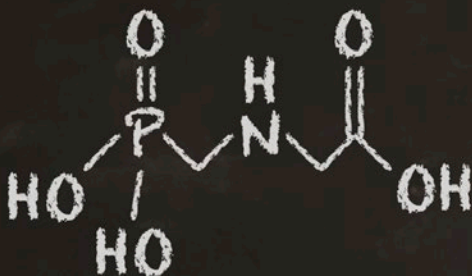
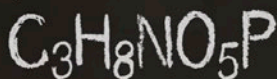


**It's the world's most
popular agri-chemical...**

Glyphosate



...but scientists can't agree whether
this weedkiller causes cancer



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Sugar tax is just a taste of what's needed

Settling on something to write about for this issue wasn't easy. In the past couple of months we have had the surprise of the sugar tax, a worrying first assessment of UK food crime and a fascinating insight into what consumers want our food industry to look like.

It was interesting that the Food Standards Agency, in publishing the latter, included this quote from one of the consumers they questioned for up to a day at a time: "The government needs to start taxing companies that use sugar and E-numbers ... If they do nothing else I'd like them to do that. Make it harder to be unhealthy."

Pushing through a sugar tax won't be easy, but as the chancellor has since confirmed, there is no going back now. "It's the way it's going to be," George Osborne said after reports that the big drinks companies would launch a legal challenge to the levy.

To my mind, the drinks companies should suck it up. They have spent the last 12 months or so pushing the message that they are spending big on marketing their diet and sugar-free ranges, and sales are booming. If so, then what's the big problem?

Having said that, I wonder whether a face-off is much-needed. For one, it's clear from the FSA's extensive research that consumers don't really trust the food industry (corporate control of our food supplies is a major concern). But they also want government to step in and do more.

Osborne has done just that. Perhaps Liz Truss at DEFRA will follow his lead? She said the promises made to the food industry won the election for her party. However, the Conservative manifesto presents the economics of food, with little or no thought for the environmental impacts and implications.

The 25-Year Food and Farming Plan, as we discuss in this issue's Political Print, is likely to head down the same path. Some of the leading experts in this field don't think it'll be worth the paper it's written on within five years.

"Competitiveness is fine, it's the language business likes but it's not the language that improves public health," said Professor Tim Lang recently. Neither is it the one that will curb carbon emissions, as researchers at Oxford University recently claimed.



The enormous size of the change to the food system that the evidence says is needed is "not a tweak here or there", as Lang put it. Is a sugar tax just the first tweak in a new approach to food policy? Could a carbon tax now be a serious consideration? Or perhaps tougher regulation on food waste? Perhaps the government will define sustainable diets? If that happens, then I really might have to pinch myself.

David Burrows is editor of *Footprint* magazine

The review

Meat cuts, food fraud and dodgy palm oil.

Sustainable diets: Three cheers for Holland



The Netherlands' Nutrition Centre has updated its dietary advice and has advised a halving of meat consumption, to 500g per week. No more than 300g of this should be red meat, they say, in the main because of its considerable environmental footprint. It's a brave move, with some reports suggesting it's a breakthrough for more sustainable diets.

If only the UK government could be so bold. Public Health England also revised its guidance last month, replacing the Eatwell Plate with an Eatwell Guide. Dairy consumption should be halved, PHE said, while there's also a note to eat less red and processed meat. It doesn't go far enough, though.

The environmental footprint of the guide is less than the plate, as well as much lower than current diets, but it's nowhere near low enough to keep emissions in check and to limit temperature rises to 2C.

New research published by the Oxford Martin Programme on the Future of Food suggested meat intake needs to fall by two-thirds in countries such as the UK. The study also showed that if everyone followed the global healthy eating guidelines currently in place, carbon would be cut by just 29%. If everyone went vegetarian or vegan the figures would be 63% and 70% respectively.

"We do not expect everybody to become vegan," said the lead author, Marco Springmann, but "our analysis indicates that adopting global dietary guidelines would not be enough to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions to the same extent that total greenhouse gas emissions will need to fall to keep global temperature increases to below two degrees".

Food fraud: something to shout about

No one wants a repeat of the horsemeat scandal, but the food industry is clearly not doing enough to prevent food fraud. That's according to the Food Standards Agency's first ever assessment of food crime in the UK.

"Our assessment shows that the threat is real," noted the FSA's national food crime unit in its report, but information sharing with the food industry is in its early stages. Broad and more specific information would help, it noted, but food firms "can worry that reporting as crime will damage their reputational or profits".



The consequences of keeping schtum can be more severe and there have been warnings that foodservice remains particularly vulnerable. The NFCU points out that meat species substitution in catering "continues to be observed through local authority sampling", with lamb replaced by beef, turkey or pork. "This is particularly common in spicy meals, where customer capacity to detect the fraud may be impaired by other powerful flavours."

But the spices themselves may also not be what they say in the packet. An oregano sampling exercise earlier this year revealed that 19 of 78 samples consisted of 21% to 69% olive or myrtle leaves.

Palm oil: why keep quiet for so long?



The fallout from the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil's decision to (finally) suspend one of its founding members has been fascinating to watch. Malaysia-based producer IOI was found to have fallen foul of some of the certification scheme's rules, with an investigation showing extensive deforestation and fires in peatland areas within some of its plantations.

The RSPO took 12 months to reach its decision, though it's been six years since NGOs raised the alarm over IOI's operations. "It is too little too late," said the Friends of the Earth food campaigner Clare Oxborrow.

Moves by the big food brands to distance themselves from IOI since the suspension on April 1st have been anything but tardy. Mars, Unilever and Kellogg are all taking their business elsewhere until the situation is resolved, while Nestlé has ceased sourcing from the plantations at the centre of the controversy. Mondelez has been a little more reluctant to divulge its plans, but it looks like IOI has also fallen foul of the Cadbury owner's supplier policies too.

On the one hand, the reaction speed once the suspension was confirmed has been impressive. On the other, could all these companies not have moved sooner? If IOI, as has long appeared likely, was managing some of its plantations poorly, why not step in, ask questions, or at the very least exert more pressure on the RSPO to act?

April's magazine in numbers

10% – levels of ‘fish substitution’

found in sushi restaurants



Researchers from the universities of Salford, Bristol and Exeter analysed seafood samples from 30-odd sushi bars and restaurants. They discovered one in 10 fish was not the species stated on the menu. This represents “moderate” substitution and is way better than in the US, they noted.

24p – the tax on drinks sweetened with more than 8g of sugar per litre



The March budget included a bitter blow for soft drinks manufacturers. Drinks with 8g or more of sugar per 100ml will be hit with a charge of 24p a litre, while products with 5g to 8g will be taxed at 18p a litre. Pure fruit juices and flavoured milks are exempt from the levy.

8% – daily food intake that should consist of dairy products



Flavoured milks may have ducked the Treasury’s planned sugary drinks tax, but the Department of Health delivered a sucker punch a day later when it published the new EatWell guide. Dairy products should make up 8% of an individual’s daily food intake, compared with 15% in the previous iteration.

20% – industry’s new food and drink waste reduction target



The Hospitality and Food Service Agreement on waste and the Courtauld Commitment will be replaced with one new voluntary scheme for the entire food and drink industry. Courtauld 2025 signatories will work towards a 20% food waste reduction target by 2025.

