Hung out to dry: the case of the disappearing mackerel

GM – Contemptible or Inevitable?
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I’TS BEEN a tough couple of weeks for the British food industry. First there was the discovery of horse DNA in burgers supplied by the food manufacturer ABP to the likes of Burger King and Tesco. Then pork DNA turned up in halal pastry products made by McColgan Quality Foods and supplied to prisons through distributor 3663. Islamic law forbids the consumption of pork.

Cue much pointing of fingers and soundbites in the media – “shocked” and “unacceptable” were frequently used by ministers, standards agencies and food companies alike – and then an emergency meeting. In a few hours the need for a new testing regime was agreed. Given the nature of the cases and the consumer backlash for some of the UK’s best-known brands, the Food Standards Agency needs to turn the theory into practice quickly.

New testing regimes cannot be rushed, but while the horsemeat issue took us by surprise, there have been questions about halal before. In 2011, Footprint convened a roundtable following investigations by the Mail on Sunday into halal being served to

My beef with the pork scandal

David Burrows
Editor-in-chief

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MSC certified fish sales have grown by 100% on a compound basis for the last few years. Fair trade sales have topped £1 billion and are expected to outstrip mainstream product growth. It is clear that the consumer now really cares.

Delphis Eco’s accredited, ecological cleaning range is another way to make this positive change.
No return for the mack?

Fears of overfishing may put mackerel’s comeback on hold as customers face a tough choice between eating healthily and sustainably, writes David Burrows.

What a difference two years make. This time in 2011, mackerel was riding on the crest of a wave – in plentiful supply, promoted as part of a healthy diet thanks to its high levels of omega-3 fats and backed by a Channel 4 and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall campaign to encourage fish and chip shops to sell more of it (“Mackbaps” were in vogue). It was also cheap.

But in January this year mackerel hit choppy waters when the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) announced it was removing the fish from the “to eat” list. “After years of being a popular sustainable choice, mackerel should no longer be appearing so regularly on your dinner plate,” the MCS said.

Mackerel “is now rated by the charity as a fish to eat only occasionally”.

Three factors combined to affect mackerel’s rating. First, the Marine Stewardship Council suspended its certification of the north-east Atlantic stocks after what it said was overfishing. Second, scientific data emerged showing that the breeding-age population is in good condition but declining. And third, the mackerel stock moved north, chasing its prey of small fish, crustaceans and squid into Faroese and Icelandic waters. Iceland and the Faroes have, in turn, caught more and more mackerel – in 2005 Iceland caught no mackerel at all, but it now lands 145,000 tonnes, while the Faroes take another 100,000 tonnes. According to Seafish, the UK’s authority on seafood, catches by the two countries since 2009 have been well in excess of the agreed “total allowable catches” advised by ICES, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. The European Union has been desperately trying to broker a deal that will limit catches to sustainable levels. Iceland has argued that it needs to catch more mackerel to stop the “invasion” crowding out other species, while the Faroes walked away from talks to develop an international mackerel stock management plan, fearing that its fishermen would be short-changed.

The row has spilled over into other quota talks, with the Faroes pulling out of an international agreement on herring. Ian Gatt, chief executive at the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen’s Association (SPFA), accused the Faroes of “acting like pirates” over herring and called for EU sanctions.

The Scottish government has called for a neutral international mediator to be brought in to resolve the mackerel problem. But with no agreement in sight, what does this mean for the fish?

For the time being, stocks appear in good health. But few – apart from fishermen in Iceland and the Faroes – disagree that catch levels are unsustainable in the long term. The decision may be hasty but one of the roles of the Marine Conservation Society’s list is to ensure that today’s healthy stocks don’t become tomorrow’s overfished ones. “We’re not for one minute suggesting that people stop buying or eating mackerel,” says the society’s fisheries officer, Bernadette Clarke. “Mackerel has been downrated to a level of ‘caution’, but it’s not a fish to avoid. If people want to continue eating mackerel they should ensure they buy it from as sustainable a source as possible.”

By that she means fish caught locally using traditional methods or from suppliers which have signed up to the principles of the Mackerel Industry Northern Sustainability Alliance.

The added complication with mackerel is that health experts have long campaigned for people to eat more of it. According to the British Heart Foundation (BHF), consumption of oily fish, like mackerel, stands at about one third of a portion per week, while the recommended intake is one portion.

The science isn’t in doubt. “It is important to recognise that science and the fishing industry are in agreement on this one – stocks of mackerel are plentiful. What we are all looking at though is the future of the stock and the cautionary advice now being received from some certification bodies if the dispute about the north Atlantic quota remains unresolved.”
“In order to help with this environmental issue but still keep our hearts healthy we should choose our fish responsibly and try to vary the types of fish we eat,” says the BHF’s senior heart health dietician, Victoria Taylor, adding: “People can sometimes find it difficult to reconcile the environmental impact of fishing and public health advice to eat more fish.”

The mackerel issue brings together the health and environmental agendas, but should one take precedence over the other? The likes of WWF-UK argue that truly sustainable diets consider both aspects, but universal agreement is some way off. Others suggest that consumers are expecting businesses to offer products that are environmentally sustainable, but want the choice when it comes to health.

“For us the consistent message is sustainability,” says Andy Milner, the procurement and supply chain director for Westbury Street Holdings, the parent company for BaxterStorey, “and within that customers will have [the option] to choose healthier products.”

“In some respects,” he adds, “the mackerel issue has played into our hands given the focus we have on seasonal products and working with local suppliers.”

In recent years, mackerel has been celebrated by chefs and conservationists as healthy, cheap, sustainable and locally caught – the way out of our addiction to cod. We took to it with gusto and before we know it the species has been downgraded from the Marine Conservation Society’s “Good to Eat” list.

