



**Paper for information: Government Updates on Nutrition
Related Activities
DEFRA**

Agenda Item: 6

Promotion of Home Grown Fruit and Vegetables

- 1) Government values the contribution of horticulture to the UK economy. It is worth some £2billion at the farmgate and supports downstream activity in packhouses, processing and the garden industry. Government has set out a commitment, within the NHS Plan, to improve access to and increase consumption of fruit and vegetables. The Department of Health's (DH) "Five-a-Day" programme offers targeted action to achieve these goals. There are five strands to this programme: local community initiatives; a national communications programme to raise understanding of the "at least five portions a day" message; government working with the industry and other stakeholders; the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme; and an evaluation and monitoring programme.
- 2) The "Five-a-Day" initiative and School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme have been welcomed by the horticulture industry for the opportunities that they both present. The school consumption calendar has been designed to reflect seasonality of produce and DH remains keen to explore ways of maximising the opportunity for homegrown produce. This has been recognised by the industry and the NFU. Currently apples, pears, carrots and strawberries grown in the UK are being supplied under the scheme. Funding for specific promotion of UK produce is not permitted under EU State Aid rules. Nevertheless, the horticulture industry receives support to increase its competitiveness and to encourage sustainable production in the context of the Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy. For example assistance is provided through:
 - The funding of Research and Development - Defra funds substantial strategic research on horticulture, worth some £10million p.a. in recent years.
 - Grant funding through the England Rural Development Programme.
 - Support for English Farming and Food partnerships.
 - Support for the Food Chain Centre.
- 3) In terms of EU support, under the EU Fruit and Vegetables Regime, formally recognised Producer Organisations (POs) can receive support for operational programmes, which are aimed at improving the quality, marketing, and end value of produce and also encourage the use of environmentally friendly techniques. Payments to UK POs in 2005 are estimated to be £26m.
- 4) In terms of procurement, an objective of Defra's Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI) is to increase opportunities for small local farmers to tender for public sector contracts. This includes fruit and vegetables and, while the legal framework governing public sector food procurement does not allow buyers to specify local, the rules are sufficiently flexible to enable buyers to specify freshness and seasonality which helps provide a more level playing field for domestic producers. Defra's advice, for example, also encourages public bodies to split bigger contracts into lots to give Small and Medium Enterprises the chance to tender. Defra is promoting the PSFPI in regional workshops and national conferences. In a national suppliers workshop held in March 2005, the then

Sustainable Farming and Food Minister, Lord Whitty, made several references in his address to opportunities for fruit and vegetables growers in the drive to serve more healthy food in the public sector. This address can be seen at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/nationalconference/pdf/050307-lwhittyintro.pdf>.

- 5) Following the recommendations of the Curry Commission, Defra, working with Food from Britain (FFB), the Regional Development Agencies and the Countryside Agency jointly agreed a 3-year Regional Food Strategy and prepared a new structure for support of quality regional food initiatives. FFB take a lead role in England and are receiving additional Government funds (£1 million per year) to promote quality regional food at a national level. FFB work closely with regional food groups representing the regions of England and the representative bodies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Examples of activities included in the FFB programme include attendance at international and national food shows, meet the buyer activity involving multiple retailers, initiatives to encourage more local sourcing and raising the profile of Britain as a food destination to tourists. 2005-06 is the final year of the original 3-year programme of support. However, following an economic evaluation of the Strategy by ADAS, Sustainable Farming and Food Minister, Lord Bach, announced in October 2005 an extension of support for the programme for another two years, again with additional funding of £1 million per year.
- 6) Government recognises that the marketing of local food can bring benefits for producers and consumers. Because there are fewer middlemen, it allows farmers and small producers to retain a higher proportion of the end price of their produce. It also increases consumer choice and raises awareness and interest in local food by helping to improve consumers' links with and understanding of the rural economy and food production. Suppliers will flourish by providing what customers want and there is growing public enthusiasm for locally produced food and food with a clear regional provenance. In recognition of this, provision is available under the England Rural Development Programme for grants for related activities such as the establishment of farmers' markets, the development of regional and local branding of foodstuffs and the formation of collaborative groups to market quality products. Defra's support for the sector includes:
 - Deploying its various funding schemes to assist (among others) local food producers who make a good case for support.
 - Spreading best practice in local food to a wider national audience.
 - Supporting the farmers' market movement.
 - Through its procurement initiative, encouraging other Government Departments and public sector bodies to purchase according to sustainable development criteria, which should help local food producers to win business.
- 7) The Curry Report recommended that industry should do more to ensure that English producers take part in the EU Protected Food Name Scheme. We have supported this recommendation and with the help of FFB encourage more producers to apply to register their products. Producers, who register their