6,000 – pages in the European Food Safety Authority’s glyphosate analysis



Is the world’s most widely used herbicide carcinogenic? Some say possibly. Others say probably. But EFSA said it’s unlikely. So who is right? Check out our briefing page at the end of this month’s magazine.



Future of food: what do consumers want?

The Food Standards Agency's findings on THE people's vision for 2050 will both inspire and alarm the industry.



What might the world's food industry look like in 2050? Businesses, politicians and environmentalists all have their own visions. Some of them align; some of them don't. But what do consumers think? The Food Standards Agency has had a go at finding out.

What it has come up with is much more than a list of things that are on people's minds in relation to what they eat (price, animal welfare, health, climate change and the like). Consumers "spent a whole day telling us what they wanted", the FSA's chief scientific adviser, Guy Poppy, said about the workshops.

The findings are intriguing, concerning and inspiring to varying degrees. Here's a snapshot.

A nation of worriers

People worry about a loss of connection with where their food comes from. Food companies may have thought that, in convenience foods, year-round availability, food-to-go innovation and online grocery shopping, they were offering customers exactly what they wanted. And to a certain extent they have – people are time-poor and technologically rich.

But behind the lifestyle benefits these innovations have created, there is a niggle: will we lose a way of relating to food that we enjoy, and part of how we relate to each other as people? The report notes that "real concerns and anxieties about how we might relate to food in the future" surfaced during the more detailed discussions. Squaring that particular circle will be a headache.

Stick with labelling

That health messages are gaining traction also comes through in the FSA study. The food industry was "widely praised" for improving the clarity of food labels in areas such as allergens, fat, salt, sugar and additives. Good news indeed. But this access to information shouldn't end with nutrition.

As participants began to understand more about the complexities of global supply chains – deforestation to produce palm oil, water scarcity in regions that supply supermarkets with year-round exotic fruits and so on – they wanted the food industry to provide more information on the global environmental effects of food production.

Empowered but not trusting

Clear labelling gave consumers the confidence to "make empowered choices about their food – and reassured them that the food industry was being encouraged to act in consumers' interest", the FSA said. This isn't always the case, though. Asked who had the most influence in the supply chain, respondents said the market, which in turn led to concerns about the power of the biggest food brands. Consumers had the least influence, with government sandwiched in between.

But when it comes to who they trust, that hierarchy is flipped on its head. The government needs to step in and step up, was the conclusion: "People hoped that government would push harder to support public interests via education and information support, but also intervention in marketing and retailing that promoted unhealthy or wasteful food choices."

Green light for red tape

Taxes – which have been floated for carbon and introduced on sugar – should remain on the table, the research suggested. The government's role should be to "make it harder to be unhealthy", said one respondent.

This chimes with rumblings from parts of the food industry, both in terms of health and environmental policies. Businesses are looking to the government to help them tackle the complex issues of food security, for example. "Where there is not a strong business case, legislate us, so that we are forced to perform, because voluntary standards can only get us so far," was the impression given by industry leaders in one recent report.

Two-tier society

The environment secretary, Liz Truss, said the promises made to the food industry won the election for her party. However, the Conservative manifesto (and probably the 25-Year Food and Farming Plan) presents the economics of food, with little or no thought for the environmental impacts and implications. Sustainable food may therefore remain on the sidelines until 2020.

If the FSA's findings are anything to go by, this won't wash with the environmentally informed and corporate-sceptical consumer of the future. "Participants hope that government and regulators will play a more visible role in the future of food, to ensure that their interests are protected in a more complex world," the authors concluded.

If not, then a "two-tier" society could emerge, "where healthy and less processed foods are increasingly a luxury, and people who are more financially pressured relying more on convenience foods". Some would argue that it's here already.

Note: This is an abridged version of an article published on www.tifsip.org on March 15th 2016. It has been published here with permission.

Is your food looking fishy?

Evidence shows seafood mislabelling has been tightened up. But there’s still room for improvement in foodservice.



Are you getting a raw deal on sushi? Probably not, according to a new analysis of 115 samples of the seafood delicacy at 31 UK bars and restaurants. We “detected a low percentage of substitution”, the experts from the universities of Salford, Bristol and Exeter note, “which could be an indicator that many restaurants have a positive attitude towards labelling accuracy due to heightened consumer awareness”.

Fish fraud has been big news in the past, with some studies indicating that one in four fish wasn’t the species listed on the menu or packet. This can have environmental implications, for instance when vulnerable species are caught illegally and labelled as something else. There are also health concerns, such as when mislabelling masks undeclared allergens, contaminants or toxins.

In the grocery trade there have been marked improvements in relation to seafood labelling. A study in six European countries published towards the end of last year showed that levels of mislabelling had fallen below 5% in the 1,500-odd samples tested.

In the UK, rates were about 3% – low enough that they might be expected to be the result of human error. The media backlash, new labelling requirements and stiffer penalties for non-compliance had all helped turn the tide, the research team said.

Mislabelling of seafood can have serious environmental and health implications

This new study suggests that things are not too bad in foodservice, either. Moderate levels of substitution in the region of 10% (12 out of 115 samples) were discovered. This is significantly lower than the rates found in North America, where mislabelling in some investigations was as high as 74%. Even products that are typically known to exhibit high levels of mislabelling, such as tuna, showed “a remarkable level of compliance”, the researchers concluded.

But it’s far from job done. The rate of mislabelling is still more than three times that in retail operations. The net has closed around fraudsters in the grocery chain thanks in no small part to EU regulations requiring suppliers to include the fish’s scientific name and, in some cases, the zone where it was caught. Supermarkets are also encouraged to voluntarily include the date of catch as well as other environmental or ethical information.

The laws for foodservice are much less rigorous – restaurants only have to provide information on allergens. They aren’t obliged to mention on their menu what species is being sold. They do however have to keep the information and provide it should a customer ask. So, the researchers did just that.

“In one case where oral enquiry about which tuna species was being sold was made to the waiting staff, the response was bluefin tuna, which was not supported by the results of DNA barcoding,” they noted. “In this study, it was not included as a case of mislabelling, as the menu did not explicitly mention ‘bluefin tuna’, but it does illustrate an absence of care or knowledge in the usage of this commercial name.”

The standardisation of the system, using scientific names, is the logical solution, says Professor Stefano Mariani at the University of Salford. “There are hundreds of fish species regularly flooding the EU market. Many that are caught outside of the EU don’t even have a common name,” he explains.

Even for common species there is plenty of confusion: cod, for instance, is called *bacalao* in Spanish and *merluzzo* in Italian, but in Spanish *merluza* means hake. “There is only one way to go: standardise labels very strictly, and use the only name that is totally global, across the language barriers – the scientific name,” he adds.

Species	Mislabelled	Correctly labelled
Flying fish eggs	1	0
Snapper	1	0
Kingfish	2	0
Barramundi	0	1
Black cod	0	1
Swordfish	1	1
Mackerel	0	8
Sea bream	0	3
Yellowtail	0	12
Sea bass	2	14
Eel	0	20
Tuna	5	43
Totals	12	103

Behind the headlines

Tesco's farm fudge



The supermarket's refresh of its fresh produce ranges using 'fake' farms has left a sour taste, but it won't last for long, says David Burrows.