If you wish to serve mackerel, try to ensure the mackerel you buy is as sustainable as possible. The advice is now to only source fish caught locally using traditional methods including handlines, ringnets and drift nets, and from suppliers who are signatories to the principles of the Mackerel Industry Northern Sustainability Alliance. Caterers can also consider using herring or sardines in place of mackerel.

The best advice is for buyers to ask questions about all fish that they buy – where and how it was caught, and whether it is from a sustainably managed fishery. Good suppliers should be able to answer and provide relevant information. If they can’t, change to another supplier who can.

It is important that we don’t all sigh, put it down to experience and go back to the fish fingers. The mackerel experience has started the process of reconnecting us with our fish, we’ve tried and learned to love a fish from outside the “big four” of cod, salmon, prawns and tuna and we’ve started to embrace the idea that sustainable fish is good to eat. If anything, this latest development tells us that we need to be even more flexible, even more adventurous and even more connected with our own locally caught fish and seafood.

Paul Cox is director of conservation and communication at the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth

**Expert analysis** Paul Cox
Indie café or ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing’?

Harris + Hoole has drawn critical coverage for its links with Tesco but there are good reasons why small brands risk their ethical reputation by embracing corporate giants.

“Tesco argues that it, and the Tolley family, have always been up front about their relationship, but whether they have or not, the question is: does it matter?” quoted figure. However, for some 1% seems too much: one Whitstable resident said the operation was akin to “a wolf in sheep’s clothing”. Tesco argues that it and the Tolleys have always been up front about their relationship, but whether they have or not, does it matter?

Marketing Week magazine’s retail expert Rosie Baker said Harris + Hoole’s founders “have created a strong brand identity, a good proposition and have an established customer base. The identity of its financiers has no impact on that and it would be a crying shame if the success of a fledgling British brand and business were damaged by misplaced principles.”

What’s more, this is a path trodden by other small businesses that have looked to other brands rather than banks to help them grow. Two examples are Coca-Cola taking a majority stake in innocent, and Kraft buying Green & Blacks, but there are many more. Much has been written about whether brands founded on ethics and entrepreneurial spirit will wither within the embrace of corporate giants, but innocent, for one, seems to be doing OK – would it have just launched a £1.1m marketing campaign without its bigger brother?

“The deal with Coke has allowed us to set out to do more of the things we wanted to do,” one of the founders, Richard Reed, told the “Today” programme in 2011. “They are a sleeping partner.”

Perhaps it is not Tesco, Coca-Cola or Kraft that the “disgruntleds of Whitstable” need to be scrutinising but the banks and the government.

The much-vaunted “funding for lending” scheme launched last year, which gave banks £80bn at low interest rates so they could offer small businesses and homeowners better loan deals, doesn’t appear to be working. Confidence in securing bank loans has fallen to an almost three-year low among small and medium enterprises, according to Business Monitor.

It’s no surprise that budding entrepreneurs are looking elsewhere for investment. Look at what it’s done for the Tolleys: yes, there has been difficult media coverage but Tesco could be about to put Harris + Hoole cafés into its stores.

On the Tesco blog Clarke wrote about “loving the stores we have, making them an appealing destination for customers to come. Dobbies, another Tesco business, does this brilliantly with coffee shops which customers travel to just for the scones. When the Tolleys are ready, we will put them into some of our stores. They will have proved that their brand and their offer work, that customers like it and it will be another reason for customers to shop with us.”

Other supermarkets could do worse than follow their lead, but equally many small businesses could do a lot worse than follow the Tolleys, and the likes of Reed before them.
Dealing with waste in a sector like foodservice isn’t easy - the lines of responsibility are easily blurred. But there is help at hand thanks to the progress being made by three companies looking to dramatically cut the waste they send to landfill.

In the space of a couple of weeks, Unilever and Nestlé announced they have hit their “zero waste to landfill” targets in the UK. For Unilever, this equates to about a million household bins of waste now being recycled, composted, reused or recovered rather than buried. This has been achieved during a period when sales have increased by around 20%.

Nestlé, meanwhile, has hit its target two years early. Announced in 2010, the plan was to divert all factory waste from landfill by 2015 but it seems the food manufacturer, which supplies the foodservice industry through Nestlé Professional, has got ahead of itself. And that means adjusting its sights.

The aim now, explains the head of environmental sustainability, Inder Poonaji, is to cut waste by 5% by 2014 along the supply chain. Farmers have already been engaged and there is an appetite to help Nestlé fulfil its commitment, so Poonaji and his team are turning their attention to catering clients.

“We’ve done the easy wins,” he adds, “so now we need to crank things up by moving along the supply chain. I think there is a real understanding and a genuine desire to good for the environment [in foodservice], but companies are not sure how to go about it.”

Nestlé will be working closely with WRAP (the Waste & Resources Action Programme) to help map waste as it is created along the supply chain. It’s “quite a big task” says Poonaji, but the costs of the programme so far will be recouped within two years and there are more savings to be made.

Another company that has set about measuring waste in the foodservice chain more accurately is 3663. The distributor has teamed up with SITA UK, the waste management company, to run a “3663 zero” scheme which will provide customers with waste collection services. But, as the manager of the not-for-profit initiative, Bernadette Chamley, explains, it will also give customers valuable management information by looking at materials delivered to and collected from each of 3663’s sites. Larger customers will be offered “closed loop” reports showing what has gone in and come out.

Collecting data on waste is not easy or cheap, but as more companies expand their sustainability ambitions up the supply chain, caterers will be under more pressure to look at their own operations. The voluntary agreement on waste is also now in place, so the chances for co-operation and sharing of best practice will improve as waste tonnages sent to landfill fall.
THE COALITION has reached the halfway stage of its term in office, and the promise to be “the greenest government ever” is proving a heavy burden to carry. In the government’s recent mid-term review document, the first acknowledgement of the pledge is conveniently tucked away on page 18, quickly followed by the ominous caveat that “in tough economic times ... the environment can seem like a second order issue”.