products for protection, benefit from having a raised awareness of their product across Europe. The separate designations are:

- Protected Designation of Origin – open to products, which are produced, processed and prepared within a particular geographical area, and with features and characteristics, which must be due to the geographical area.
- Protected Geographical Indication – open to products, which must be produced, processes or prepared with the geographical area and have a reputation, features or certain qualities attributable to that area.
- Traditional Speciality Guaranteed – open to products, which are traditional or have customary names and features, which distinguish them from other similar products. These features must not be due to the geographical area the product is produced in nor entirely bases on technical advances in the method of production.

Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI)

- 8) Background -The PSFPI was formally launched on 26 August 2003 to encourage public bodies to procure food in a manner that promotes sustainable development and encourages more small and local producers and suppliers to compete to supply them with food.
- 9) PSFPI objectives - Five key objectives, are to: (1) raise production and process standards; (2) increase tenders from small and local producers; (3) increase consumption of healthy and nutritious food; (4) reduce environmental impacts of production and supply; and (5) increase capacity of small and local suppliers to meet demand. Related objectives include increasing demand for organic food, choice for ethnic minorities and efforts to reduce waste.
- 10) Compliance -The PSFPI is compatible with UK policy and legal framework governing public procurement. PSFPI cannot require buyers to source locally - because to overtly demand local produce would contravene the legal framework governing public procurement that is designed to ensure its is fair, transparent and not used to discriminate or set up barriers to free trade. The PSFPI objectives are also consistent with achieving best value for money as they help to increase competition.
- 11) Spend - Defra is funding regional workshops for buyers and suppliers and commissioning pilot projects for developing demand and supply from an annual PSFPI budget of £250,000 secured in 2006/7 through the efforts of Sir Don Curry (chair of the Implementation Group for Farming and Food Strategy), who considers the initiative as a flagship of the Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy.
- 12) Current position - Central Government procures a fair proportion of its food from the UK: MOD sources about 70% of its food (excluding meat and produce) from the UK; Prison Service about 85% of with a large proportion of fruit and vegetables from prison market gardens; and NHS some 90% pork, 50% beef, 45% fresh produce, 40% fish and 5% lamb. Defra's London restaurants: Chicken 80%, Beef 70%, Lamb 15%, Bacon 25%, Pork 90%, Vegetables 65%, Fruit 25%, Dairy 95%, Fish 85% and Bakery 95%.

- 13) Barriers - Examples: (1) UK farming and growing industry needs to develop capacity to supply in consistent volume and quality to meet public sector demand; (2) with the exception of pork, there is often a premium for purchasing from UK producers; (3) consumers expect to be able to eat all year round foods that have a limited growing season in the UK.
- 14) Food Procurement Implementation Group - established in March 2003 to promote the PSFPI across the public sector working with buyers, suppliers and other stakeholders. Government Offices for the Regions (GORs) are playing an active role in running workshops and piloting projects to develop the supply side.
- 15) Key delivery partners and stakeholders - DH, NHS, MOD, Prison Service, DfES, DCLG, GORs – represented on Food Procurement Implementation Group, NFU, English Farming and Food Partnerships, Food for Britain, Meat and Livestock Commission, NGOs (e.g. Soil Association), Food and Drink Federation, British Hospitality Association, and food service companies.
- 16) Developments since last meeting
 - i) All GORs (except GO-NE) undertook pilots to develop the supply side in 2005/06.
 - ii) PSFPI programme underway for 2006-07
 - iii) Comprehensive PSFPI web site updated, (containing guidance, tools, best practice and links to other sources of information).