Poor old Tesco: just when it seems to have come up with a decent idea, the media throws it back in its face. More than 70 lines of fruit, veg, poultry, pork and beef have been revamped under seven new “farm” brands. These include Redmere Farms for veg, Rosedene Farms for fruits and Boswell Farms, which look after the beef. Trouble is – none of them exist.

The story was almost too good to be true – especially for those who enjoy a little Twitter-based Tesco-bashing. “Aren’t real farms good enough?” tweeted @systems4food. “We live in a land where real farms go bust so @Tesco can invent fake ones,” screamed @JHallHDI. “Doesn’t Tesco want its brand to be trustable again?” wrote @tarabluesky.

The critics do have a point. Some suggested the move has risk written all over it given the emphasis on provenance and transparency. Tesco’s announcement coincided with the first ever assessment of food crime in the UK, as well as figures from Mintel’s 2016 shopper survey showing that 55% of Brits want to buy British whenever they can.

“This feels a little out of step with current trends in consumer attitudes, which seem to be shifting towards authenticity, and understanding where food comes from,” said Nick Lee, a professor of marketing at Warwick business school.

Having said that, Mintel found that 45% feel British goods are more expensive than imported ones, and only a third are happy to pay the premium. For this reason, experts like Lee doubt whether the social media outrage will cause people to shop elsewhere.

Planet Retail’s David Gray is also sceptical. Tesco’s refresh is all about driving people into the store, he said. More appealing packaging and far more attractive price points (Rosedene’s blueberries are, at the time of writing, half the price of the equivalent Tesco value product, while Redmere’s parsnips were also a snip at 54p versus the own label bag at 90p) could lead them to leave their ethics at the door.

Not that Tesco has done anything wrong. It has really “stolen” this idea from the discounters, said Gray. “Why is it OK for Aldi and Lidl to do it and not Tesco?” It’s because big targets often make easy targets, he added.

“My view is that it is just a brand,” explained Dominic Watkins, a partner at law firm DWF. “Provided that it does not suggest or imply a particular geographical origin that would mislead the consumer then it should not be misleading.”

Others tend to agree. “It’s just a name, just a brand name,” retail consultant Alison Pike told *Marketing* magazine. “They could use the name of a real farm – but would the customer know? No.”

But now many more consumers do know that Tesco’s farm brands are fudged. Whether they really care remains to be seen.

Political Print

DEFRA's much-awaited Food and Farming Plan could offer strong support for Britain's embattled farmers – but the EU referendum has put it on the back burner.



The eu referendum has much to answer for. Ever since the Remain and Leave campaigns were launched in earnest in February the mill of domestic policy making has ground to a near halt. Plans have been parked, strategies have stalled and bills have been blunted as the energies of both the prime minister and his cabinet colleagues – EU loyalists and rebels – have been diverted towards the campaign trail.

Two highly anticipated food policies are among the casualties: the Department of Health's Childhood Obesity Strategy and DEFRA's 25-Year Plan for Food and Farming, both of which were slated for release early this year and both of which have seemingly been kicked into the long grass until after the vote on 23 June (the former has already been officially postponed until the summer while a DEFRA spokesman says, somewhat cryptically, that the latter is not "imminent" but will be published "soon").

The fact the two strategies are being developed independently of one another is a source of great frustration for many NGOs working in the food sphere which believe that policies addressing consumption and production cannot be separated. Even more incongruous is the fact that DEFRA is developing its Food and Farming Plan independently of a 25-year Environment Plan despite the clear reliance of agriculture on a healthy environment.

In fact, the lack of joined-up policy-making should surprise nobody. The Food and Farming Plan has a very clear purpose that has little to do with health or the environment. The plan is the Conservative Party's opportunity to show its support for UK farmers at a time when the government's inability to suppress the forces of global markets has been brutally exposed by the crisis in the dairy industry.

The plan represents a rare chance for DEFRA to shed its image as a reactionary, firefighting department

It also represents a rare chance for DEFRA to shed its image as a reactionary, firefighting department and put forward a vision for food and farming that contributes to the government's overarching growth agenda. With its enforcement budget being cut to the bone, such strategic thinking is vital if DEFRA is to show its worth to the many Conservative MPs who would happily see the department dissolved entirely.

The result will be a plan that is unashamedly pro-industry, designed to boost growth and competitiveness by focusing on increasing exports and cutting regulation.

Industry, most notably the National Farmers' Union, has been heavily involved in developing the content of the plan, which has not gone out for public consultation (although a select group of NGOs have been invited to comment on an early draft). Any complaints about the plan's narrowness of vision, however, are likely to fall on deaf ears.

When it is finally published, the plan is likely to find strong support within the food and farming community. Restless farmers may be placated by its aim to strengthen the British food brand at home and abroad (a Great British Food Unit has been established within DEFRA to do just that), while foodservice operators will surely welcome commitments from retailers and manufacturers to boost skills and apprenticeships.

The devil as ever will lie in the detail. And the jury remains out on whether a plan that sees growth and competitiveness as a proxy for long-term sustainability of UK supply will prove fit to tackle the complexities of 21st-century food security; complexities that make the UK's potential extrication from the EU seem like a walk in the park.

My viewpoint

Sugar tax is just the start of intervention unless industry acts swiftly, collaborates and does a better job of fighting its corner, says Jennifer Powers.



“The sugar tax was the budget announcement no one saw coming. The first inkling that something was afoot was a provocative tweet from broadcaster Robert Peston as the chancellor rose to his feet, suggesting the budget contained a big surprise. Jubilation followed from Jamie Oliver and fellow campaigners, the industry reacted with indignation and the announcement dominated newspaper front pages.

Cynical minds may speculate that the announcement was a clever diversion from the disappointing growth forecasts contained in the budget, but more interesting is why the government felt able to announce a controversial and hurriedly pulled together policy which cuts against the grain of mainstream Conservative thinking.

What to do about obesity has always presented the government with a dilemma. The libertarian wing of the Conservative Party is suspicious of “nanny state” paternalist measures and is inherently sceptical of compulsory regulations and new taxes – and few politicians would want to introduce measures that threaten jobs and livelihoods.

However, a small but influential number of Conservative ministers, advisers and centre-right media commentators felt that the light-touch approach previously taken on obesity has failed – and they seized their opportunity to intervene.

It was the lack of a counter-argument that gave campaigners a clear run and the government the space to act

Medical NGOs and celebrities ran a very successful campaign. But it was the lack of a counter-argument that gave campaigners a clear run and the government the space to act.

There will now be a consultation and the opportunity for industry to avoid the tax through reformulation, but as with all new taxes a Rubicon has been crossed. Industry needs to fully engage with the consultation process and become more involved in the public policy debate about the most effective ways to tackle obesity.

There are three ways it can make a start. First, it must push back consistently and continuously against the demonisation of specific nutrients and food groups. Second, it must raise awareness about the adverse effects of interventionist policies – particularly on hard-pressed consumers. The sugar tax will undoubtedly push up the shopping bills of some low and middle-income earners – a fact that has been largely missing from this debate.

Third, in an industry with little tradition of collaboration, individual companies must recognise the importance of working together over the long term to promote the importance of a well-rounded diet. Companies should raise concerns about proposals that will end up stifling competition or raising prices.

