and demonise certain foods."

Tesco has said that it intends to ignore the government proposals and will continue to display ingredients as a percentage of a recommended daily amount.

Paul Lincoln from the National Heart Forum attacked the complacency of companies.

"The traffic lights model emerged as the best from independent research but the companies clearly feel that it would affect their sales and profits," he told the newspaper.

Sainsbury's currently puts traffic light codes on ten per cent of its products.

Further information:
http://www.fdf.org.uk/responses/fdf_response_fsa_signposting_consultation.pdf

M&S in Fairtrade commitment

Date: Mon, 06 Mar 06

Story Text

Marks & Spencer (M&S) today announced plans to move its tea and coffee products to Fairtrade.

The firm's decision to switch its range of 38 products is expected to increase the value of Fairtrade tea and coffee sold in UK supermarkets by 30 and 18 per cent respectively.

Profits from sales of Fairtrade products are put back in to communities by improving infrastructure and social conditions.

Fairtrade coffee will hit M&S stores today with its tea equivalent arriving next month.

Stuart Rose, the company's chief executive said: "Our customers have told us they care about how our products are made and we want to help them make Fairtrade part of their retail habit."

He added that as Marks & Spencer only sells its own brands, the company is in an easy position to make the switch.

Socks and t-shirts made from Fairtrade cotton also go on sale from today, with plans to expand its use to other garments.

Further information:
<http://www2.marksandspencer.com/thecompany/mediacentre/pressreleases/2006/com2006-03-06-00.shtml>

Shopbox ready for debut

Date: Mon, 06 Mar 06

Story Text

A secure home delivery storage box created by a firm based in Leeds is to make its public debut, with the endorsement of numerous prominent supermarket groups.

The shopbox is a refrigerated container designed to receive consumers' groceries when they are not at home.

It is locked to the property with a supplied steel wall plate and lockable security cable, thus providing the necessary security as well.

The box was designed by Leeds-based logistics firm Archbold Group and will be unveiled at London's Ideal Home Show later this week.

Supermarket groups such as Sainsbury's, Asda, Tesco, Waitrose and Iceland said they back the innovation.

The firm's chairman Stuart Archibold commented to the Yorkshire Post: "It's in when you're out. As customers have gradually taken on this idea, they have discovered lots of other benefits."

He explained that the shopbox freed the consumer of the need to be home when expecting deliveries and therefore freed supermarkets as well of the need to do all of their deliveries within a few high-demand time slots.

The shopbox is about the size of a wheelie-bin with frozen, chilled and ambient compartments, and can be rented at a cost of Â£2.54 a week or bought outright for Â£349 plus delivery and installation.

More information

<http://www.shopbox.co.uk/>

New soluble film introduced

Date: Mon, 06 Mar 06

Story Text

A new wholly soluble film has been developed for the usage of packaging dry ingredients within mixing and batching operations in the food sector.

Monosol claims that its new F100 film can be used to construct pouches within which dry ingredients can be stored, allowing processors to order these food components in pre-measured

quantities, as well as cutting down their processing costs.

Moreover, the film is made up of edible cellulose polymers and is completely soluble in cold water, thereby greatly reducing the risk of contamination of the food product by packaging.

Monosol told website Food Production Daily: "In addition, these pre-measured units also improve the accuracy of the mixing operation, which helps food processors produce product of consistent quality.

"Furthermore, controlling dust in mixing operations enhances worker safety and reduces cleanup requirements."

The film was developed with the unit-dose packaging of dry ingredients such as flavours, colorants, enzymes, vitamin fortifiers and yeasts specifically in mind.

It can easily be converted into bags or wrappers on most conventional packaging machines, Monosol also claimed.

More information

<http://www.monosol.com/overview/press.php>

Fruit producers in breakthrough

Date: Mon, 06 Mar 06

Story Text

A new chip has been developed that will enable citrus fruit producers to improve the fruit they produce and find better ways to manage them.

The GeneChip Citrus Genome Array, which was developed by University of California Riverside (UCR) researchers in conjunction with manufacturer Affymetrix, enables producers to improve their fruit by helping them to find out which genes are turned on in a tissue of citrus.