Sugar Production/sugar reform

- 17) The diet and health implications of sugar reform are an area that the Department of Health lead on. At the end of April Defra received the Department of Health's input into the final Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) providing us with their assessment on how far such changes might actually impact on health outcomes.
- 18) Sugar is a relatively small share of product value, and is unlikely itself to be consumed in significantly greater quantities. However, an increase in consumption of sugar-containing products following price reductions could have potential health implications mainly due to the consumption of additional calories from those products. According to preliminary analysis by the Department of Health, there could potentially be an impact on obesity because of the link between changes in energy balance and the resulting changes in body mass index.
- 19) According to preliminary analysis by the Department of Health, in the RIA it is suggested that the additional weekly calorie intake would be 34 calories for adults and 50 for children. In the less elastic scenario, (econometric analyses have been done to estimate the sensitivity of consumption of various food categories to price - the price elasticity of demand) weekly calorie increases are estimated to be around 27 calories for adults and 39 calories for children. Further analysis by the Department of Health on the impact on obesity prevalence from changes in calorie intakes in general is currently underway. Clearly there are many cultural, policy and economic factors affecting calorie intakes. In addition to uncertainty over price transmission and consumption responses, other factors may limit the impact on calorie intakes.

- 20) Furthermore, there is concerted action by Government, working with industry, to improve the overall balance of the diet in terms of fat, sugar and salt content and this in itself could mitigate the effects of reform. Sugar reform will add further pressure on food manufacturers to produce and market food products, particularly those consumed by children, with a greater concern for health.
- 21) Tackling the problems of unhealthy eating and lifestyles requires an appraisal in its own right. To the extent that the increases in consumption of sugar-containing products is deemed to be undesirable, various courses of action are possible.
- (i) Targeted initiatives against sugar containing products whose consumption is expected to increase. Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency have several initiatives in place and are working with industry to decrease the level of sugar in processed foods through reformulation. In addition there is work underway to help consumers to make healthy choices through clearer labelling and signposting of foods that are high in sugar.
 - (ii) Specific consumer levy on sugar equivalent to the likely fall in sugar prices. This could be difficult to administer, given the wide range of products containing sugar and would deprive consumers of the welfare gains from lower prices. However, the overall efficiency gains of reform would largely remain because producer prices still come down. Instead of the largest benefits accruing to consumers they would instead accrue to domestic taxpayers (who are of course, consumers as well).

Defra nutrition related research

- 21) At the last meeting on 24 March 2006, SACN's members enquired as to how much nutrition-related research was funded by Defra.
- 22) Background. Defra funds and manages nutrition-related research under the **LINK** programme. LINK is a means by which the Government encourages collaborative research for innovative and industrially relevant research to support its wealth creation and quality of life goals. Because of its relevance to industry and the collaborative nature of the work, this is an area which is given priority for sponsorship.
- 23) Currently, Defra provides grants for approximately £5 million of research per year to various consortia in five Farming and Food Science LINK programmes. Research projects funded through LINK form an integral part of the sustainable farming and food science R&D portfolio. Through LINK, Defra provides grants to consortia of the private sector and the research base to conduct research for industrial or private sector purposes aligned to Defra objectives.
- 24) One of the active programme areas is the **Food Quality and Innovation (FQI) LINK** programme. The programme is designed to help industry meet anticipated technical challenges across the areas of raw material production, food manufacturing, packaging and distribution. It also seeks to enhance industry ability to contribute to Defra's targets for sustainable development of the food chain. The broad aims are to increase industry's technical capability and

performance in producing safe, high quality nutritious food and to provide necessary information and direction in terms of ensuring these foods meet consumer expectations and needs. The programme will also enable the development of foods which better meet society's needs and expectations, including the delivery of balanced, positive nutrition.