In this Year of Great British Food, and with the Childhood Obesity Strategy still to come, both the government and industry face profound choices about the relationship between food and public health, not least: How much to intervene? And how much can and should the industry offer voluntarily?



The only thing not in doubt is the certainty and determination of the public health campaigners for change. Tackling obesity will be a story that runs throughout this parliament and far beyond. If the food industry continues with its current approach then the sugar tax will only be the beginning of interventions that affect the bottom line.”

Jennifer Powers is head of advocacy at **Westbourne Communications**

Hats off to the government

Easter bunnies, bitter blows and the thirst for more of the same. David Burrows reflects on the story of the sugar tax so far.



In february all the talk was about the rabbit the prime minister might pull out of his negotiating hat in Brussels. That one never materialised (his new deal with the EU was widely panned). Thank goodness for the chancellor, then, who conjured up a pre-Easter bunny of a surprise with his sugar tax announcement in the March budget.

“I am not prepared to look back at my time here in this parliament, doing this job and say to my children’s generation: ‘I’m sorry. We knew there was a problem with sugary drinks. We knew it caused disease. But we ducked the difficult decisions and we did nothing.’”

George Osborne, UK chancellor

The move to introduce a levy, applied to drinks with more than five grams of sugar per 100 millilitres with a higher rate for more than eight grams, caught everyone by surprise. There were rumours but six months ago the Department of Health said:

“The government has no plans to introduce a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. The government has committed to a tax lock to avoid raising the cost of living and to promote UK productivity and economic growth.”

The U-turn left many executives at the big beverage brands choking on their lunchtime Coke.

“For nearly a year we have waited for an holistic strategy to tackle obesity. What we’ve got today instead is a piece of political theatre.”

Ian Wright, Food & Drink Federation director general

The word “disappointed” came up in a number of the quotes flying around in the aftermath of the chancellor’s speech.

“We are extremely disappointed that the government is proposing to introduce a soft drinks tax from 2018.”

Britvic spokesperson

“Why us?” was the cry.

“We are the only category with an ambitious plan for the years ahead – in 2015 we agreed a calorie reduction goal of 20% by 2020.”

Gavin Partington, British Soft Drinks Association director general

After all, the voluntary initiatives are working.

“Despite the considerable voluntary initiatives and the significant progress that our industry and the company have made, a punitive levy on a specific single category has been brought out where, in stark contrast to other food and drink categories, we have been reducing sugar content and have a strong [commitment] to do so.”

Roger White, AG Barr chief executive

AG Barr’s shares dipped almost immediately, slipping more than 5% since the budget. The industry has warned that jobs will be lost.

“The imposition of this tax will, sadly, result in less innovation and product reformulation, and for some manufacturers is certain to cost jobs.”

Ian Wright, FDF

What’s more, it won’t curb obesity.

“If the aim is to reduce obesity, this levy flies in the face of evidence from around the world which shows taxes do very little, if anything, to reduce sugar and calorie intake or obesity levels but do add to people’s cost of living.”

Jon Woods, Coca-Cola Britain general manager

Campaigners, of course, claimed the opposite, raising a glass (of water, probably) to the unexpected news.

“This is a big moment in child health. It’s symbolic that a robust government can actually get control of big business when it’s having an ill effect on child health.”

Jamie Oliver, celebrity chef and campaigner

And while it may have been a “symbolic slap” to industry, it isn’t anti-business. Rather it should fuel innovation and reformulation.

“Because it is already possible to replace sugar with low-calorie sweeteners, producers are likely to respond by reformulating their existing products. And we think that this will be where we are likely to see the biggest health impacts.”

The Behavioural Insights Team

There is indeed scant evidence that jobs will be lost as a result. But will manufacturers spot an opportunity, pushing up the price of diet options?

Some think so.

“Some manufacturers and/or retailers might respond to the tax by increasing the prices of diet drinks, dampening the extent of any consumer switching to these products.”

Institute for Fiscal Studies, Green Budget

But the government has already said this will be frowned upon. Indeed, the levy is on producers of sugar drinks rather than being a direct tax on consumers.

“The Treasury has also warned industry not to pass on levy costs to the purchaser and that it should do more to promote healthier products – even down to marketing water.”

Tam Fry, National Obesity Forum spokesman

Whether this will come to pass remains to be seen.

“Products with high sugar contents are more likely to be promoted and more of them are bought when on promotion. If we are to tackle the UK’s love affair with sugar we need to reduce the incentives for companies to produce and promote ever greater volumes.”

Anita Charlesworth, Health Foundation director of research and economics

There could, of course, be further restrictions on advertising laid down within the long-awaited (and much-delayed) childhood obesity strategy. Many agree that a sugar tax isn’t a silver bullet.

“The evidence broadly suggests that a structured approach, involving restrictions on price promotions and marketing, product reformulation, portion size reduction and price increase on unhealthy products, implemented in parallel is likely to have a more universal effect.”

Public Health England

This is just the start, campaigners hope. The soft drinks industry sees it very differently. Some are reportedly planning to take legal action.

“It’s fair to say we are more than just considering legal action. This has been rushed through without warning.”

Senior industry source (talking to the Sunday Times)

Similar challenges have been made in other European countries, while the European Court of Justice has blocked Scotland’s plan to introduce minimum pricing on alcohol. The chancellor’s response?

“Bring it on. We are going to introduce a sugar tax. It’s not a threat or a promise, it’s the way it’s going to be.”

If it’s discriminatory (fruit juices and milkshakes, for example, are exempt), then campaigners say slap the tax on all sugary drinks – including the sugar-laden hot drinks in cafes.

“We know that fruit juices are packed with sugar and lattes and so forth and all these supersize drinks on the high street can be disastrous.”

Tam Fry, National Obesity Forum spokesman

But why stop there? The drinks industry noted that...

“...sugar and calorie intake from all other major take-home food categories is increasing, which makes the targeting of soft drinks simply absurd.”