But to whom exactly? Consumers? Businesses? Or more likely the government itself, whose preoccupation with patching up the economy in the short term, however well intentioned, has come at the cost of any kind of long-term vision for what a green economy might look like. Either the coalition is saving itself for a sprint to the line or the “greenest government” pledge is, to put it bluntly, a load of baseless nonsense.

Those holding out for a joined-up food policy have also been left scratching their heads. The word “food” is mentioned just six times in the document: twice in headings, twice in reference to the government’s inadequate buying standards and once each in a nebulous pledge to promote sustainable agriculture and in reference to new labelling rules which were set by the EU. This after the hype of the green food project.

In this context, it seems perverse that food is so low down the government’s agenda.

MORE FOODSERVICE packaging will be recycled in Scotland thanks to thousands of new bins. In all, 2,700 recycling bins will be installed in 250 sites, taking a range of materials including plastic bottles and drinks cans. The bins will be in busy areas, such as the Nevis Range Mountain Resort and Edinburgh Airport.

ONE MAN’S trash is another man’s treasure, so they say, which perhaps explains why used cooking oil is being targeted by thieves. A story on the BBC recently focused on two of these pirates who were jailed for stealing 220,000 litres from supermarkets and KFC restaurants (a case of light fingers rather than finger licking). There were no eyepatches and parrots; the men wore uniforms, carried false ID and had official-looking paperwork to con staff into thinking they were official contractors. According to Agri Energy, a fifth of all used cooking oil is being stolen – about £50m worth. Businesses are being told to take extra care and let staff know who should be picking up their waste.

TéHE HOSPITALITY industry is being encouraged to limit menu choices and introduce flexible portioning as part of a new global campaign to cut food waste. Backed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) the campaign seeks to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas that will help create “a truly global culture of sustainable consumption of food”. In the developing world, 95% of the food waste occurs at the production and storage end of the food chain, whereas in developed countries the problem is at the other end of the chain. With a new voluntary agreement on waste in place, the UK foodservice and hospitality sector is hoping to get to grips with its 3.4 million tonnes of waste, including leftovers and kitchen waste. High-profile campaigns in the UK have helped to raise public awareness of waste – Love Food Hate Waste being the obvious example. If only UNEP had consulted WRAP before picking a title for its campaign: the excessively punctuated “Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint”.

The Political Print

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FOOTPRINT INTERVIEW

An Innocent Smoothie with... David Clarke

Pork has been in the news quite a bit of late. Red Tractor’s CEO picks up the story, and explains why the assurance scheme has plenty still to offer.

David Burrows (DB): Good afternoon. You’ve recently teamed up with Jimmy Doherty on a new Give a Fork About Your Pork campaign. How’s it going?

David Clarke (DC): The campaign is only just getting into full swing so it’s too early to have any real evaluation. But it is a great thrill to work with Jimmy and to get his endorsement of the detailed standards and the rigid traceability necessary to produce Red Tractor pork.

DB: Indeed, meat has been in the news of late thanks to horsemeat and pork scandals. Has this helped to raise awareness of Red Tractor in a different way?

DC: It certainly has, and it was interesting to find the shadow agriculture minister recommending Red Tractor products early on the first morning of the story. But we need to be careful to understand that the Irish DNA testing has uncovered two quite distinct problems that the media has yet failed to separate.

DB: It has been a confusing story to follow...

DC: On the one hand there is evidence of significant levels of horsemeat in boxes of beef supplied from the east of Europe. Some boxed “beef” had 80% horse and one burger in the original samples had 29% and these gross levels of unexpected types of meat are totally unacceptable. But some of the pork contamination appears to be at very low levels and might simply come from using the same equipment for different recipes without a total clean-down.

DB: But surely that’s not acceptable for those who don’t eat pork for religious reasons?

DC: A lot of work is now going on behind the scenes and the industry needs to better understand what levels of cross-contamination might give a positive result from these very sensitive tests and what might be considered an acceptable tolerance. Of course contamination with pork will have to be considered as a special case to ensure that products are acceptable to particular religious groups. But caterers themselves should remember that they might have similar cross-contamination risks in their own processes.

DB: Is the Red Tractor one way of caterers ensuring that the meat they buy is exactly what it claims to be?

DC: As a technical certification scheme, Red Tractor plays a vital role at the business to business level. Buyers need to know about the standards of their suppliers to protect their own reputations and for legal due diligence. The system is used very widely by buyers across the supply chain.

DB: Are caterers as supportive of the Red Tractor scheme as retailers?

DC: “Caterers” is a pretty broad constituency. We feel that Red Tractor fits best with the contract catering sector and the branded chains and that is where we focus our efforts. In the past few months we have made great progress with both Nando’s and KFC, both of whom are able to use Red Tractor positively in their own promotions and point-of-sale information.

DB: Are you looking to raise awareness across the foodservice sector?

DC: Without a doubt. We see more operators wanting to use the logo driven by customers wanting to know that their food has been produced to good standards and where it is from. For us, foodservice is a huge opportunity to raise consumer awareness of the Red Tractor logo and what it stands for.
Help Us Build a Stronger Catering Equipment Industry

INFORMING  Keeping members informed on the critical technical and legal issues

INVOLVING  Bringing members together to build a stronger catering equipment community

INFLUENCING  Representing members’ interests directly to Government and international decision makers

Information  Involvement  Influence
I’m usually not one to believe in serendipity, but the following story made me wonder. Early in 2012, I began discussing with my team the idea of partnering with charitable organisations in the United States and around the world. I always believed there was more we could do as an industry to give back. At the same time, we were working to offer filtered water as an alternative to bottled water in our restaurants and nightclubs. Our venues go through almost 1m bottles of water every year, so naturally there is a huge cost for us in terms of investment, storage, waste and environmental impact.