25) For further information on Defra's LINK programmes please refer to Defra's website using the following link:

<http://defrafarmingandfoodscience.csl.gov.uk/linkprogrammeoverview.cfm>

26) There are currently three FQI LINK programmes that Defra has recently approved for funding. These are as follows:

1) Salt delivery for maximum flavour/taste perceptions in foods

- Research on the link between diet and health has recommended that the salt content of food be reduced considerably and there is pressure on food manufacturers to comply with these recommendations, both from the Government and from some consumer sectors. Compliance is difficult as reducing salt past certain levels has adverse effects on flavour and because there is no easy replacement for sodium chloride.
- Defra are currently investigating the role of salt on the material properties of food. This current proposal focuses on improving salt perception by delivering salt to the receptors in an efficient way, as much of the current salt content in a food never contacts the receptors and is simply swallowed. This approach has obvious applications in foods like sauces and soups.
- Defra is commissioning research on this project on 1 June 2006 and is providing a grant of £82,679.

2) Designing palatable, nutritionally aligned foods using consumer reward strategies

- Nutritional guidelines defining the appropriate levels of salt, sugar and fat in the diet are well established. The current task for health professionals and food manufacturers is to help consumers comply with the guidelines.
- One method manufacturers have tried is reformulation of foods by decreasing the levels of fat, sugar and salt in products. It has proved difficult to address this problem by substitution as sugar, salt and fat affect a variety of attributes (mouth feel, texture and flavour release). This change in sensory attributes can make the product unappealing and therefore affect their acceptance by the consumer.
- One recent concept thought of for influencing consumer acceptance is that a food product that we enjoy and like gives us an "emotional reward" when eaten (e.g. release of serotonin in the brain). The hypothesis is that, for some products, the consumer will be willing to accept the reduced sensorial quality that can result from fat or salt reduction, in return for some other "reward", such as a "healthier" or easier to use product (e.g. low fat alternatives to butter).
- The proposal for this study is to test the above hypotheses before presenting it to the industry as the potential basis for designing foods with improved

nutritional properties and acceptable properties in terms of flavour, appearance and “healthy eating”.

- Defra is commissioning research on this project from 1 September 2006 and is funding a grant of £114,770.

3) *Reducing fat in processed food using water-in-oil water emulsions*

- The overall aim of the project is to develop a process for creating novel emulsion systems with reduced fat content that have the same overall sensory perception as full fat emulsions. This will be achieved by reducing the fat content of conventional emulsions by substituting fat with water, in water-in-oil water emulsions (WOW).
- This project is currently in the process of being commissioned by Defra, and no funding has been agreed.
- There are also additional nutritional-based research projects being funded by Defra under different schemes. These are as follows:

Projects funded by the Chief Scientific Advisors

27) The Chief Scientific Advisors (CSA) at Defra also fund nutrition-related projects.

28) One project they are currently researching is to investigate the role of **salt in the generation of structure and flavour during processing of starch based foods**. The aim of this one-year project is to study the effect of salt content and type on the processing and subsequent structure and flavour of starch based foods with particular emphasis on extrusion, baking, toasting (breakfast cereals) and pasting. This project commenced on 1 July 2005 and the CSA funded £86,000.

29) Defra also support the BBSRC Agri-Food Committee through its Government Partnerships Awards Scheme and one project under the nutrition remit (structure of foods) was recently funded called **engineering the lipid emulsion interface to regulate lipolysis**. Defra funded 15% of the total research project cost.

Other Defra projects

30) Defra has also held two in-house workshops this year with delegates from academic and industrial backgrounds attending.

31) The first on 23 March 2006 was to **identify research opportunities to reduce saturated fats and sugars in processed food**. As a result of the workshop certain areas of research are to be considered such as routes to lowering saturated fat in bread and baked products.

32) The **British Nutrition Foundation** (BNF) were contracted by Defra to examine the area of **functional foods** (sports foods etc) and ingredients and determine areas where further research is required and how Defra may play a role. A workshop was held on 12 May 2006 in order to examine the science in this area.

The BNF have set up a steering group who will report back to Defra in September with their recommendations.