Gavin Partington, director general BSDA

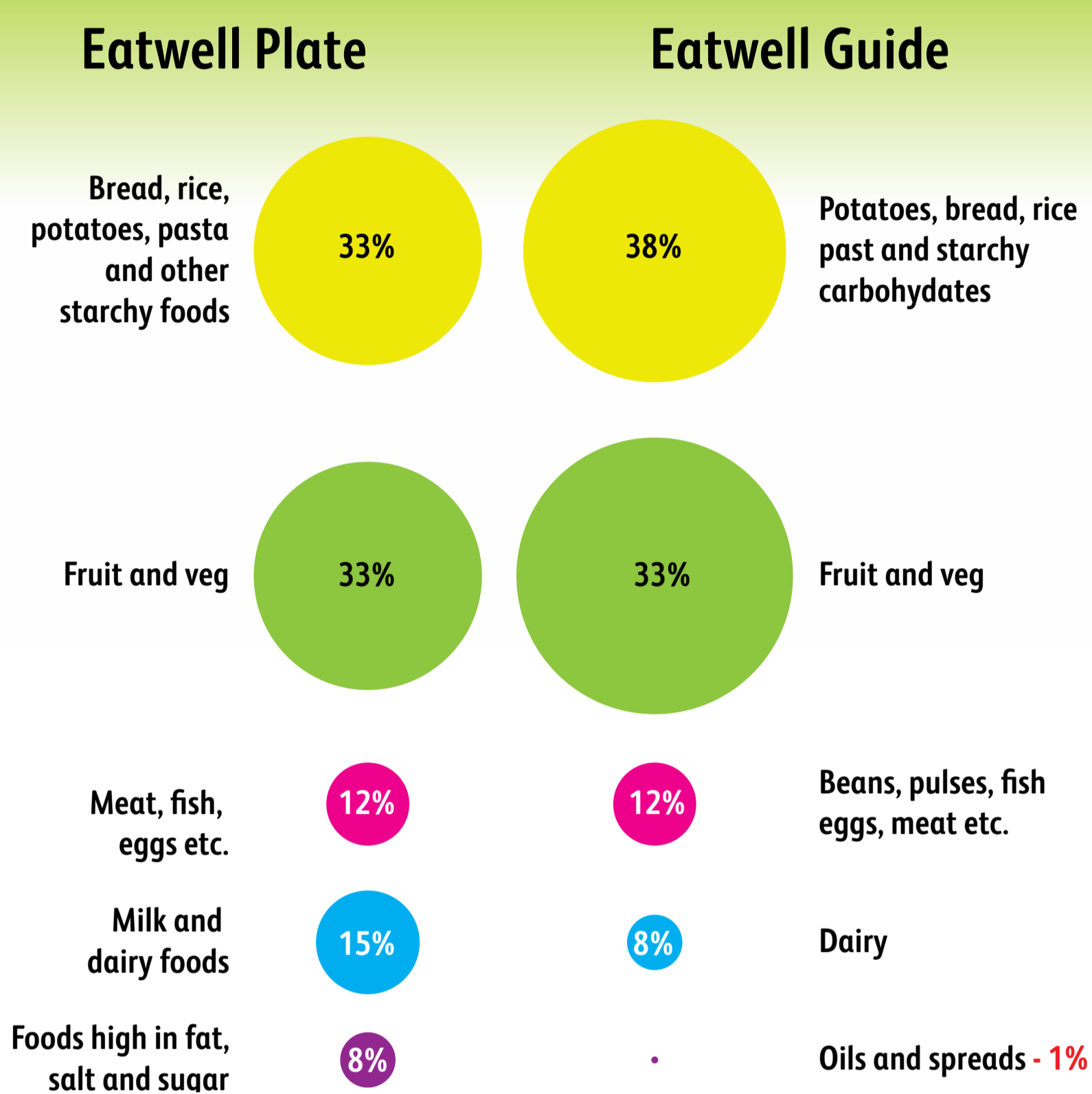
The likes of the IFS also suggest that people, especially children, will simply go elsewhere for their sugar fix. This is unlikely, but a sugar tax on unhealthy foods is on “less firm footing” evidence-wise than one targeted at drinks alone, said the University of Oxford’s Adam Briggs. A tax on high-carbon foods, on the other hand...

“... could have meaningful effects on greenhouse gas emissions without harming health.”

If that happens, environment campaigners would throw their hats in the air – and I’d eat mine.

Dairy dispute over healthy eating guidelines

Experts call the new Eatwell Guide a step in the right direction, but industry objects to recommendations to consume less milk products.



The government's revision of what constitutes a healthy diet has created a bit of a stir. In March, Public Health England (PHE) replaced the Eatwell Plate with the Eatwell Guide to reflect recent nutritional recommendations, including those on sugar, fibre and starchy carbohydrates from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition's report in 2015, "Carbohydrates and Health".

The new advice suggests carbohydrates and fruit and vegetables should make up 38% and 40% of daily consumption respectively. Beans, pulses and meat should form 12% of food intake, but people should "eat less red and processed meat". Foods high in fat, sugar and salt should make up no more than 8%.

However, it is the halving of dairy intake – from 16% to 8% – that has grabbed the headlines. The dairy industry has been left "baffled" by the decision, which "goes against a series of recent public announcements and reports which show a better understanding of the role of milk and dairy products in a healthy and balanced diet by government and parliamentarians", said the Dairy UK chief executive, Judith Bryans.

The dairy all-party parliamentary group, which has only just published a report recommending a "three a day" campaign for dairy products, was left similarly puzzled. "Dairy products are full of key nutrients we all need, from the well-known calcium and protein to the lesser-known iodine and vitamin B12. We should be making every effort to encourage dairy consumption, not taking steps to reduce it," the group noted.

The new guidelines have an appreciably lower carbon impact than current diets but are way off what's needed to hit 80% emissions cuts by 2050

But PHE is convinced it has got its maths right. "We are all having too much saturated fat and salt in our diets, which is detrimental to our health," said its chief nutritionist, Dr Alison Tedstone. "The new Eatwell Guide supports people to reduce saturated fat and salt consumption while still meeting official calcium and iodine advice and is based on robust scientific evidence."

The changes have otherwise been widely supported – especially the (tentative) move to encourage consumption of less meat and more plant-based proteins. Though the guidelines are based purely on the provision of a healthy diet, an analysis by the Carbon Trust shows that the Eatwell recommendations have an "appreciably lower" environmental impact than the current UK diet.

But it doesn't go far enough if emissions are to be cut by 80% by 2050. To achieve that target, total emissions – from food, as well as travel, heating and so on – will need to fall from 11.9 tonnes to 2.4 tonnes per person. Currently, the average UK consumer uses 145% of that allowance in food consumption alone. A switch to the new guide's recommendations could reduce this to 100%.

It's therefore a "small step" in the right direction, says Mark Driscoll, the head of food at Forum for the Future. Indeed, far more significant shifts in consumption patterns will be required, with meat the principal target.

"Meat is typically the most greenhouse gas intensive part of our diet, but the guidelines fail to explicitly recommend eating less of it," adds Clare Oxborrow, the chair of the Eating Better campaign. "Equally, the guide makes no attempt to promote more sustainable farming methods, when promoting a farming sector fit for the future should be a priority."

Last throw of the dice for voluntary deals?

The Courtauld Commitment is targeting big cuts in waste across the food industry, but if it fails then legislators may step in. By David Burrows.



A lot rests on Courtauld 2025. The new food industry super-agreement aims to save £20 billion through resource efficiency, cut food and drink waste as well as greenhouse gases by 20%, and reduce water use.

WRAP, which is leading the voluntary initiative, has form in hitting targets: the Courtauld Commitment among grocers and food manufacturers brought some decent reductions on emissions, packaging and food waste in its three phases over the past decade. Meanwhile, things appear to be on track in the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement (HaFSA) too.

There are certainly merits in merging these two major initiatives. The sharing of best practice – as discussed in February’s *Footprint* – is both welcome and timely. Grocers are ahead of their foodservice cousins in tackling food waste, so much can be learned from their experience.

Foodservice is coming late to the table, at least on waste management step one – diversion from landfill. About 80% of waste ends up in residual bins, according to WRAP. The sector moves slowly at times, but let’s not forget supermarkets had a head start: Courtauld was launched in 2005, whereas HaFSA only arrived three and a half years ago.

The question is: will another new food waste agreement upset the applecart?

Progress towards HaFSA targets has been steady rather than startling. WRAP’s Richard Swannell told *Footprint* recently that action to prevent waste is proving easier than recycling and re-using what’s left. Still, it’s early days.