When we decided to install a Vivreau water system we heard about a new initiative called WHOLE WORLD Water. It seemed like a game-changing idea: unite the hospitality and tourism industry around the greatest social issue facing the world – the fact that nearly 1bn people don’t have access to safe and clean drinking water, and almost 2.4bn live without basic sanitation. They hit on everything I personally care about: environmental sustainability, reducing our carbon footprint and a new way to give back that focuses on long-term solutions versus short-term fixes.

More importantly, it’s a sustainable business model. Filtering and selling water at our venues is profitable. It’s simple. And with WHOLE WORLD Water we build our business over the long term to create massive social change. Even with the 10% contribution to the WHOLE WORLD Water Fund from the sale of every bottle of water, I’m building my bottom line and participating in an exciting global marketing platform that engages our employees and customers.

But it’s the scale of the solution – not the issue – that’s so exciting. We are a multi-trillion-dollar industry. And WHOLE WORLD Water is the first industry-wide initiative that could play a major part in solving a global issue. We have the scale – all we need is the will. Filtering our own water is easy to implement. What’s more, it is measurable and bankable. In fact, sustainable business solutions guarantee sustainable social solutions.

Another unique selling point for joining WHOLE WORLD Water was their approach to managing the WHOLE WORLD Water Fund. They created the fund to provide access to clean and safe water for everyone around the world. It will be open to organisations, NGOs, charities and social enterprises. Therefore my employees understand that all of their favourite water charities have the opportunity to benefit from this partnership. The fund takes a different approach from purely charitable grant-giving by investing in programmes with the potential to bring a return through carbon revenues and results-based financing, enabling revenues to be recycled back into the fund and deployed again.

This is a new way to do business, one I’m proud to say Tao Group is a part of. We’re out to prove that economic and social progress are not mutually exclusive. Join us, and let’s see this issue eradicated in our lifetime.

Next month the WHOLE WORLD Water Fund is launched. The plan is to bring the world’s hospitality businesses together and raise £1bn a year to improve access to safe and clean water for a billion people. Rich Wolf, co-founder of the Tao Group, explains why he’s already on board.

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ACCORDING TO dubious research cooked up for a marketing campaign a few years ago the third Monday of January deserves the title of “Blue Monday”. That’s when people are at their most miserable, thanks to a combination of post-Christmas blues, cold dark nights and the arrival of unpaid credit card bills. This year it fell on January 21st and, according to the website hosted in its honour, it was the top trending topic on Twitter the world over. Good news for a bad day, perhaps.

Blue Monday could be a bad day for business too. “Workplace malaise” is costing the UK as much as £93bn in lost productivity, according to researchers at the University of Exeter. Their study suggested that improvements to workplace ambience could help improve productivity among downbeat staff by 32%. But there is another area of research into staff wellbeing that is gaining far more traction, academically, socially and economically. Food.

At the turn of the year, the Times ran a story about a “brave new world of super workers”, fuelled by improvements to the fare in staff canteens. Understandably, corporate nutrition has got many in foodservice excited – and it’s also captured the interest of Footprint.

“As a nation, we’ve spent the last 10 years questioning where our food comes from and, more recently, the sustainability of its supply,” explains the Footprint Media Group CEO, Nick Fenwicke-Clennell. “Today, more than ever, we are asking questions about the food itself to individual health, nutrition and wellbeing and the impact it has on society in general.”

When he says “we” he means everyone, including business leaders. The idea of “mood food” might seem a little soft for the hard corporate world but examples of businesses working more closely with their caterers to provide healthier options for their staff are snowballing. Bupa is working with BaxterStorey on calorie labels, Charlton House is helping Pernod Ricard with its “Wellbeing Works” programme, and there are many others beside. Such achievements have not received the recognition they deserve, while the sharing of best practice has also been limited. Until now.

Just a few days before Blue Monday, Footprint held the inaugural Health & Vitality Honours (HVH) lunch. An award scheme this is not. “The honours are designed to recognise those operators and manufacturers – in the cost and profit sectors of the industry – who have taken up the challenge of improving customers’ nutrition and wellbeing,” explained Fenwicke-Clennell in his opening remarks. This is a platform to showcase best practice: it is the chance to work in a non-competitive environment to help the industry improve together. “By the very nature of its size and reach, the foodservice industry is in the position to influence a cultural shift in attitude and behaviour,” he added. “It is our hope that the publicity surrounding the honours will encourage other operators to follow this path so that collectively we can have a major impact on the health of the nation.”

The lunch at Lord’s Cricket Ground – created by the MCC’s executive chef, Tim Harrington – provided a fitting start to the event, staged with the support of Sodexo, the headline sponsor. Leading personalities from the industry, including Raymond Blanc, the Local Authority Caterers Association chair, Anne Bull, and Westminster Kingsway’s head of culinary arts, Gary Hunter, teamed up with the health and nutrition expert Dr Susan Jebb and Sodexo’s health ambassador, Matt Dawson, to judge and honour companies from all along the supply chain.

One of the most hotly contested categories was the Communication and Engagement Honours. Charlton House pipped Compass UK & Ireland with its Well Being, Being Well initiative. The judges noted that in years to come companies will need to provide more detail of tangible improvements – something that business leaders will also be keen to access when considering new contracts.

As HVH’s principal ambassador, Amanda Ursell, a nutritionist, writer and consultant, suggested, “top bosses understand well that nutrition is important for employee performance”. However, more data will offer caterers more opportunity to show how diet can affect performance, productivity and morale among the workforce.

As discussion evolved over the lunch, Mick Hickman, foodservice director at Compass – runner-up for Communication...
looked at who is involved and how they affect we do with industry to tackle this?’ They’ve to the health service and though: ‘What can around obesity and the costs of poor health government has looked at the problems driven [health] up the agenda is that the when he said: “What’s Footprint in January’s also touched upon in an exclusive interview which “insight on differing needs has driven different options” – explained how “nudge” is better than regulation. This is something he also touched upon in an exclusive interview in January’s Footprint when he said: “What’s driven [health] up the agenda is that the government has looked at the problems around obesity and the costs of poor health to the health service and though: ‘What can we do with industry to tackle this?’ They’ve looked at who is involved and how they affect people’s diets. Foodservice companies are a big part of that.”