The chip is to be utilised in the construction of new diagnostics tools with the aim of enabling producers to enhance both citrus agriculture and post-harvest fruit handling, as well as to improve understanding of the mechanisms underlying citrus diseases.

"The citrus array helps us quickly examine a certain trait in citrus," said Mikeal Roose, a professor of genetics at UCR.

"For a trait posing a problem for the consumer, such as an undesirable flavour, we can identify genes associated with the trait and target these for correction to improve the flavour."

It is hoped that the chip will allow researchers to study in more detail those traits most important to the citrus fruit sector, such as easy peeling, seedlessness, flavour components and nutritional characteristics.

The Genechip consists of nearly a million pieces of citrus DNA deposited on a thin glass wafer, and is to be the first citrus microarray to be used commercially.

Further information: <http://www.ucr.edu/research.html>

New ice cream caters for elderly

Date: Mon, 06 Mar 06

Story Text

A food manufacturer has developed a range of foods designed to cater specifically older people in retirement – including a new ice cream.

Israel's Shefa Group, which specialises in food catering services and management solutions, has developed a nutrient-rich ice cream which will contain calories, proteins, vitamins and fibre, reports Ynetnews.

Ronit Paz, head of the health division at Sheba Group, told the website: "We are aware of a direct link between mood and appetite and openness to food.

"We developed this unique ice cream that could enhance the menu of [older people] and have a direct impact on their health and psychological condition."

The ice cream, which was introduced at a nutritionist's conference, is the first in a range of products designed to appeal to older populations by enabling them to gain weight, or to supplement their existing diet.

Further information: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3224140,00.html>

Obese men 'more likely' to die in crashes

Date: Mon, 06 Mar 06

Story Text

Male drivers who are obese are at an increased risk of dying if they are involved in a car crash, finds a team of scientists from the Medical College of Wisconsin.

A study by the Injury Research Centre revealed that males who are very overweight and those who are very slim were more likely to be fatally injured in the event of a crash, reports the American Journal of Public Health.

It was found that being moderately overweight, however, could actually reduce the risk of death in what the report's authors describe as a possible "cushioning effect".

In addition, it was found that weight or obesity did not have a comparable effect on the risk of death for women.

Lead author Shankuan Zhu said: "Men with the highest body mass index (BMI) were at greatest risk for death from front or left-side collisions, especially at high speeds.

"The increased risk for death due to motor vehicle crashes associated with a high BMI may be caused by some combination of momentum effects, comorbidities (side effects) of obesity, and emergency post-operative treatment problems among the obese."

According to the report, males involved in car accidents are about twice as likely to be fatally injured as females, with death becoming more likely for those with a BMI below 22 and above 35.

The research was conducted using data gathered from more than 22,000 drivers over the age of 16 years between 1997 and 2001.

Further information: <http://www.ajph.org/news/newsrel.shtml>

EU approves new maize

Date: Fri, 03 Mar 06

Story Text

The EU today announced its approval of a new variant of maize for use in all foods.

The new biotech maize, called 1507, has been developed by DuPont subsidiary Pioneer Hi-Bred International and is resistant to insects that can damage some other maize crop types.

The announcement follows the approval of 1507's use for import and animal feed last November and means that processed products and grain containing the new maize can now be imported in to the EU.

1507 is also believed to offer higher yields than other varieties.

Pioneer's president, Dean Oestreich, said: "This approval supports expanded choices for farmers and recognizes the safety and value of Pioneer biotech products worldwide."

"1507 maize can help farmers protect their seed investment by minimizing the risk of insect damage, while maximizing the yield performance of Pioneer's superior seed products," he added.

1507 is resistant to such maize loving insects as the south-western and European corn borer, both black and western cutworms and the armyworm.

Danisco in new allergen overhaul

Date: Fri, 03 Mar 06

Story Text

Danisco says that it has taken measures to remove all allergens and allergen-containing ingredients from its range of antimicrobials and protective cultures.

It claims that it is acting in response to the forthcoming EU legislation on labelling, through taking steps to help manufacturers avoid allergens in their products altogether.