Though the question is: will a new food waste agreement upset the applecart?

Perhaps. The common criticism of these industry-led schemes is that the reach is not far enough. This has certainly been the case with HaFSA. At the launch in 2012 there were 70 signatories; now there are nearly 230. Good news – yet this represents only a quarter of the sector by turnover.

Signatories beyond the usual suspects and those confident of meeting the prescribed targets – or happy to miss them under the cover of “sector level” data rather than business level – have been limited.

A look at Courtauld 2025 sign-ups shows eight firms from hospitality and foodservice: apetito, Bidvest, Compass, Greene King Retail, KFC, OCS, Pizza Hut, and Sodexo UK & Ireland. In grocery, all the major retailers and discounters are in.

Supermarkets are always keen to sign up to a more passive approach to environmental regulation. They fear legislation and bad press. Foodservice got a taste of this too – late last year Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall put KFC in the spotlight for over-egging its work on redistribution of surplus food.

For those who think Courtauld 2025 provides another 10 years of breathing space, be warned.

The company had its fingers burned, but action has been swift. A statement to announce its support for Courtauld 2025 notes that 60 outlets are donating food and by the time the year’s out all 890 will be.

Fearnley-Whittingstall already has Costa and Starbucks in his sights, but he can’t haul every food business across the coals. Some will react when their peers’ reputation goes up in flames, but most are content to keep ducking in the shadows.

And this is the problem with a voluntary approach: it captures only the willing or, indeed, the already moving. Many of the rest, as we are discovering during our research on a project with TUCO, want to be led.

And for those who think Courtauld 2025 provides another 10 years of breathing space, be warned.

For one, the government has already ditched the Public Health Responsibility Deal, in which many big brands signed up to the easiest targets and smaller companies didn’t bother at all.

And though the Conservatives may remain apathetic to waste policy, the issue is capturing the imagination of many MPs. Spurred by changes to the laws on food waste in France, more than 100 of them signed up to support similar legislation in England. However, the food waste (reduction) bill – which included mandatory reduction targets, enforced redistribution of surplus food and, most concerning for some, disclosure of waste in their supply chains – has stalled.

The brief proposals only mention supermarkets, manufacturers and distributors, so the implications for foodservice were unclear. But even signing up to Courtauld 2025 may not keep the legislators at bay for much longer.

Greene King & SWR extend long term partnership to drive waste strategy

As part of Greene King's commitment as a Courthold 2025 signatory the group have partnered with SWR to deliver a recycling led waste management solution to their pubs. SWR have worked extensively with the Spirit group, servicing over 800 pubs, and following Greene King's acquisition of Spirit this proven partnership will now extend to a further 1047 sites.

"We are delighted to be working in partnership with Greene King to help them on their recycling journey. A huge amount of preparation and planning has been put in place to ultimately deliver the best waste management solution, with positive results against both sustainability and commercial targets" Andy Butler, CEO, SWR commented.

Vance Fairman-Smith, Director – Supply Chain, Greene King added "I am confident SWR will be a great waste partner to GK, they have proven themselves within Spirit estate by managing large scale change project, increasing recycling levels, delivering great service and supporting us manage bin numbers."

In partnership Greene King and SWR will implement an optimised solution for each site, developed following analysis of the estate. Introducing food waste collections will be the most significant change. Why is this good? - it's not only the right thing to do from a sustainable stand point but makes financial sense as well - a true win win!

Food is heavy and causes problems across the industry by pushing general waste bins over the weight allowance so an additional benefit of segregating food waste is to avoid over-weight charges. The food waste will be diverted from landfill and sent to anaerobic digestion plants where it is recycled to produce both biogas and fertiliser. With growing consumer focus on food waste and further potential legislation changes it's good to be on the front foot.

What does it mean for the pubs?

As much as switching waste supplier will be an operational change, introducing food waste segregation will also require a cultural shift; SWR and Greene King will be working in close partnership to fully support the pubs with the change with a range of educational tools, including video, briefings and social media:



From experience both companies understand how important pub engagement & behaviour will be key in achieving the zero waste to landfill goal. In addition to internal communication across the estate, each site will be supplied with posters and stickers as visual reminder of segregation at source. Sites will also get feedback on their recycling levels so progress can be monitored.

SWR is committed to providing the best customer experience in the industry and have established systems to deliver this service. SWR will provide dedicated support to answer questions and queries from Greene King sites. Dealing with one waste management company across the country is a key benefit for Greene King in choosing SWR as their waste partner.

Brussels lowers its sights

By 2020 the EU could be throwing away 120m tonnes of food. A target to cut this waste by 30% by 2025 seemed like a decent idea – so why has it been binned? Valerie Flynn reports.



A quick recap

The food waste target was part of the European Commission's July 2014 circular economy package – a basket of proposals and regulation that would make the bloc more resource-efficient. However, the new commission argued that the plans were too focused on old-fashioned waste policies (landfill bans and sky-high recycling goals, which were unpopular with many national governments) and not sufficiently focused on preventing waste or designing products that last longer and are more readily recyclable. (For more background see *Footprint* 35, August 2015).

The new proposal

The redrafted package, CE2.0, isn't quite as ambitious as many would have hoped. The omission of the 2025 food waste goal in particular was criticised. NGOs have decried the lack of a binding food waste target, but it's worth noting that the original 2025 target was also aspirational.

The new headline policy is an aspiration to halve food waste by 2030, based on the food waste target established at UN level last year as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. The commission has also committed to developing a methodology this year for measuring food waste, which would then be used across the EU. Measuring the problem will undoubtedly help in addressing it.

Good news on redistribution

The commission also promised other measures, which could make a big difference. For instance, it will issue guidance this year aimed at facilitating food donations and the use of food chain by-products in the production of animal feed by clarifying what is permitted under the relevant EU legislation.

Next year it will "explore options for more effective use and understanding of date marking on food" to tackle the problem of safe, edible food being discarded as a result of best-before dates being wrongly interpreted as expiry dates.

What happens next?

The commission's proposal is only the first step of the EU's labyrinthine legislative process. Now MEPs and member states need to negotiate their respective positions. Then a delegation from the European Parliament and a delegation representing member states will thrash out a compromise, which will become law. It's likely to be 2017 before the two sides make it to the negotiating table.

MEPs appear confident that the European Parliament will push for much stronger measures on food waste when a deal is finally hammered out with member states

What changes will member states be looking for?

Campaigners working on this issue say no member state is really pushing for a specific food waste target. Many believe it is important to get the measurement methodology in place first.

France looks set to be the most progressive country on food waste. It has called for more ambition than that proposed by the commission, including the introduction of measures to avoid wasting food not sold by distributors. Spain and the Netherlands may also back more ambition, but their positions are not yet clear.

The UK is not in favour of a binding target. However, a food waste (reduction) bill is gaining momentum.

What about the European Parliament?

In a non-legislative resolution last summer, the European Parliament called for a binding 30% food waste prevention target for 2025. But will it do so again in the forthcoming legislative votes, the most important of which is scheduled for early November?

"I am positive about it," says Josu Juaristi Abaunz, a member of the parliament's left-wing GUE-NGL political group and one of the MEPs leading work on the circular economy. "Since the arrival of the waste package review, the parliament has shown a high level of ambition."