And this collaboration has to extend right up and down the supply chain – a fact recognised in the HVH through honours for Responsible Manufacturing and a Product of the Year. A joint venture between The Cheese Warehouse and Cricketer Farm won the former category for their West Country Reduced Sodium Eatwell Cheese. The product, which competes with full-fat cheddar on taste even though it has 50% less fat and 30% less salt, was developed in response for caterers tasked with hitting strict targets and committing themselves to pledges under the government’s health deal.

It is more of this innovation – whether in products, menus, marketing or services – that the HVH seek to inspire. “This venture will create more transparency on health-related issues within the foodservice supply chain, and provide a truly great platform for businesses to showcase best practice,” said Ursell. “I can’t wait to discover what the industry is doing to ‘health up’ the meals they are feeding to millions of people every day, and am very excited about the potential for the honours to inspire everyone in the industry to create tasty, good-for-you offerings.”

The first Health & Vitality Honours
Health & Vitality Communication and Engagement Honours sponsored by Innocent Winner: Charlton House for its Well Being, Being Well Initiative Runner-up: Compass Group UK & Ireland Health & Vitality Sourcing Honours sponsored by Acquire Winner: DB Foods for its Brookfield Farm High Welfare English Veal Runner-up: St John’s College, University of Cambridge Public Sector Health & Vitality Honours sponsored by Brakes Winner: Sodexo with Supporting Healthy Eating in the British Armed Forces Corporate Vitality Honours sponsored by the members of Footprint Forum Winner: Nestlé Professional Runner-up: Charlton House Healthy Hospitality Honours sponsored by Nestlé Professional Winner: Compass Group UK & Ireland Runner-up: Charlton House Responsible Manufacturing Honours sponsored by epsys Winner: A joint venture between The Cheese Warehouse and Cricketer Farm, for their West Country Reduced Sodium Eatwell Cheese Runner-up: Nestlé Professional Health & Vitality Product of the Year sponsored by Sodexo Winner: A joint venture between The Cheese Warehouse and Cricketer Farm, for their West Country Reduced Sodium Eatwell Cheese Runner-up: DB Foods for its Brookfield Farm High Welfare English Veal Special Achievement Honours Winner: Bill Brogan, catering & conference manager, St John’s College, University of Cambridge

Footprint Forum
sponsored by the members of 

Corporate Vitality Honours
Winner: Sodexo with Supporting Healthy Eating in the British Armed Forces Runner-up: Compass Group UK & Ireland

Public Sector Health & Vitality Honours
Runner-up: St John’s College, University of Cambridge Winner: DB Foods for its Brookfield Farm High Welfare English Veal

Health & Vitality Sourcing Honours
Winner: Nestlé Professional Runner-up: Charlton House

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Goodbye to supersize?

As New York bans giant servings amid growing pressure to confront obesity, David Burrows asks if the UK’s soft drinks face hard regulation.
LAST MONTH Coca-Cola unveiled a new advert, but it’s just not any advert. Instead of relating its drinks to happiness the two-minute commercial responds to an issue which the soft drinks industry is under growing pressure to confront. “Today, we’d like people to come together on something that concerns all of us: obesity,” the dulcet-toned narrator suggests. The company says the advert is intended to address the confusion about the number of calories in soft drinks. Critics believe the move is an attempt to show it is serious about self-regulation.

“In a veiled mea culpa, Coca-Cola finally acknowledges the need to reverse their tendency toward supersized portions, obscure label information and predatory marketing to children,” Dr Harold Goldstein, executive director at the California Centre for Public Health Advocacy, wrote in the Huffington Post. “Unfortunately, their initial steps and recommendations focused largely on physical activity are as flat as a lukewarm soda left on the counter all afternoon. In fact, in light of increased public support for regulations on their marketing practices, Coke’s meagre changes seem cherry-picked to provide more political cover than health impact.”

With about a third of US children and more than one in three adults overweight or obese, support for regulating food and drink companies has been bubbling along for some time, but New York’s imminent ban could change everything.

In March, sales of fizzy drinks and other sugary beverages larger than 16oz (0.5l) will be banned, except in supermarkets and convenience stores. Those that violate the law, including restaurants, face a $200 (£126) fine. The ban – which was passed in September last year but in January was 

With the responsibility deal just coming up to its second birthday – and more companies having signed pledges – the chances are slim. However, while that deal and the Change4Life programme will “hold sway”, such voluntary actions are just the start of the process, as Martin Caraher, professor of food health and health policy at City University London, explains. “I would argue that the responsibility deal can only get us so far.”

Caraher says that the food industry is already having problems with the responsibility deal given that firms are often working on different areas and towards different goals. Companies will start to send in their annual reports to the Department of Health in March, but a spokesman suggests that a formal review is not necessarily on the cards.

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Many of the big players in catering have backed the deal – 64% of the sector is signed up to the salt reduction targets, for example. Meanwhile, the British Soft Drinks Association (BSDA) says its members have “led the way” in committing themselves to the deal, noting that 61% of soft drinks now contain no added sugar. Coca-Cola takes a similar line in its ad: “Across our portfolio of 650 beverages we now offer 180 low- or no-cal versions.”

The BSDA media director, Richard Laming, also points out that drinks without added sugar now make up around 60% of the market, up from 30% 20 years ago – “but the rate of obesity is going up”.

There is also an argument that consumers don’t want to be told what they can and can’t buy: one survey by the New York Times found that 60% of respondents objected to the ban. Laming says a ban in the UK would be “a total waste of time” as people will simply move to other products. “We have to enable people to make the right choices.”