A significant part of this has centred around its project to create a new range of allergen-free starter cultures for meat fermentation and protection purposes, leading to a whole host of new strain manufacturing, formulation and downstream processes.

Stephane Constant, Danisco's food protection business director, explained: "We started this process a few years ago by removing lactose from some of our Texel meat cultures.

"We have now totally switched the production of Nisaplin Natural Antimicrobial to media free of milk, soya, wheat and egg. Nor do we include any of the allergens listed in the new legislation in the production or formulation of these products."

Danisco was able to develop this antimicrobial by replacing traditional foaming and scooping processes with modern, safer and more consistent micro-filtration and ultra-filtration technology.

In addition, this new extraction process helped to maximise the Nispalin plant's fermentation and extraction capacity, as well as making it generally more environmentally-friendly.

Further information:
http://www.danisco.com/cms/connect/corporate/media+relations/news/frontpage/businessupdate_62_en.htm

Secure packaging will 'reassure consumers'

Date: Fri, 03 Mar 06

Story Text

A new, more secure form of packaging has reached the UK's food sector, which its owners claim will help to reassure consumers about the content of what they buy.

Danish firm Plus Pack claims that its new DiamondBowl SureClose packaging ensures food cannot be imperceptibly tampered with, due to its tear flap and safety lock, meaning producers can ensure their product reaches the consumer safely.

It says that the packaging, which is made from clear OPS plastic, is ideally suited for use with green salads, chopped fresh fruit, pasta salad and various other delicatessen products.

Shawn Roberts, head of UK sales for Plus Pack, commented: "Consumers increasingly want to be reassured that the food contents are untouched when they select a product off the supermarket shelf or out of a chilled cabinet."

He added that the tamper-evident ethos that his firm has brought into food packaging has already become a standard principle in pharmaceuticals packaging.

The DiamondBowl was constructed using modern thermoforming technology – an area in which Plus Pack is planning on investing heavily over the next few years, so as to double the firm's production capacity.

Further information:
<http://www.pluspack.dk/Default.aspx?ID=6&M=News&PID=399&NewsID=115>

Fyffes sees results boost

Date: Fri, 03 Mar 06

Story Text

Irish fruit distributor Fyffes said today that it had achieved better-than-expected annual results thanks to very favourable market conditions in mainland Europe.

The Irish group saw a 25 per cent leap in earnings courtesy of high banana prices on a 15.2 per cent rise in revenue to €1.74 billion.

Chairman Carl McCann said: "Fyffes has delivered excellent results in 2005, helped by favourable market conditions in continental Europe."

"Reflecting this strong performance, the group has paid the special dividend of £20 million," he added.

Fyffes said that preparations were well advanced to deliver its proposed de-merger of £200 million worth of property assets, to be spun-off into a separately quoted company, Bluestone.

Shareholders will vote on the de-merger in April. Meanwhile, Fyffes announced an 87.4 per cent rise in its full year dividend per share, to 12.61 cents.

Further information:
<http://www.londonstockexchange.co.uk/LSECWS/IFSPages/MarketNewsPopup.aspx?id=1171826&source=RNS>

Red wine offers fibre boost™

Date: Fri, 03 Mar 06

Story Text

A regular intake of red wine could be good for your health, reports the American Journal of Enology and Viticulture.

Scientists at Madrid's Council for Scientific Investigations have declared red wine a good source of dietary fibre.

Tests on a selection of red and white wines reportedly showed there to be three to eight times more fibre in the red varieties.

The researchers investigated a tempranillo, and various blends of other wines including cabernet, sauvignon and monastrell.

A mixture of tempranillo and monastrell was found to be the most fibre rich concoction at 1.37 grams per litre.

A white offering, rueda verdejo, contained the least fibre of the test bottles, at 0.19 grams a litre.

Dr Fulgencio Saura-Calixto, head of the study, wrote in the journal that red wine consumption could help people reach the recommended daily intake of fibre.

"The daily consumption of 300 millilitres of red wine would increase soluble dietary fibre intake by 6.9 per cent," he wrote.

The fibre in wine comes from the skins and flesh of grapes and from yeast.

Further information: <http://www.ajevonline.org/cgi/content/abstract/57/1/69>