Other MEPs contacted by *Footprint* were similarly confident that the parliament's negotiator, Simona Bonafè, will receive a mandate to push for much stronger measures on food waste when she sits down with member states' representatives to hammer out a deal.

What if no binding target is introduced?

A handful of countries are not waiting for the EU and have already set their own food waste reduction targets, including France (50% by 2025), Sweden (20% by 2020) and Scotland (33% by 2025). Other countries, including Germany, Hungary and Ireland, are targeting agriculture sector waste as part of their waste prevention policies in an effort to tackle food waste at source.

But environmental groups and many MEPs believe widespread commitment is unlikely without a binding EU goal.

"From experience we know that when you have recycling targets at EU level, that's the main driver at national level," says Joan Marc Simon of Zero Waste Europe. "Without targets at EU level, countries are left to voluntary measures. It would be much more difficult."

Valerie Flynn is an environmental journalist and former editor of *ENDS Europe*. She covers EU regulatory news and developments for *Footprint*.

Food industry's big allergy dilemma

The UK is seeking a pragmatic response to 'may contain' labelling which can deter customers, but new research warning of an explosion in allergies suggests the industry will continue to play it safe.



Few doubt that precautionary allergen labelling (PAL) can baffle consumers seeking to avoid certain ingredients. A survey of 5,000 subscribers to the UK's FreeFrom newsletter last year revealed that 45% were totally confused by warnings like "may contain nuts". Even more (56%) were actually annoyed by the ubiquitous nature of the information. The kicker, however, is that almost half (46%) said they always pay attention to the warning and never buy such products.

With that in mind, consider this: Mintel research shows that in the UK alone 39% of the population say they avoid at least one food, while a survey of 5,000 shoppers by BBC Good Food published in January suggested that 17% believe they have an allergy or intolerance (though only half have been diagnosed).

So more and more consumers tend to err on the side of caution and believe that they have an allergy or intolerance. This isn't necessarily an issue, as Dominic Watkins, a partner at law firm DWF, explains.

"In terms of intolerances this can manifest itself in so many ways that people can see cause and effect, and reach a conclusion that – because they do not want the effect that they have experienced – they will avoid the food and decide they have an intolerance." The fact that this conclusion is not reached by a medical professional does not make this any less valid to those concerned, he adds.

This is an opportunity rather than a problem for the food industry. According to Horizons, the use of allergen and gluten free terminology is rising 20% year on year on high street menus. In the UK, 13% of shoppers say they avoid gluten. Research by YouGov presented at Food Matters Live in November showed that about one in three (34%) of those cutting down on gluten actually have a sensitivity to it. In dairy it's even less (31%).

71% of households with no allergy or intolerance sufferers might buy free-from foods in the future

According to one gluten-free supplier, Delicious Alchemy, about 12% of the population are recognised as gluten-free "lifestylers", who choose to eat gluten-free as part of a healthy diet. In fact, 71% of households with no allergy or intolerance sufferers might buy free-from foods in the future, says YouGov.

You can see where this argument is going, but Michelle Berriedale-Johnson, director of the Freefrom Awards, the initiative behind the Allergen Safe concept, has put two and two together and concluded that food companies that also err on the side of caution with their PALs could be significantly restricting their market share.

Her reasoning is fairly simple. If the product has a PAL then more and more consumers are likely to avoid it as they shun certain ingredients in the belief that they or their children have an allergy or an intolerance, or think it's unhealthy. Therefore, brands that have a "play it (too) safe" rather than pragmatic and robust approach to PAL will lose customers as more self-diagnose.

Research in the UK, published in November 2014, showed that of 2,851 samples with an advisory label 1,031 (36%) contained no allergen. This compared with less than 1% in which an allergen was discovered in a product with no PAL. The conclusion was that "cross contamination for all four allergens tested is well controlled". In confectionery levels were higher but all the products carried an advisory label.

So could the Allergen Safe concept – essentially an audit-led certification scheme and logo that would give manufacturers peace of mind that they were only using PAL when they needed to without fear of legal repercussions – actually work?

"PAL presents the food industry with poor options and poor outcomes," says Berriedale-Johnson. "There is scientific evidence showing that if manufacturing is done properly there is no significant risk to consumers." Certification would therefore give brands and consumers peace of mind that "if there isn't a PAL the product is safe".

The British food industry has been warned to prepare for 'an explosion' in food allergies

Jo Arden, the head of strategy at brand consultants 23red, claims the scheme is long overdue but warns that it will only catch on if three factors align. "First, we must have robust thresholds agreed at an EU and UK level across all allergens. Second, an effective but proportionate means to police manufacturing standards needs to be developed. And third, we must find a way to build trust in the scheme quickly from both buyers and consumers."

It doesn't help that there are currently no internationally agreed reference doses to inform voluntary use of PAL, including "may contain". However, some of the clinical data suggests reference doses which may, according to the UK's Food Standards Agency, help inform PAL decisions in the future.

Discussions are taking place on developing EU legislation in these areas. These will ensure that agreed reference doses offer the best level of protection for people with food allergies and intolerance. In all this, the safety of consumers has to remain the priority – and this could keep food companies firmly in the precautionary camp.

In March, Trace One warned the British food industry to prepare for "an explosion" in food allergies. Hospital admissions for anaphylactic shock – the most severe of allergic reactions – have doubled in the past 10 years, while admissions for serious reactions generally has increased 75%, according to research by the supply chain consultancy.

The population has grown by only 8% in this time, so this increase cannot simply be put down to there being more potential sufferers, suggests Shaun Bossons, the company's executive vice-president for global business development. The culprit isn't clear, but complex food formulations, food fraud, consumer confusion and mislabelling could all be to blame.

"What really needs to concern the food industry is consumer trust," Bossons adds. "Transparency in the food supply industry will be a major step in limiting any further growth in the admissions rate."

Gluten-free is the future



All the talk of gluten-free has been difficult to miss, but is it just a passing fad? Leon Mills, KNORR marketing manager at Unilever Food Solutions explains why gluten-free is here to stay. And why KNORR has been quick to show operators the benefits of catering for people with coeliac disease and overcoming the challenges they face when it comes to gluten-free catering.

A staggering 13% of the UK population now avoids gluten¹. While for many a gluten-free diet is a lifestyle choice, it's the only way to manage a serious autoimmune disease for the 1 in every 100 people in the UK with coeliac disease².

As awareness of coeliac disease grows, diagnosis is becoming more common, and the number of people following a lifelong gluten-free diet is on the rise. In fact, around 1,200 people join Coeliac UK every month³. It's hardly surprising then that gluten-free has rocketed up the agenda for foodservice operators.

While there's been a widespread improvement from cafes, restaurants and workplace canteens in terms of understanding gluten-free, there's still a long way to go. 28% of operators still don't offer gluten-free menu items⁴.

Reduce waste, boost profits

It's not just what's on the menu that diners with coeliac disease have to consider though – 75% fear cross contamination in the kitchen. This is having a knock on effect on hospitality profits too. It's estimated the hospitality industry is missing out on £100 million worth of gluten-free business every year⁵.

It's this missed opportunity which Unilever Food Solutions (UFS) is helping operators to realise – and overcome – with its KNORR® gluten-free campaign.