Others in the industry argue that there is only so much companies can do to encourage healthy consumption, though. In the “Beyond Business As Usual” report published by the Food Ethics Council (FEC) in January, one retail-sector representative remarked: “I can play around with the nutritional content of a doughnut as much as I want, I can say ‘eat just one doughnut’, I can make them smaller … but I can’t stop someone eating three.”

So where does the UK go from here? The Coca-Cola ad will arrive on these shores very soon – if it hasn’t already – but will the bans follow? Caraher believes that Mayor Bloomberg’s counterparts in the likes of Glasgow and Liverpool will be watching what happens over the pond with interest; while some might see the initiative as draconian, pressure will build in the UK if companies are not considered to be moving fast enough. Support is gathering for a tax on sugary drinks that will raise £1bn for a Children’s Future Fund to help pay for school meals and provide more fruit and vegetable snacks for children (see below). As Dan Crossley, executive director at the FEC, notes: “If companies like Coke think they can just put out an ad like this and it’s job done, they are mistaken.”
RESOURCES EFFICIENCY is the name of the game for recession-hit businesses. Whether it’s energy, water or waste, cutting resource use is now a commercial priority rather than an environmental ambition. Myriad campaigns have extolled the benefits of the “simple things” consumers and businesses can do to save resources and, critically, money. A report by the Carbon Trust and Ricardo-AEA last summer concluded that contract caterers could save more than £35m a year through “behavioural changes” in kitchens. Meanwhile, the Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA) estimates that a small foodservice outlet could save £19 a day with basic changes in staff behaviour. “It won’t make you a millionaire, but encouraging your staff to make some changes will save you money,” says the SRA managing director, Mark Linehan.

The Carbon Trust has researched energy use in more than 2,000 pubs and restaurants; it found that costs were between 3% and 7% of sales, or 5% on average.

“That means that if you cut energy costs by 20% [through behaviour change], you are reducing the cost of sales by 1%, which is the same as increasing your profit margin by 1%,” explains Dominic Burbridge, who leads the trust’s work with the hospitality and leisure sectors. “Front of house you’re talking about 5% or 10% on average, whereas in the kitchen the savings can be up to 40%,” he adds.

Burbridge is convinced the sector can do more to cut resource use through low-cost staff engagement programmes. But it will take time and effort. The sector has a largely transient workforce, so simple behaviour changes are difficult to maintain. “The Holy Grail is to create something that is rewarding for the business, engaging or fun for employees and measurable,” he says.

So how can those in the profit sector do that?

Costa Coffee has started making efforts to “excite” its employees about sustainability. Having spent heavily on energy-efficient equipment as part of its owner, Whitbread’s, Good Together project, it has turned its attention to staff. “We realised that good employee engagement [on green issues and how best to use the new equipment] can achieve between 5% and 20% reductions in carbon emissions,” says its energy and environment manager, Oliver Rosevear. “You can make all the changes [with new equipment and so on] but unless your staff are on board then you won’t get the results you expected.” The key is to excite them: “Sustainability might be fascinating to a geek like me, but is that the case for a barista?”

Actually, after a number of discussions with staff, Rosevear was pleasantly surprised by their desire to improve, and they were well-educated on the issues. What they lacked was information on what they could do and the difference it would make. “So we’re introducing energy reporting for stores, where they can see the changes in energy use year by year and the difference they’ve made. We’re also bringing together a network of passionate people that can help get their teams behind the process and make the information more personal.”

The concept of “energy champions” works for some businesses but not others. A soon-to-be published study looking at the best triggers for changing behaviour has
concluded that peer-to-peer interaction can be more successful than financial rewards – even among hard-up students. Lorraine Whitmarsh, an expert in the psychological and social dimensions of sustainability issues from Cardiff University, has been involved in the research.

“We found that giving students a rebate for cutting back on energy worked to some extent, but it’s the social approaches like using eco-champions and running inter-floor energy saving competitions that came out on top,” she says. “We did have some students nipping downstairs and turning their competitors’ lights on, but generally the idea of co-operation towards a shared goal worked well.”

Whitmarsh says the findings are relevant to the workplace: like students, staff don’t often see an energy bill or pay it. Some companies are already using site-based competitions to encourage savings: Mitchells & Butlers uses submetering to analyse energy use across some of its sites, which allows restaurant managers to compete against one another. “This all helps to raise awareness,” says the Carbon Trust’s Burbridge, “and that’s the start of the journey.”

Repetition is key. Many businesses fall into the trap of running an awareness campaign for a few months in the hope that it will spark long-term change. But the drop-off rate is very short. “Unless you constantly reinvigorate your activity the drop-off can be six or seven months,” says Burbridge.

It’s perhaps not surprising that information campaigns didn’t work at all for the students. People who are already partly engaged in the issues will take the time to read a leaflet or poster, but these “greens” are still in the minority.

As a rule of thumb, 20% of people are “deep green” or “green”. At the opposite end of the scale are the “unpersuadables” (20%). The remaining 60% tend to sit in between: they will do the “green thing” so long as they are not inconvenienced and it costs nothing. “This means that if you’re going to appeal to an entire workforce, you’re going to have to press different buttons,” says Burbridge. “Just saying that it’s good for the environment isn’t enough.”

Care also needs to be taken not to dress up any activity as a purely cost-saving exercise. Staff can be cynical, so there needs to be good communication about the importance of cutting energy: when asked, staff are likely to want to cut their energy use rather than have their number reduced.

Improvement and engagement can also take time. Accor has 3,600 staff in 92 countries whom it needs to engage to help achieve the environmental targets set out in its Planet 21 programme. “Some of the staff have been doing the same things for years, and we’re trying to change what they do … that will take time,” explains Sophie Flak, the hotel group’s executive VP for sustainable development. “Our chambermaids need to know that their job isn’t just about cleaning, and we need to show them the difference they are making.”

Flak says there are already “extraordinary things” happening in some hotels thanks to better staff engagement, while others are “so backward”. A new e-learning programme is expected to help, as well as overcome some of the language barriers.

Technology could play a critical role in behaviour change. CESA, the Catering Equipment Suppliers Association, has been using QR codes to enable kitchen staff to download best practice videos for some equipment. But the most successful measures aren’t always the most technical. “Premier Inn has saved loads of energy by putting three simple changes on the fob keys used by housekeepers,” says Burbridge. “The key, as it were, is simplicity.”

Check out foodservicefootprint.com for some simple energy-saving tips.

**EDITOR’S TIPS**

Clarity. Explain why staff need to change the way they work

Consistency. Drop-off can be quick, so a short campaign won’t produce lasting change

Evolution. Workers like to run with the pack and will want to blend in, so the trick is to make the sustainability initiative the new normal

Measurement. It’s not always easy to measure change, but it’s an excellent way to engage staff and highlight the fruits of their labour

Enrichment. Reward staff, and not necessarily with financial incentives

Sources: Carbon Trust, DNV Two Tomorrows, Ricardo-AEA
Not even 3 inches of snow could stop the elite of the health and wellbeing agenda gathering at Lord’s to celebrate the results of the inaugural Health & Vitality Honours. Attendees came from as far afield as Yorkshire (whether they got back is a different matter) to enjoy an afternoon of healthy indulgence in the very special atmosphere of the Long Room.
Opportunity on your doorstep

Retailers are benefiting from a passion for local food, but some caterers are eyeing the strong and growing market too. David Burrows talks to BaxterStorey’s Ian Platt.

The government’s green food report took a few by surprise with a recommendation for farmers to grow chickpeas and spices for “UK curries”. This would reduce reliance on imports, help cut emissions and also open up new markets for British farmers. A little far-fetched it may be, especially for farmers who pride themselves on their wheat, lamb or potatoes, but there is every chance it could work. Why? Because people are hungry for local food.

The market research firm Mintel estimates that local food sales are expected to hit £6.2bn. Tesco and Asda are aiming for hundreds of millions in local food sales, while the government has also pledged to procure more local food for its 1,100 hospitals, 30,000 schools and 140 prisons. But, as seen in last month’s Footprint analysis of government “buy local” policies, using small suppliers can mean big headaches. “It is a fine line between supporting the product and overburdening these businesses with unrealistic expectations,” said Jane Wakeling, the regional sourcing manager for Compass Group UK & Ireland.

The traditional route for larger caterers is to consolidate the supply chain, using fewer, bigger suppliers – some based overseas. This may save money, but it can shackle the creativity of chefs and result in a less personalised service. That’s why BaxterStorey decided to buck the trend. “Chefs with autonomy – that’s what it’s all about,” says its supply chain manager, Ian Platt. “Our model is based on giving every chef, at each of our 500 or so client sites, the freedom to source their own food.” And unlike some competitors with big central buying teams, Platt’s team at head office numbers just five.

BaxterStorey chefs can design menus and choose ingredients locally from, on average, three butchers, two fishmongers, two bakers and two produce suppliers. They can be “incredibly responsive” to clients’ needs, says Platt. It also makes commercial sense: “Our chefs prepare their menus after careful consultation with their local suppliers,” he says, “so they are designed around food which is in season – and therefore plentiful and inexpensive.”

If this seems akin to letting the kids loose in the sweetshop, that’s where training comes in. “Our small head office team supports the chefs by vetting all suppliers before they can become part of our approved supply chain,” explains Platt. “It’s very important for us to protect our company’s ethos of ‘farm to fork’.”

Born and bred in rural West Sussex, Platt has long been a keen advocate of British farmers. “There is no legislation telling us to provide British bacon to our clients but this is a core product that we want to lead from the front with.” It makes commercial sense to go further sometimes. BaxterStorey’s egg procurement policy provides a case in point.

In January 2012 battery farming was banned in the UK, replaced by eggs from “enriched cages”. BaxterStorey’s parent company, WSH, chose to become the only foodservice company to stock free-range eggs as standard. “We buy 8.5m [RSPCA Freedom Food] eggs each year from our Chorley-based farmer,” says Platt. It was a brave decision based on ethics rather than economics, given that free-range was initially about 4% more expensive. But it paid off as supermarkets began promoting enriched-cage eggs, resulting in a supply shortfall and a price increase for the catering sector that crept towards what BaxterStorey was paying for free-range. “Our cost has remained steady because our supplier arrangements were in place well in advance of the new legislation.”

Platt believes that there is a strong market for local food. Data from the researchers IGD last year backs him up, with 36% of shoppers prepared to pay extra for locally produced foods. In fact, local is expected to be the main driver for “ethical purchasing” as the recession continues. But at the moment it’s largely the retailers – and BaxterStorey – that have cottoned on to this.
A taste for tripe

UK consumers have become ‘squeamish’ about eating certain cuts but a new report argues that meat – including offal – needs to be valued rather than wasted.

FERGUS HENDERSON will be pleased. A report published this month by WWF-UK and the Food Ethics Council (FEC) claims that food companies, consumers and the government must place a greater value on meat. Valuing meat as a precious resource, making the most of each carcass and reducing the amount of edible food that ends up in pet food, incinerated or in household rubbish are all advocated as ways of improving meat consumption in the report, “Prime Cuts: Valuing the Meat We Eat.”

In an exclusive interview with Footprint last year, Henderson – the chef renowned for his creativity with offal, pictured below right – argued much the same. “These animals are reared to be eaten, but we need to make sure we eat the whole beast,” he said. “Surely that makes sense?”

Environmentally, it does: rearing livestock has a considerable environmental impact thanks to the production of methane – a powerful greenhouse gas – so using more of the meat from each animal would reduce the damage. Economically, it does: better carcass use could benefit producers who currently have to look overseas to sell certain cuts of meat. But how about socially?