People with coeliac disease don't want to be made to feel different – and they don't have to either. With a few simple measures, operators can cook great tasting, gluten-free meals that are suitable for everyone – meaning no more wasteful individual portion cooking and no more missed customers.

After all, aside from the sector's social responsibility, a good gluten-free offer is good business sense. People with coeliac disease are usually the decision maker on where their group go to eat⁶ – by winning their trust, operators will also be winning the business of everyone they dine with too.

“Unilever Food Solutions is one of the only companies taking gluten-free really seriously. It's great to work with an organisation that is so forward thinking. Together we've created some delicious gluten-free recipes – you can't tell the difference in taste.”

- Phil Vickery



Overcoming gluten-free bugbears

So why aren't all operators offering gluten-free? We commissioned research into the market to find out the specific challenges chefs face and their real bugbears when it comes to allergens and gluten-free. What we discovered is that for many operators, setting up their kitchen to cater for gluten-free is seen as the biggest challenge.

That's why we've teamed up with Coeliac UK to create a gluten-free kitchen guide. With the step-by-step instruction, the guide shows just how straightforward it can be. It also explains how to get Coeliac UK's gluten-free (GF) accreditation, which can help to boost sales. In fact, some operators have reported up to 10% increase in sales since getting accredited⁷.

In addition, KNORR has partnered with top chef Phil Vickery to create a host of gluten-free recipes and run a masterclass series for foodservice operators across the UK. Together, the guide and recipes are helping to banish the myth that tasty gluten-free food is hard to make.

The right thing to do

As a sector, we have a duty to feed our customers responsibly. This has improved considerably since the regulation on the term gluten-free became more stringent in 2012 and the new 'Food Information for Consumers regulation' (FIR) came into full effect in December 2014.

But for chefs and front of house teams – who now have to know which of the 14 major allergens is in every dish and drink they serve – this has added even more complexity to their jobs. As if running a food business wasn't hard enough! But by following the simple steps laid out in our new kitchen guide, operators can remove the complexity and focus on creating great tasting meals that customers want.

We've developed our product range to help save chefs prep time in their kitchens. Helping them to make eating out safe for everyone is not just a nice to have, it's the right thing to do. As we look to the future, with an increasing number of dietary requirements, we need to be offering more options that are suitable for all. And thanks to the new KNORR kitchen guide, it's simpler than ever before.

To find out more and download KNORR's new gluten-free kitchen guide visit knorrglutenfree.co.uk

UFS is committed to helping chefs meet the everyday demands of the kitchen in a sustainable way, and KNORR has been leading from the front. For example, KNORR Gravy Granules – which have been on the market for over 24 months – are not only gluten-free, they're free from all of the 14 declarable allergens.



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Briefing: glyphosate, the world's leading weedkiller

The herbicide plays a key role in modern farming but the EU is under growing pressure to ban it amid claims it causes cancer.



What is glyphosate?

Glyphosate is the world's most widely used herbicide (weedkiller), not least because it's so effective. The substance has become a mainstay of modern agriculture and its popularity has rocketed since Monsanto developed Roundup Ready crops. These genetically modified plants are able to resist glyphosate so farmers kill the weeds and not their plants.

Why all the fuss?

NGOs have long had glyphosate in their sights but the fact it's now twinned with GM has only increased their ire. Since the 1970s applications have increased a hundredfold and its persistence is causing a growing number of scientists to question whether it poses dangers to both the environmental and human health.

Is it a health risk?

That depends on who you speak to. Ask Monsanto and the likes of the European Crop Protection Association and they will say there is nothing to worry about. Go to campaigners and they will say the basis of European regulation is the precautionary principle and we just don't know if it's safe or not.

A [study in 2013](#) by Friends of the Earth Europe is a microcosm of how this debate has raged. FoE found traces of glyphosate in urine samples from people in 18 different countries; on average 44% contained "quantifiable levels" of the chemical. Monsanto pointed out that "levels of glyphosate that have been detected in human urine in the general population, and even among farmers using glyphosate, correspond to intakes that are well below any allowable daily intake set by regulatory agencies".

Is there more of it in food these days?

It's difficult to say. We know that heaps more is being used on a range of crops, including maize, wheat, barley and edible beans. The fact it is also being used at stages closer to harvest and in greater intensities has prompted some to conclude that average residue levels on and in some harvested grains, oilseeds, and certain other crops are "substantially higher" than they were a decade ago and, as a result, human dietary exposures are rising.

Research in Germany last month found residues of the herbicide in 99.6% of urine samples, with 75% of people tested displaying levels five times higher than the legal limit of drinking water. As *Footprint* went to press, 150 MEPs were reportedly lining up to have their urine tested for the chemical

Do food companies need to worry?

Not at the moment, but pressure is mounting. Last year, the Soil Association called on bread companies to force their suppliers to stop using glyphosate after it was found in about a third of samples tested by DEFRA. The levels were within legal boundaries, the Federation of Bakers said. Whether the limits are set low enough is a moot point. This was however sandwiched in between two far more controversial studies.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) said in March 2015 that it is "probably carcinogenic to humans". Campaigners seized on this and called for the EU to ban it. But EFSA, the European Food Safety Authority, didn't agree with its US counterparts – its 6,000-page assessment concluded that the substance is "unlikely" to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans.

Who should we trust?

Good question – and at the moment it's difficult to say. EFSA and IARC were due to meet up in February to discuss their respective positions but that never happened. Instead, what has ensued is a transatlantic bun-fight between the groups. This started with a number of the IARC experts joining together with almost 100 other academics to pooh-pooh EFSA's process.

What were the criticisms of EFSA?

In a letter to the European commissioner for health and food safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis, the 96 scientists claimed IARC's study was "by far the more credible". They wrote: "We urge you and the European Commission to disregard the flawed EFSA finding on glyphosate in your formulation of glyphosate health and environmental policy for Europe and to call for a transparent, open and credible review of the scientific literature."

How did EFSA respond?

EFSA hasn't covered itself in glory of late, losing a four-year court battle last year in relation to its assessments of pesticides, so its boss, Bernard Uhl, had been reluctant to be drawn into a public spat in what he'd described as "the Facebook age of science". But the pressure, from both peers and the public (135,000 people signed a petition to ban glyphosate), was too great.

Uhl finally published an 18-page letter defending his team and its findings in January. EFSA's is "the more comprehensive hazard assessment", he said. Reacting to suggestions that EFSA was too cosy with industry he highlighted that more than 40 active substances have been removed from the European market in the past 12 years.

So will glyphosate join them?

Kind of. The European Parliament has just (April 13, 2016) voted in favour of a seven-year licence, rather than the 15 years originally proposed by the European Commission. This is because of "concerns about the carcinogenicity and endocrine disruptive properties of the herbicide". MEPs also called for an independent review and the publication of all the scientific evidence that EFSA used to assess glyphosate.

Health Commissioner Andriukaitis recently noted the "extraordinary degree of public attention and concerns" the matter has attracted. A just-published YouGov poll showed 64% of Europeans want a ban – this drops to 56% in the UK, where 36% don't know which way the EU should go.

Next month national experts will also vote and, if there's no qualified majority, it will be left up to the Commission to decide. It's by no means a sure thing that it will stick with its original plans for reapproval.