The report notes: “While there may be opportunities here, there are also challenges in engaging UK consumers who might be ‘squeamish about offal’ and are used to eating a significant proportion of meat in pre-packaged and processed forms.”

UK producers are faced with a diminishing home market for certain cuts of meat – by 2020 the market for edible offal is expected to have fallen from 165,500 to 130,500 tonnes and half that again by 2050 – as they home in on very specific tastes.

So what is the meat to eat? The researchers identified nine ways to define “better” meat consumption including “better for human health”, “better for the environment”, “better for farming profitability”, “better for taste and quality” and “better for reducing waste”. Offal falls into the last category, and anything to reduce waste in the food system is widely supported. However, defining what is better for the environment, better for farmers and better for health is more complex. The report states: “We recognise that climate change, environmental and producer benefits from less but better meat consumption are only potential benefits, as the relationship between consumption and production is not clear.”

“We need to make sure we eat the whole beast ... surely that makes sense?”

- Fergus Henderson

Mark Driscoll, WWF-UK’s head of food, is fully aware that defining what is meant by “less, but better” meat is a difficult nut to crack, but moving the debate from the more simplistic “less” could resonate with consumers and benefit producers. “We know there are good reasons for reducing our meat consumption in the West,” he says. “However, a simple ‘less meat’ message could have unintended consequences for farmers’ livelihoods, rural communities and landscapes and runs the risk of alienating consumers who want to eat meat. Some have suggested ‘less but better’ meat could be the answer, but no-one has really looked into what this means.”

Farming organisations have welcomed the report, albeit tentatively. Nick Allen, sector director at EBLEX, suggests encouraging people to eat less meat in the UK “makes little sense” given that it’s “an efficient place to produce beef and lamb”. What does make sense is WWF-UK’s “considered approach to these issues rather than the usual ‘meat is bad, so eat less’ message”. He adds: “All too often it can appear that meat produced is not valued by the consumer or, in some instances, the retailer.”

The consequence of disregarding the quality of the meat we eat was highlighted by two scandals which grabbed the media spotlight in recent weeks.

The discovery of horse DNA in burgers supplied by the food manufacturer ABP to the likes of Tesco and Burger King was followed in early February by revelations pork DNA had been found in halal pies and pasties supplied to prisons. As Footprint went to press, food distributor 3663 had identified McColgan Quality Foods as the source of “the very small number of halal savoury beef pastry products” found to contain porcine protein. Islamic law forbids the consumption of pork and 3663 said in a statement that it was “shocked” by the discovery.

Others have been less surprised. “If you have a competition that says: Who can sell the cheapest stuff? Inevitably at a point in time you will get something like this,” said the Waitrose chief, Mark Price, in an interview with Reuters.

Perhaps consumers and suppliers will be more prepared to consider quality as well as price in the wake of these scandals. If so the impeccably timed “Prime Cuts” report will offer them food for thought – and perhaps ensure that another repeat is not inevitable.
Energy optimisation

Strong currents
HERE’S SOMETHING you might not know: the declared electricity supply in the UK is 230 volts with a tolerance of ±10%. Yet the voltage supplied to you will typically be around 245V. Most appliances will work more efficiently and use less electricity at a much lower voltage. This means that on most sites, electrical equipment is running at a voltage much higher than needed, causing losses.

Voltage optimisation
VOLTAGE OPTIMISATION devices maintain the supply at 220V. That equates to about a 10% reduction in energy use. By eradicating the usual peaks and troughs of supply, they can also increase the life expectancy of equipment, particularly lighting. Lamp life expectancy can be reduced by up to 50% by excess voltage. Optimisation means fewer lightbulbs and less time spent changing them.

No guarantee
AS WITH many sustainability initiatives, the savings are not guaranteed. One government study showed returns ranging from a 19% saving to a 4% loss. It depends on the premises, your equipment and what it’s used for. Manufacturers can provide estimated savings and, in time, energy bills can be compared, but for those wanting to know exact savings there are devices such as iVolt which show actual energy use with and without voltage optimisation.

How much?
THERE’S A cost to consider and these devices aren’t cheap. For smaller premises optimisers are available for around £3-4,000 but on large sites the costs can escalate to tens of thousands. There are plenty of case studies with figures and data on the savings, but very few showing the initial capital investment.

£15,500 and counting
FOXHILLS HOTEL and Resort adopted the technology a couple of years ago and energy bills at the 70-room hotel have been cut by £15,500 a year. Given that the annual bills are in the region of £156,000 that’s not bad. “The savings are threefold, really,” says the facilities director, Ben Biggs. “It not only saves us money by reducing the amount of power we use but it reduces the strain on equipment, which means it lasts longer, and by monitoring our energy consumption in real time it provides me with crucial information which I can then take to my staff to make them more conscious of the electricity we’re using – and in many cases wasting.” Another hotel in North Yorkshire is expecting to save £7,900 a year on energy bills (and cut carbon emissions by 65.7 tonnes) having invested £39,500 in voltage optimisation. Whitbread has also invested in the technology, with early data showing savings as high as 18% on some sites. There are also devices across government sites and the Environment Agency says it is saving an average of 8% and up to 17% in some buildings.

One more thing
THE AMOUNT of space required for low voltage optimisation equipment ranges from 0.5 sq. m to about 2 sq. m. It’s also heavy – most units weigh 100-1,200kg. So, if you are planning to expand and anticipate that your electrical demand will increase then tell the installer, as they will have to allow more headroom by installing a larger unit.

EDITOR’S TIPS
If you rent your premises anything you do needs to have the backing of the landlord and, given the returns on investment, you need to be sure you are not going anywhere any time soon. This will add value to the premises.

Many manufacturers have cost savings calculators, which allow you to input your equipment and see the savings available. However, you need to do a full assessment of your energy use and demands before considering such a big investment. This should be carried out – often for free – by the installer.
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